

## REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

GPS – Geopolitical Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

<b>Title of the thesis:</b>	Mihajlo Kopanja
<b>Author of the thesis:</b>	Conceptualizing Location – One Term, Many Meanings, a Lot of Problems
<b>Referee (incl. titles):</b>	<b>Martin Riegl</b>

**Remark:** It is a standard at the FSV UK that the Referee's Report is at least 500 words long. In case you will assess the thesis as "non-defendable", please explain the concrete reasons for that in detail.

### **SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED** (for details, see below):

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20)</i>	19
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	20
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	20
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	19
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	20
<b>TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)</b>	
<b>The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)</b>	<b>A</b>

### **Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the 5 numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).**

#### **1) Theoretical background:**

The author has clearly defined his research questions (conceptualization and application of the location, subsequently possible ways for its re-conceptualization with regards to its explanatory value). The author based his research on in-depth analysis and comparison of the existing literature (I much appreciate the comprehensive table with different terms, meaning and authors). To answer above defined questions Mihajlo relies mostly on critical geopolitics and constructivist approaches which one might barely object or question. But the author is clearly aware not only of works such as Agnew but S.Cohen or neo-classic geopolitics (Kaplan, Friedman etc.).

#### **2) Contribution:**

Mihajlo has chosen a relevant, topical, but also difficult topic for his analysis ("reexamination of the concept of location and its use in geopolitics). However, overall impression is positive, he has managed to avoid possible pitfalls and Mihajlo's approach to conceptualization of such a difficult term (location) and its application of the case study of Serbia is unique. I also appreciate author's courage to openly criticize and question some of conventional wisdoms and kind of provocative conclusions regarding the lack of consistency with regards to some main concepts. But I would recommend to use the term of geopolitics instead of geopolitical studies.

#### **3) Methods:**

Method is clearly defined (use of both inductive and deductive approaches) and thoroughly applied throughout the thesis. Mihajlo allows the reader to fully understand the way he conducted his research.

**4) Literature:**

Mihajlo has proven to be 100% capable of conducting independent research based on the relevant and exhaustive set of theoretical, primary or secondary sources. He has gathered an impressive body of existing literature which he skillfully exploited to achieve his declared goals. What I slightly miss are works of political geographers such as M.I. Glassner or H. de Blij. Similarly F. Ratzel is usually considered to be a founding father of political geography (not geopolitics)

**5) Manuscript form:**

The thesis meets all formal criteria and is of high standard. The thesis is clearly and logically structured, language allows the reader a fluent reading. There are no major shortcomings observed in the paper.

**DATE OF EVALUATION:**

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**Referee Signature**

**The referee should give comments to the following requirements:**

**1) THEORETICAL BACKGROUND:** Can you recognize that the thesis was guided by some **theoretical fundamentals** relevant for this thesis topic? Were some important theoretical concepts omitted? Was the theory used in the thesis consistently incorporated with the topic and hypotheses tested?

Strong                      Average                      Weak  
20                              10                              0                      points

**2) CONTRIBUTION:** Evaluate if the author presents **original ideas** on the topic and aims at demonstrating **critical thinking** and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and relevant empirical material. Is there a distinct **value added** of the thesis (relative to knowledge of a university-educated person interested in given topic)? Did the author explain **why** the observed phenomena occurred? Were the policy implications well founded?

Strong                      Average                      Weak  
20                              10                              0                      points

**3) METHODS:** Are the **hypotheses** for this study clearly stated, allowing their further verification and testing? Are the theoretical explanations, empirical material and **analytical tools** used in the thesis relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the aspiration level of the study? Is the thesis **topic comprehensively analyzed** and does the thesis not make trivial or irrelevant detours off the main body stated in the thesis proposal? More than 10 points signal an exceptional work, **which requires your explanation "why" it is so**.

Strong                      Average                      Weak  
20                              10                              0                      points

**4) LITERATURE REVIEW:** The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and **command of recent literature**. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way and disposes with a representative bibliography. (Remark: references to Wikipedia, websites and newspaper articles are a sign of **poor research**). If they dominate you cannot give more than 8 points. References to books published by prestigious publishers and articles in renowned journals give much better impression.

Strong                      Average                      Weak  
20                              10                              0                      points

**5) MANUSCRIPT FORM:** The thesis is **clear and well structured**. The author uses appropriate language and style, including academic **format** for quotations, graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables, is easily readable and **stimulates thinking**.

Strong                      Average                      Weak  
20                              10                              0                      points

**Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:**

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Czech grading
91 – 100	<b>A</b>	= excellent
81 - 90	<b>B</b>	= good
71 – 80	<b>C</b>	= satisfactory
61 - 70	<b>D</b>	= satisfactory
51 - 60	<b>E</b>	
0	<b>F</b>	= fail (not recommended for defence)