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**Palacký University Olomouc**  
**Faculty of Arts**  
**Habilitation committee chair**  
**Professor Jiří Lach, M.A., Ph.D.**

**ITEM: Habilitation procedure thesis review for Dr. Josef Kraus**

To those to whom it applies,

The document submitted by Josef Kraus, Ph.D., from the Faculty of Social Studies at Masaryk University, titled "Early Warning Systems in the Context of Pre-Conflict Analysis", consists of a total of 112 pages and is divided into six parts: Introduction; A Failed Comeback? Understanding Iranian Policies in the South Caucasus; Proxy Wars and the Role of Intelligence Services in the Current Middle-East; The Concept of State Terrorism in Relation to Iran; Religious Extremism as a Cause of Armed Conflicts: Indicators and Early Warning Systems; Early Warning Signals of Military Coups: A Case of Montenegro. Although the first text is titled Introduction, both that text and all other texts have an introduction, development of the topic through several sections, conclusion, and a list of references. The entire text is accompanied by a total of five figures (some of which are authored by Dr. Kraus), one table, and one diagram. The overall literature used in all texts is of high quality, incorporating works by top scientists as well as those with specific regional experience and knowledge.

The initial text titled "**Introduction**" delves into the discussion surrounding the development of early warning systems (EWS) for armed conflicts within the study of pre-conflict scenarios and conflict analysis. Dr. Kraus aptly emphasizes that this approach and necessity play a crucial role in advancing scientific knowledge and directly impacting global security and political realities. The primary focus of this text lies in deepening the comprehension of the significance of this research and its contribution to theoretical concepts in security studies, political science, and related scientific fields, as well as its practical policy implications. The examination of pre-conflict situations in instances of armed conflicts, wars, and interpersonal violence necessitates a comprehensive and systematic analysis, employing a multidisciplinary approach. One of its key objectives is to uncover the intricate network of factors and conditions that lead to violent disputes. Exploring the factors that contribute to armed conflicts is vital not only within the academic realm of political sciences but also for formulating effective strategies in conflict prevention, security policy, and international relations. By combining theoretical knowledge with empirical data, gaining insights into both academic and practical research

in this domain provides an understanding of the origins, causes, and triggers of armed conflicts. This knowledge empowers responsible actors to enhance the likelihood of preventing or successfully resolving such conflicts in the future. The author (Dr. Kraus) adeptly observes and describes all the academic challenges involved in formulating and addressing the topic under analysis, while presenting these challenges from various perspectives. Ultimately, this text seamlessly connects with the subsequent texts, which have been produced both independently and in collaboration with other scientists. All of this demonstrates the author's longstanding dedication to the field being explored and their extensive knowledge of the subject matter being described.

The second text is titled **“A Failed Comeback? Understanding Iranian Policies in the South Caucasus”**. The authors of this text are Josef Kraus and Emil Souleimanov, and it was published in 2016 in the *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*. The authors of this text aim to reassess Iran's foreign policy towards the South Caucasian republics. Their analysis focuses on crucial aspects of Iranian strategy towards Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, which, as indicated in the literature review section, have received limited scholarly attention since around 2010. These key issues include the energy and military security dimensions of Iranian-Azerbaijani relations, Iran's intermittent interference in Azerbaijan's internal affairs, and the matter of Iranian Azerbaijan in the relationship between Baku and Tehran. The paper examines Iran's relationship with Armenia through the lenses of energy, transportation, and economics, while the analysis of Iran's relationship with Georgia centers around the growing economic cooperation between Tehran and Tbilisi. A concise historical overview of Iran's longstanding relationship with the South Caucasus is provided in the subsequent section. The article then outlines the existing literature on Iran's relations with the South Caucasian states, organized according to the primary themes of the article. While Azerbaijan is heavily emphasized in this article as a key regional player with significant historical and strategic ties to Iran, the authors also aim to identify gaps in the current literature concerning Iranian foreign policy towards the region. The subsequent section presents three case studies, each focusing on specific aspects of under-researched bilateral relations. The conclusion succinctly summarizes the findings of the article. Throughout this work, the authors demonstrate a keen sensitivity to the region under analysis, as well as a deep knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. This paper represents a valuable research contribution to the field, exploring a topic that has been insufficiently explored.

**“Proxy Wars and the Role of Intelligence Services in the Current Middle-East”** is the third text in the sequence. Dr. Kraus is the sole author of this text, which was published in 2018 in the *Czech Military Review Vojenské rozhledy*. In this paper, the author explores the concept of proxy wars in the Middle East region and the role played by intelligence services in these conflicts. In the ongoing conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, various external actors and powers intervene, utilizing their intelligence services (among other means) to safeguard their national interests in the affected states. These external actors often find themselves engaged in conflicts with one another on the territory of a different state. The primary objective of the paper is to introduce the concept of proxy wars and analyze the involvement of intelligence services in the ongoing conflicts within the defined area (with an emphasis on the period after the end of the Cold War). The author emphasizes that the role of local powers intervening in these conflicts has become increasingly significant, directly impacting the

dynamics of the conflicts. One of the fundamental tools employed by states participating in proxy wars is the use of intelligence services to carry out covert or clandestine operations, provide direct or indirect support to one side of the conflict, offer intelligence or advisory services, and more. The author rightly points out that Saudi and Iranian intelligence agencies are highly active in separate conflicts within the current Middle East landscape. Proxy warfare has evolved since the end of the Cold War, with regional powers like Saudi Arabia and Iran taking prominent roles. However, this does not mean that superpowers are now passive. In particular, the United States and Russia are extensively involved in Syria, often collaborating with regional powers. The concept of proxy war remains highly relevant even in the 21st century, and the Middle East, with its dynamic security environment, serves as a compelling example to illustrate this phenomenon. In this case, the author showed great understanding and significant analytical skills in research and presentation of research results.

Dr. Kraus independently published the fourth text, titled **“The Concept of State Terrorism in Relation to Iran”**, in 2016 in the Slovak Journal of Political Sciences. In this text, the author examines the concept of state terrorism in the context of the Islamic Republic of Iran's politics. The author draws on the typology developed by American political scientist Gus Martin and investigates both Iranian domestic and international patronage and assistance. Martin, in his book *“Understanding Terrorism”* (2006), categorizes state terrorism based on two criteria. The first criterion is the sphere of influence or domain, which distinguishes between domestic and international terrorism. The second criterion is the type of sponsorship, where Martin differentiates between patronage and assistance. Patronage entails active involvement and support from the state, including participation in acts of violence and repression. On the other hand, assistance refers to a more subtle form of participation in terrorist activities. The paper concludes that Iran is engaged in a wide range of terrorist activities, with specific forms of terrorism being carried out autonomously and varying over time. The most active period for Iranian terrorist activity was during the 1980s, while it decreased in the second half of the 1990s. Once again, Dr. Kraus demonstrates a profound understanding of the subject matter and applies it to the regional context of the Middle East. Like his previous works, this text showcases the author's dedication to researching, documenting, and shedding light on various crucial topics in the modern world.

The fifth text is titled **“Religious Extremism as a Cause of Armed Conflicts: Indicators and Early Warning Systems”**, was published in 2019 in the Czech Military Review *Vojenské rozhledy*. Dr. Kraus is the single author of this text. In this text, the author begins with the premise that religion can be one factor among many that contribute to armed conflicts. The author poses the question of how and when we can recognize or predict when religion becomes a threat to regional or state security. Subsequently, the author establishes the research framework and highlights how the process of radicalization can offer analysts insights into societal movements or trends. Radicalization is the process through which individuals are exposed to an explicitly ideological message and belief system that promotes a shift from moderate, mainstream perspectives to extreme views. It is important to note that radical thinking itself is not inherently criminal, and sympathizing with radical ideas does not automatically lead to violence or terrorism. However, radical thinking poses a threat to national

security when individuals adopt or engage in violence to achieve political, ideological, or religious objectives. Monitoring the process of religious radicalization is crucial for any warning system that focuses on religious extremism as a potential cause of armed conflict. The objective of this text is to explain and describe the functions of various early warning systems and the conditions for applying them to a specific society in order to identify the risks of armed conflict stemming from religious extremism. Additionally, the article aims to identify the most relevant indicators of the rise of religious extremism as a significant cause of armed conflicts in general. Further case studies can validate the effectiveness of this approach and the suitability of the selected indicators. It's important to note that this contribution is limited to providing a framework for future work by analysts and experts in the field of state or regional security. Dr. Kraus adopts a highly analytical approach in this research and effectively achieves the set goals of the study.

The title of the final text is **“Early Warning Signals of Military Coups: A Case Study of Montenegro”**. This single work by Dr. Kraus was published in 2020 in the Czech journal *Obrana a strategije*. The paper focuses on modern military coups and attempts, aiming to identify the indicators that lead to situations where armed forces are willing to take action against a civilian government. The examination of these indicators, which increase the probability of a military coup attempt, can contribute to the development of an early warning system (EWS). Such a system would enable scholars, state authorities, and non-state organizations to identify the upcoming threat of a military coup. Indicators or early warning signals based on the developed EWS are commonly utilized in intelligence, predictive analysis, and prevention. The examination and identification of suitable indicators involve multiple layers or levels, allowing for a detailed observation of the chosen topic. Methodologically, various approaches can be employed, and different tools provide distinct outcomes suitable for diverse research and analysis purposes. A brief description and classification of these approaches can be found in the author's previous work. As a special case study, the text delves into the coup attempt in Montenegro in 2016, applying the EWS model. Once again, the author demonstrates exceptional knowledge of the analyzed area, and their conclusions regarding the potential applications of EWS are particularly impactful.

Finally, it is necessary to emphasize that these texts showcase Dr. Kraus's strong analytical abilities, his dedication to the topics he researches, his consistent effort to publish texts, and his deep and high-quality understanding of the subjects he analyzes and describes, and I recommend continuation of dr. Kraus's habilitation procedure.

With respect,

**Associate Professor  
Robert Mikac, PhD**