

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:	Pelin Ayan Musil, PhD

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Contribution and argument (quality of research and analysis, originality)	50	45
	Research question (definition of objectives, plausibility of hypotheses)	15	15
	Theoretical framework (methods relevant to the research question)	15	10
Total		80	70
Minor Criteria			
	Sources, literature	10	7
	Presentation (language, style, cohesion)	5	4
	Manuscript form (structure, logical coherence, layout, tables, figures)	5	4
Total		20	15
TOTAL		100	85

Reviewer's commentary according to the above criteria:

The aim of the thesis is to understand the impact of the political changes in Iranian history, particularly toward more repressive regime after the 1979 Islamic revolution on the country's economic institutions. It presents a novel perspective in the field of political regimes since the general inclination in the literature is to shed light on how economic developments in a country affects democratization or democratic recession processes. Aryan's thesis counters this line of thinking and asks how political changes in an authoritarian regime affected the quality of economic institutions in a country. It considers political changes in three channels 'political régime, political institutions and the level of freedom' (p.22).

The thesis is based on a bivariate correlational analysis between the several indicators of political institutions/freedoms and economic indicators across different periods of time in

Iran. The student clearly explains how he selected the measures for the dependent and independent variables of the thesis, and indeed creates a combination of measures for the variables based on his own choice of reliable sources (Fraser Institute, Polity IV and Freedom House scores, as well as World Bank indicators). Justification of the selection of data sources must be an integral part of a thesis and the student's transparency on the process of selecting variables and measures in his thesis add quality to the work. An important creative aspect of the work is the student's addition of control groups to the analysis (pp. 27-29); however, I still think the addition of the countries in each control group (which is based on their freedom ranking in selected years) could have been explained better. The first control group is justified as being more regional as it includes countries from where Iran belongs: i.e. the Middle East; and the second control group is justified as a group that includes countries on a more global scale. I have been wondering why these groups were not formed on the basis of the level of similar cultural contexts (i.e. Muslim-majority countries) or forms of economic governance (i.e. from being more open-market economies to closed economies) or forms of regime type (democracies vs. autocracies). I would like the student to explain this choice more thoroughly during the defence.

This is overall a very good and focused thesis with a very clear objective, thorough empirical assessment and sound methodology. Yet perhaps the length and depth of the empirical analysis comes at the expense of a more thorough discussion of the work's contribution to the literature on the relationship between political regimes and economic institutions. The findings of the empirical analysis are presented in conclusion and show that Iran "*not only could not pursue its progress and keep the pace with other world similar economies but also lost its previous quality of economic institutions and by 2021 is not comparable with neither 1975 competitors nor the regional countries that had far less status at the beginning of the analysis period*" (p.47). What is the broader significance of this finding beyond merely confirming existing hypotheses? While confirmation of established theories can be a valid outcome of research, it is essential for us as readers to grasp why validating or challenging a particular theory was necessary from the outset. Should we have anticipated different results due to the unique context of Iran, for instance, in contrast to other authoritarian regimes? It would be beneficial for the student during defense to discuss how his meticulously designed and executed research contributes to the existing body of knowledge in the field.

Proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F): 85 B

Suggested questions for the defence are:

1/ Justify the selection of countries in control groups 1 and 2 vis-à-vis alternative ways of selecting them (i.e. based on cultural and economic similarities).

2/ What is significance of your analysis on the case of Iran within the broader discussion of the relationship between political change and economic institutions?

Grading Scale:

- A = 91-100 % – excellent
- B = 81-90 % – very good
- C = 71-80 % – good
- D = 61-70 % – satisfactory
- E = 51-60 % – minimal pass
- F = 0-50 % – fail