

MASTER'S THESIS EXAMINER REPORT

IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies

Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Thesis title:	Relationship Between Citizen and State in the Countries of Former Yugoslavia
Student's name:	Nikola Tasic
Referee's name:	Janusz Salamon

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Contribution and argument (quality of research and analysis, originality)	47	
	Research question (definition of objectives, plausibility of hypotheses)	14	
	Theoretical framework (methods relevant to the research question)	14	
Total		80	
Minor Criteria			
	Sources, literature	9	
	Presentation (language, style, cohesion)	4	
	Manuscript form (structure, logical coherence, layout, tables, figures)	4	
Total		17	
TOTAL		92	

Plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score: 1%

Reviewer's commentary according to the above criteria:

Nikola's thesis is an absolutely outstanding achievement under one criterion: originality. As someone who supervised Nikola's work on his research project which took him over two years to complete, and this largely due to his insistence on the optimal execution of his research plan, I can testify that his main thesis has been conceived by Nikola in an entirely independent manner. Moreover, he found it necessary to forge his own methodology (with "the bipolar framework" as its core) that would be consistent with the goals of his research project. The main thesis defended in his work is of no minor significance, since it theorizes a social phenomenon that generates the greatest challenge for the countries of former Yugoslavia, namely the willingness of a very high percentage of citizens to emigrate. This tendency (confirmed by the numbers of those who have already emigrated, but also by the opinion polls that identify the numbers of those who wish to emigrate) surprisingly coexists with a high intensity patriotism and attraction to identitarian politics that appeals to the strong partisan nationalist and religious sentiments. Nikola with his theory of the two poles that influence the civic ethos and civic engagement (the Positive Pole identifying the cluster of identity-related factors and the Negative Pole identifying the cluster of welfare-related factors) clarifies the dynamics of the social, political and economic life in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. (Incidentally, a related question that Nikola might be asked at the defence is whether his bipolar explanatory model does not have a universal validity well beyond the Balkans. Perhaps due to specific historical

developments of the countries under consideration both poles manifest somewhat higher intensity than in some other regions of the world but the bipolar model is as applicable elsewhere.) Nikola's work includes many detailed analyses, including interpretations of the quantitative data, and it is commendable that the author allows oneself to be guided by the findings which came to him as a surprise. Let me mention one such unanticipated empirical finding, since it exemplifies the level of significance of Nikola's original research project, as entailing obvious policy implications for the countries of Western Balkans. Expecting symmetry between the two poles, he discovered that the data identify asymmetry between the two poles (the Positive Pole showing much higher intensity), and yet despite this asymmetry of the intensity of declared commitments and preferences, the impact on the agency was symmetrical, namely high levels of readiness to act on the identitarian impulses accompanied by equally high levels of readiness to emigrate, even though the recorded intensity of dissatisfaction with the welfare conditions was considerably lower than the intensity recorded in the cluster of factors in the Positive Pole. The policy implications that Nikola identified as a result of this analysis is that even relatively low levels of dissatisfaction with the welfare conditions cannot be easily offset by very high intensity of identitarian political platform, therefore the only way to stop the disastrous brain drain of the region is by improvement in the Negative Pole cluster.

This leads me to one general critical observation about the thesis which I hope is sufficiently offset by my recognition of the highly original and generally convincing defence of Nikola's bipolar model of the analysis of the attitudes of the citizens of the countries of the former Yugoslavia towards their states (NB. It seems that the title of the work ought to speak about 'attitudes of the citizens toward the state...', not about 'relationship between citizen and state...', since the latter is a two-way affair, while the thesis seeks to explain the factors determining loyalty and disloyalty of citizens towards their states.)

I believe the thesis in order to be published is in need of considerable refinement, at the methodological, structural and stylistic level. The work, for all its fascinating content, reads like notes collected by the author in preparation of a larger work yet to be written. The work bursts with enthusiasm and creativity but it has a distinctive touch of scholarly amateurishness about it. Let me give just one example of such a flaw (which can be overcome by further revisions). On page 61, when the author reaches the climax of his journey, he declares: "The thesis will finish by posing the argument that the ultimate challenge in these countries [of former Yugoslavia – JS] is thus to create an environment where two Poles work together instead of against one another." Now, quite apart from the stylistic infelicities of this fragment – how are supposed the two poles "work together", if the author defined them as two opposite poles, and for this reason named them appropriately as the Positive Pole and the Negative Pole? The Positive Pole is called Positive because it motivates loyalty towards the state, and the Negative Pole is called negative because it motivates disloyalty towards the state. In what sense will the binary model of the analysis be preserved if the two poles will "work together"? I can only guess what the author wants to say but failed to say it more clearly. He wants to say that it would be best if both the identity-related factors and the welfare-related factors would motivate loyalty rather than disloyalty. But in such case none of these clusters of factors / poles should be called negative. So the author would do better by identifying the two poles of his explanatory model primarily by reference to their 'content' (say, as the Identity Pole and the Welfare Pole) and only secondarily by evaluative adjectives "positive" and "negative", since the model is indeed universally applicable, only in Finland both poles will have to be described as positive, in the Western Balkans the two poles point in the opposite direction, while there are perhaps some unfortunate countries where both poles will deserved to be called "negative" since both will motivate what Nikola describes as disloyalty towards the state. The very possibility of such dissection as I have just done shows that there is a scope for conceptual, methodological, structural and linguistic refinement of Nikola's brilliant thesis which may well deserve to be published.

Proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F): A

Suggested questions for the defence are:

I (do not) recommend the thesis for final defence.

Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	A	= outstanding (high honor)
81 – 90	B	= superior (honor)
71 – 80	C	= good
61 – 70	D	= satisfactory
51 – 60	E	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	F	= failing. The thesis is not recommended for defence.