

BACHELOR'S THESIS EXAMINER REPORT
PPE – Bachelor's in Politics, Philosophy and Economics
Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Thesis title:	Assessing the Relationship between Theocratic Authoritarianism and Economic Institutional Quality in Iran
Student's name:	Aryan Monfared Nik
Referee's name:	Petr Špecián

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Contribution and argument (quality of research and analysis, originality)	50	38
	Research question (definition of objectives, plausibility of hypotheses)	15	14
	Theoretical framework (methods relevant to the research question)	15	14
<i>Total</i>		80	66
Minor Criteria			
	Sources, literature	10	9
	Presentation (language, style, cohesion)	5	4
	Manuscript form (structure, logical coherence, layout, tables, figures)	5	4
<i>Total</i>		20	17
TOTAL		100	83

Plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score: 24 %

[NB:] If the plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score is above 15%, the reviewer has to include his/her assessment of the originality of the reviewed thesis in his/her review.

Despite the high similarity score reported by the system, visual inspection of the results does not reveal any clearly suspect passages and the thesis appears genuine.

Reviewer's commentary according to the above criteria (min. 1800 characters including spaces when recommending a passing grade, min. 2500 characters including spaces when recommending a failing grade):

Aryan Monfared Nik's thesis, "Assessing the Relationship between Theocratic Authoritarianism and Economic Institutional Quality in Iran," addresses an important and challenging questions regarding institutional quality. The thesis presents a largely persuasive argument, albeit with some limitations and areas for improvement documented below.

Strengths:

1. The thesis is well-structured and engagingly written, allowing readers to easily navigate the content and follow the author's arguments.

2. Applying the framework of institutional quality analysis offers a fresh perspective on the impact of the Islamic Revolution and subsequent political changes on Iran's economic institutions.
3. The author demonstrates a solid grasp of the relevant literature, building a robust foundation for his research. The reference list is neat and professional.
4. The thesis benefits a lot from the author's deep insight into the history and realities of Iran. His understanding of the country's sociopolitical landscape helps to situate the thesis well and explain the key context accessibly.
5. Methodological decisions are generally well-explained, and limitations are transparently acknowledged. The thesis relies on reputable data sources which strengthens the credibility of the empirical analysis.
6. Overall, the thesis presents as a mature and well-developed piece of work. The author's arguments are thoughtful and mostly persuasive.

Weaknesses and Critical Remarks:

1. The literature review, while otherwise quite strong, has some notable omissions. For instance, the thesis does not include Acemoglu et al.'s more recent (2019) work on democracy and growth. Additionally, some expositions of the literature could have been more detailed, particularly on pages 12-13.
2. A minor historical inaccuracy is present in the claim that institutional economics originated in the 1990s (p. 12). This field of study has a much longer history.
3. The historical exposition would benefit from more comprehensive referencing, especially when making potentially contentious claims. For example, the assertion of Iran's "flourishing" under the government of the Shah (p. 20) requires more substantiation.
4. Most importantly, the empirical component of the thesis raises some concerns regarding methodological decisions and result interpretations:
 - a. The decomposition of 5-year intervals into single-year observations assuming a linear trend is problematic. This approach leads to an artificial inflation of the available data, potentially producing misleading results. Applying the same method to the control group does not fully address this issue.
 - b. The comparison of Iran as a single country with aggregate control groups presents challenges in statistical interpretation. The selection of control groups has solid justification (p. 27). However, the control groups will naturally have more statistical power and potentially more stable correlations due to their larger sample sizes. Any comparisons are thus rather tricky.
 - c. Some results are strange, such as the strong positive effect of "Harassment of Journalists", or the strong negative effect of "Impartial Administration" for Control Group 1 combined with a strong positive effect for Control Group 2. Perhaps I am overlooking something here? Still, the author could have been more diligent in guiding the reader through these confusing results.
 - d. The author occasionally makes claims that are too bold, such as "The first correlation result in linear, squared, and interacted forms explains why, in spite of being one of the freest economies in the world with relatively high-quality economic institutions and possessing a better status than its regional counterparts in 1975, Iran was unable to keep up with global economic progress and lost the quality of its previous

economic institutions.” (p. 46) In the light of the correlational nature of his analysis, the implied claim about the results’ explanatory power appears overconfident.

Despite these criticisms, the thesis presents a persuasive demonstration of its author’s competence in addressing complex socioeconomic issues. In my view, the strength of the work lies primarily in its theoretical framework and historical analysis rather than its empirical component, which should be interpreted with some caution. Nonetheless, my critical remarks do not fundamentally undermine the overall quality of the thesis. Subject to a persuasive defense, the author can be considered for a B grade.

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

Suggested questions for the defence are:

What specific policy recommendations would you propose for improving Iran’s economic institutions? How might these recommendations be implemented within the constraints of the current political system?

How do you interpret the seemingly contradictory effects of “Impartial Administration” between Control Groups 1 and 2, and what implications might this have for your overall conclusions?

I 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.