



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Alex Perry

Title: Geopolitical Dynamics and State-Building in Central Asia

Programme/year: Geopolitical Studies/2024

Author of Evaluation (supervisor): Martin Laryš

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	10
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	26
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	30
<i>Total</i>		80	66
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	10
	Style	5	5
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	20
TOTAL		100	86



Evaluation

Major criteria:

The master's thesis presents a well-structured and logically consistent exploration of the involvement of the United States, China, and Russia in the state-building process in Central Asia. The research question and goals are clear, and the thesis contributes meaningfully to the discourse by highlighting key points about the role of these major powers in shaping Central Asia's political and developmental trajectory.

The author proposes a hypothesis in the introduction, suggesting that in times of heightened geopolitical tensions, greater engagement from major powers in Central Asia can be expected, while in more cooperative environments, their involvement diminishes. While this assumption seems reasonable, the thesis would benefit from a more detailed explanation of how the author arrived at this hypothesis. A brief review of relevant literature would enhance the argument's credibility.

In several parts of the thesis, the author makes bold statements that require academic support to strengthen their validity. For instance: "The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 thrust the five Central Asian republics into an independence they neither actively sought nor were fully prepared to execute" (p. 20). Other example: „Initial assumptions were that a New Great Game would develop in which Great Powers would struggle for control of this resource-rich region" (p. 30) - Whose assumptions? Who claimed that? Not that I would disagree with most of the author's statements but by citing sources that reflect these views, the author can better ground her arguments in established research and avoid the impression of presenting personal opinions.

What I see as one of the more significant weaknesses in the thesis is the insufficient focus on the actual processes of state-building in Central Asia. Although the author touches on this subject, there is no comprehensive analysis of how state-building unfolded in Central Asia and how it was impacted by the U.S., China, and Russia. A deeper investigation into these processes would strengthen the thesis considerably. Without this, the work falls short of fully addressing its stated research goals.



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Minor issues: a) In the section titled “Gaps in the Literature” (pages 12-13), the author fails to clearly outline actual gaps in existing research; b) the conclusion would benefit from a more detailed summary of the empirical findings.

Also, it would be valuable to explore how external influences on state-building in Central Asia have shifted following Russia’s re-invasion of Ukraine in 2022. While the author touches on this topic briefly, the analysis lacks depth regarding the latest developments. This isn’t a criticism, but rather a potential point for further discussion, for instance, during the student’s thesis defense.

Minor criteria:

Minor criteria do not pose any issues in this thesis.

Assessment of plagiarism: No plagiarism has been detected.

Overall evaluation:

Overall, despite a few minor weaknesses and the need for a deeper analysis of state-building processes within Central Asian states, the thesis is well-executed with clear and coherent arguments. It meets the academic standards expected for a master’s thesis.

Suggested grade: 1

Signature: