

# MASTER'S EXAMINER REPORT

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

<b>Thesis title:</b>	<b>The Saudi Iranian Rapprochement: A Neoclassical Realist Analysis</b>
<b>Name of Student:</b>	<b>David Blanes Sanchez</b>
<b>Referee (incl. titles):</b>	<b>Dr Jan Kofroň</b>
<b>Report Due Date:</b>	<b>11.9.2024</b>

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

**1) Contribution and argument:**

**2) Theoretical and methodological framework:**

The thesis works with an explicit theoretical framework – that of neoclassical realism (not all theses have one, thus I am happy to see such a productive use of a theoretical argument in rather empirical work).

To be honest, I am not a big fan of neoclassical realism, even though I do understand why students like it. Leaving my personal theoretical preferences behind, I need to, however, highlight that e.g. (leaders) perceptions as an important variable in the neoclassical model present the author with quite a big challenge. While the balance of power may be relatively easy to see, the same does not hold true for perceptions. To fully understand the perceptions, one should have access not only to public speeches (or official communiqués) but (ideally) to private deliberations among the decision-making elite too. This is however almost impossible for recent events (or for authoritarian regimes).

Sure, we can try to estimate perceptions based on public information... it is however clear we need to clear quite a big obstacle here. My point here is that a less sympathetic reader may not be persuaded by the author's interpretation/reading of perceptions. This is probably my biggest controversy with the manuscript (If I were the author, I would not use neoclassical realism and save myself this problem).

**3) Sources and literature:**

given the aim the theses very good. As I have mentioned above, one could ask if the available sources are enough to uncover the perceptions of the decision-making elite – I doubt it.

**4) Manuscript form and structure:**

**From my perspective it is fine.** I think, there could be a separate "Discussion chapter" that would compare the results of the two case studies and that would also connect the author's key results with existing theoretical or empirical literature (and that would be a nice way how to elevate the paper a bit). As it is now, there are two empirical chapters and immediately after that, there is the conclusion.

This issue notwithstanding, the manuscript is logically structured and is easy to follow.

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

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
<i>Contribution (research quality, analysis, and conclusions) (max. 40 points)</i>	35
<i>Theoretical and methodological framework (max. 25 points)</i>	21
<i>Sources and literature (max. 10 points)</i>	10

<i>Manuscript form and structure</i>	<i>(max. 15 points)</i>	13
<i>Quality of presentation (grammar, style, coherence)</i>	<i>(max. 10 points)</i>	10
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	<i>(max. 100 points)</i>	<b>89</b>
<b>The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)</b>		<b>A/B</b>

**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	<b>A</b>	= outstanding (high honor)
81 – 90	<b>B</b>	= superior (honor)
71 – 80	<b>C</b>	= good
61 – 70	<b>D</b>	= satisfactory
51 – 60	<b>E</b>	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	<b>F</b>	= failing. The thesis is not recommended for defence.