MASTER´S EXAMINER REPORT

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

Thesis title:	**Reassessing Irish neutrality in the context of the Russian attack against Ukraine**
Name of Student:	**Conor long**
Referee (*incl. titles*)**:**	**Dr Jan Kofroň**
Report Due Date:	**11.9.2024**

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

1) **Contribution and argument**: The general research question seems interesting – in simple wording "Did the 2022 Russian invasion change Ireland's stance toward neutrality/NATO membership?".
   I am not sure if the question was approached in the most productive way possible (I'll get to it later).
   I need to mention here that the title of the thesis is only about Ireland, yet the thesis provides two empirical cases Switzerland and Ireland. When reading the thesis, I did wonder why the entire thesis was not built as a comparative study (the second comparative case could be e.g. Sweden or Finland).

   Nevertheless, what may be more important, Ireland has long been a member of the EU – thus instead of focusing on hypothetical NATO membership, I would be perhaps more interested in debates on Irish attitudes toward the European defence (in theory article 42(7) is stronger and more demanding than NATO's article 5).

   The main problem of the thesis is however different – when it comes to the main conclusions, I don't think a reader will find something new/surprising or theoretically stimulating. This is not to say that the thesis does not bring some new or interesting evidence, yet it seems to me a better framing and a different theoretical approach could lead to more interesting results.

2) **Theoretical and methodological framework**:
   The thesis explicitly mentions social constructivism as the theoretical starting point. Given the specificity of the topic I would expect a bit more nuanced explanation why is this approach ideal (or productive).
   Specifically, when reading (just) the thesis title, I expected the author would provide a thorough threat assessment and compare it with available policy options – this is however hard to do under the social constructivist approach. Eventually, the thesis offers some bits of this here and there, to which extent these bits fit social constructivist theory is dubious.

   Also, I am not sure the hypotheses stem from some well-defined (ontological) theory (as they should). One could even argue that a social constructivist thesis could do just fine without hypotheses. **Specifically, I do not believe the second hypothesis can be meaningfully responded/verified from the social constructivist theoretical position**.

3) **Sources and literature:**
   Some parts are quite well populated with references. Some other parts see page 52/3 are bit empty (interestingly, the author here says "**Furthermore, the rise in the use of hybrid**

warfare tactics means that the relevance of geographic distance has reduced. While Switzerland was 53 more vulnerable in the past, it is now Ireland that may in fact be more at risk, as distance, while not a completely irrelevant factor, accounts for less and less in the 21st century" – which is very bold, and mostly wrong argument**).**

4) **Manuscript form and structure**:
The thesis is generally ok in this respect, even though, we (at Charles) do not use subchapters to split the introduction. At the same time Author's tendency to do subchapters in the methodology section, or the very conclusion seemed a bit strange too.

5) Quality of presentation – I see no problem, here.

CATEGORY		POINTS
Contribution (research quality, analysis, and conclusions)	*(max. 40 points)*	25
Theoretical and methodological framework	*(max. 25 points)*	20
Sources and literature	*(max. 10 points)*	10
Manuscript form and structure	*(max. 15 points)*	11
Quality of presentation (grammar, style, coherence)	*(max. 10 points)*	9
TOTAL POINTS	*(max. 100 points)*	**75**
The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)		C

Suggested questions for the defence are:

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

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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.