

## HABILITATION THESIS REVIEWER'S REPORT

### Masaryk University

#### Applicant

PhDr. Michal Smetana, Ph.D.

#### Habilitation thesis

The Foundations of Nuclear Order: Norms, Attitudes, and International Institutions

#### Reviewer

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University of Innsbruck, Department of Political Science

The habilitation thesis of Dr. Michal Smetana approaches the political order to control the use of nuclear, i.e. the global nuclear order, from two perspectives: from a micro-perspective by analyzing individual attitudes towards the (non-)use of nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament, and from a macro-perspective by focusing on the development of the order's institutional pillars. These perspectives are covered in the two parts of the thesis, which consists of 15 articles. The fact that Dr. Smetana has published his findings in leading journals of International Relations/Security Studies (International Affairs, International Studies Review, International Interactions, Contemporary Security Policy, European Security, Survival, The Washington Quarterly) already bears witness to the cutting-edge nature of his work.

In this review, I want to highlight four aspects that qualify his thesis for a habilitation in political science and clearly demonstrate Dr. Smetana's high quality as scholar and teacher of international relations/security studies: i) his substantive contributions to the academic debate about the nuclear order, ii) his mastering of quantitative and qualitative methods, iii) his willingness and ability to speak to policy-oriented scholars and practitioners of world politics, and iv) his professional network.

First, the articles in Dr. Smetana's thesis make important contributions to our understanding of the global nuclear order and its current state. One key element of this order is the persistent non-use of nuclear weapons. Scholarship on this issue is becoming ever more topical with the modernization of nuclear weapons arsenals, the overall deterioration of political relations between nuclear-weapons-states, in particular between the United States and Russia, and questions about the necessity and viability of extended deterrence in Europe. Dr. Smetana's work breaks new ground in the study of the non-use of nuclear weapons by using survey experiments to investigate the attitudes of populations and elites in the United States, in European countries as well as in Russia. This research adds to our knowledge of the robustness of the so-called nuclear taboo and, for the first time, also includes data on Russia.

In addition, Dr. Smetana's work offers important insights into the institutional (deep) structure of the global nuclear order. In this context, his focus on linkages between the institutional pillars of the order is especially valuable, because the existing literature predominantly addresses individual institutions and largely neglects their interrelations. In addition, his argument that the contestedness of norms and regulations is an inherent and productive

feature of the nuclear order is both valid and important, because it also shifts the focus to generative force of contestation and counters widespread claims that high levels of contestation will eventually tear the nuclear order apart.

Second, Dr. Smetana's thesis indicates a broad and thorough understanding of social science methods. He uses both quantitative and qualitative research designs and has conducted several survey experiments. The use of experiments is still rare (yet increasing) in the discipline of IR, but, as Dr. Smetana's work shows, offers exciting new opportunities for research on world politics. Not least, this ability to master and combine quantitative and qualitative methods is a key competence for successful academic teachers.

Third, the thesis also demonstrates Dr. Smetana's ability to disseminate the results of his research to different target groups. In addition to publications in top-level, theory-oriented journals, his thesis also includes publications in more policy-/practice-oriented journals (e.g. *Survival* or the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*). This willingness and ability to reach beyond the ivory tower, to make research results accessible for non-academic audiences is becoming more important in view the manifold challenges in this policy field and the current scepticism against science.

Fourth and finally, the thesis shows that that Dr. Smetana's is developing his research in the context of an impressive professional network. His interaction and collaboration with leading scholars in the study of the nuclear order and the broader discipline of International Relations is yet an another indicator for his status as an innovative and well-established scholar.

**Reviewer's questions for the habilitation thesis defence** (number of questions up to the reviewer)

- 1) I was very intrigued by your agenda for further research, in particular by your agenda for future studies on the non-use of nuclear weapons. On p. 22 of your introduction, you suggest that future studies should take a closer look at issues of identity. I was wondering whether you think that status/prestige considerations also play a role in attitudes towards the (non-)use of nuclear weapons (not only in the proliferation of nuclear weapons as mentioned in chapter 9 of your thesis)?
- 2) Your theoretical perspective on the global nuclear builds on the English school and its notion of the evolved, primary institutions. One problem of the English school (as identified, for example, by Kilian Spandler) is that is rather silent on the relations/linkages between evolved primary institutions and designed secondary institutions. Is this distinction also relevant for your understanding of the nuclear order and, if so, how do you conceive relationships/linkages between these two types of institutions?

**Conclusion**

The habilitation thesis entitled *The Foundations of Nuclear Order: Norms, Attitudes, and International Institutions* by PhDr. Michal Smetana, Ph.D. **fulfils** requirements expected of a habilitation thesis in the field of Political Science.

Date: 24 February 2022

Signature:

