

HABILITATION THESIS REVIEWER'S REPORT

Masaryk University

Faculty

Procedure field

Applicant

Applicant's home unit, institution

Habilitation thesis

Reviewer

Reviewer's home unit, institution

Faculty of Social Studies

Political Science

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Critical Investigations of the Global

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The submitted habilitation thesis is composed of seven already published studies bearing the title *Critical investigations of the global* as the immediate reference to Der Derian's edited volume *Critical investigations* (2005), being the set of studies by both conventional and critical theorists. All studies, except for one, were written by Ondřej Ditrych; the third text in a row in co-authorship with Constanza Sánchez Avilés. Also, all studies, with one exception of the last study (*Hobsession*) build their theoretical argument on a concrete empirical foundation – three focusing on the ethno-political conflict field in the South Caucasus, one devoted to Afghanistan and one building its argument on the global regulation of flows and consumption of drugs.

The first four studies focus on exploring our understanding of global thinking critically assessing (not only) the West-centric point of departure. *"Together with the premise that making of meaning in global politics is conditioned on history and power, with the effects in terms including hierarchies and social injustice, these studies share with the continental theory the objective of denaturalising common sense(s) and seemingly incontrovertible moral imperatives; the preference for ideographic research documenting the particular and singular over the nomographic research that seeks to discover general laws; the focus on (synchronic and constitutive) conditions of change over (time-sequential) causality; and finally, an incredulity toward metanarratives such as emancipation (Lyotard 1984) married, however, with the socially engaged endeavour to open new 'thinking spaces' (George 1989)."* (p.4). And so does the author uncover and shake the *unshakable, incontrovertible and objective truths*.

Two studies were published in prestigious foreign publishing houses (Peter Lang, Palgrave Macmillan) while four studies were published in prominent journals - Asia-Europe Journal (IF

1.208, Q2 Social Sciences), Journal of International Relations and Development (IF 2.2, Q1 Political Science and IR), International Politics (IF 0.78, Q2 Political Science and IR), International Relations (IF1.25, Q2 Political Science and IR).

"Georgia's Frosts: Ethnopolitical Conflict as Assemblage." *Asia-Europe Journal*, Vol. 17 (2018), No. 1, pp. 47-67.

The first study in a row proposes *"a reinterpretation of the frozen conflicts as assemblages which together affix and strategically orient a diverse ensemble of material and nonmaterial actants enrolled in networks inhabiting the conflict field"*. The concept of assemblage has been used to address various issues in global security and politics; the author chose the concept as a valuable tool in his empirical research focused on the war in Georgia. The author acquaints the reader with the idea of assemblage and systematically proceeds to look at the South-Caucasian conflict through the assemblage prism. He points to several central processes that shape the dynamic in the given "frozen conflict," tracing the transformation of the Georgian society, the invasive role of Russia, the state-building practices in the separatist entities, and the change of collective violence into the political and criminal violence. The study, therefore, looks at all the players in the field, ranging from humans to institutions, from local to state or global apparatuses. Ditrych offers his assemblage perspective enriching so the security studies and more narrowly conflict studies by the different perspective of unfreezing the conflicts offering so the complexity of each and every conflict. However, do we need a concept of assemblage – can we not do with the existing tools for conflict analysis?

"Georgia: A State of Flux." *Journal of International Relations and Development*, Vol. 13 (2010), No. 1, pp. 13-25.

The second study builds our understanding on the rudiments of political ontology of Carl Schmitt, Walter Benjamin and Giorgio Agamben and analyses the political development in Georgia after its cessation from the USSR and the declaration of independence through the lens provided by this theoretical framework. The author comes up with the argument that from 1991, Georgia as a political community has been found in a permanent state of exception. All scrutinized incumbents (Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikheil Saakashvili) are characterized as sovereign dictatorships directing the new political entity towards new political order which would embrace the territorial sovereignty, overcoming the stagnation and copying the Western model of a liberal state. The study also indicates how the enemies of the new state (separatists in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, radical political opposition) were

determined, labelled (criminals, terrorists, foreign agents of Russia), and treated as a prominent external enemy. The realization of the liberal utopia defined by a sovereign power, which at the same time reproduces the state of exceptions, is depicted as the tragic predicament of Georgia's contemporary politics.

"Afghanistan Now: A Study of the Microcosmos of Global Disorder." *Europe, the Middle East, and the Global War on Terror*. Ed. Ondřej Beránek. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2012.

The third chapter builds on the political ontology being inspired by Carl Schmitt and his concept of the *nomos* and its historical transformation. The author brings our attention to the conflict, which was supposed to end with easy victory but despite limited successes, will be instead coined as a complete failure of the West – the campaign of the West in Afghanistan. The study comes up with the metaphor that we are all found in global Afghanistan, defined by chaos and violence distributed by terrorists, insurgents and organised criminals but also the counterterrorist apparatuses; the Global War on Terror is only the assemblage of discourses, institutions, regulations, decisions, and expertise. Ditrych again reminds us of the burning and most often oxymoronic terms of *just war*, *necessary violence*, *just peace* or simply *humanitarian intervention* – all these used in the name of humanity, though through the violence being composed and imposed by the West-centric orchestra.

Ondrej Ditrych and Constanza Sánchez Avilés. "The International Drug Prohibition Regime as Security Regulation. "Regulating Global Security: Insights from Conventional and Unconventional Regimes. Eds. Nik Hynek, Ondrej Ditrych and Vit Stritecky. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

The fourth study brings us to the issue of international drug control regulation, more specifically to the international drug control regime (IDCR) as advanced form of global security regulation. It traces the emergence and evolution of IDCR by drawing on the international regime theory. The author again comes up with the salient discussion over universalisation of good and evil – do the postcolonial powers have right to pursue their interest of drug securitisation and criminalisation or should the power decide? Is it possible to find a balance between particular interests of the state (the Andean countries where coca is being part of their identity vs. domestic (over)securitisation of narcotic substances in the USA). Do indigenous inclusion and their participation in power mean the strengthening of the position towards coca of LA countries coming up with a bloc with the same position or will they be perceived and labelled merely as leftist trouble-makers?

"Forget Hobbes." *International Politics*, Vol. 53 (2016), No. 3, pp. 285-302.

The fifth study focuses on the readings of Hobbes in the knowledge of international relations and what author calls "Hobsession". The author concludes that *"the field would benefit from a cure of that 'Hobession' from which it appears to suffer, and forgetting Hobbes would expand the space for rethinking international politics"*. Is there too much of Hobbes? What would be the departure point in political philosophy then not in social contract? Where would Locke, Rousseau, Kant and all the others start when not with Hobbes readings? Why shall we forget Hobbes and not the other classics? What is the difference between Hobbes and e.g. Schmitt? Shall we not forget the other classics as well?

"Security Community: A Future for a Troubled Concept?" *International Relations*, Vol. 28 (2014), No. 3, pp. 350-366.

The final paper is dedicated to the critical assessment of the formulation of the concept of security community, starting with the original ideas of Karl Deutsch and continuing with the researchers who followed in Deutsch footsteps and elaborated the concept. However, the author is not satisfied with the current concept and coins it both theoretically and methodologically superficial and suggests to restore *"Deutschian ethos of rigorous, transparent, collective and transdisciplinary research"*.

Remarks

I miss in Commentary (Chapter 1) a more thorough explanation of what the texts hold together, for example, why they are arranged in this chronological and thematic order. Is there a research design behind it? How does it systematically hold all together (e.g. the theoretical/analytical frameworks and tools used)? Since chapter 1 is the only one written for habilitation purposes, I could imagine a far detailed presentation and explanation of the overall design. Nevertheless, I really have to accent sovereign mastery of given theoretical debates and the ability to apply them in various ways to real events and connecting theory with empiricism. There are minor mistakes or typing errors throughout the text (*Sapere aude* not *Aude sapere* p. 3; *prior tempore, potior iure* not *fortior iure* p. 13).

All of the submitted texts show profound knowledge of the author in the theoretical concepts and his ability to use those in empirical cases. The author is very much aware not only of the "old theorists" but also builds on the arguments of recent authors dealing with the Security

Studies and International Relations. Ditrych's conclusions provide a good basis for further development of the research. All the studies were published in prestigious publishing houses either in the form of study in the academic journal or as the book chapter. All with the exception of one were published solely by the author.

Reviewer's questions for the habilitation thesis defence

1. I miss in Commentary (Chapter 1) a more thorough explanation of what the texts hold together, for example, why they are arranged in this chronological and thematic order. Is there a research design behind it? How does it systematically hold all together (e.g. the theoretical/analytical frameworks and tools used)?
2. I would like to come back to salient discussion over universalisation of good and evil. Is it possible to find a balance between particular interests of the state (the Andean countries where coca is being part of their identity vs. domestic (over)securitisation of narcotic substances in the USA). Do indigenous inclusion and their participation in power mean the strengthening of the position towards coca of LA countries coming up with a bloc with the same position or will they be perceived and labelled merely as leftist trouble-makers?

Conclusion

The habilitation thesis entitled "Critical investigation of the Global" by PhDr. Ondřej Ditrych, Ph.D. **fulfils** requirements expected of a habilitation thesis in the field of Political Science .

Date:

6.9. 2021

Signature:

