



REVIEW OF DIPLOMA THESIS

Review type: Opponent's Review

Author of the diploma thesis: Diana Tadevosyan

Title: The Nature of Corruption in the Republic of Armenia, its Impact on Human Behaviour and Human Development

Author of the review: Steven Gawthorpe, Ph.D.

Corruption in Armenia is of critical importance for policy and research attention, especially when considering the current anti-corruption movement with newly elected Nikol Pashinyan. The academic value of this master thesis topic cannot be overstated. Armenia receives very little attention within the domain of corruption research and I believe this thesis possesses substantial academic value.

The structure follows the common convention for master thesis work starting with the RQ's, hypothesis, historical context, methodology, and conclusion. The chapters are logical with intelligible direction for the research inquiry. The focal point of the analysis is on chapter three and four, which analyzed perception-based survey responses to develop an understanding into the characteristics of corruption, the corresponding relationship with social perceptions, and quality of human development in Armenia. The hypothesis is as follows, "The nature of corruption in Armenia is systemic, which affects all the sectors of social life, causing damage to human development". The RQ's to test against the hypothesis are the following: 1.) what kind of corruption exist in Armenia? 2.) how does corruption affect social life? 3.) What attitude had the society towards corruption? 4.) is human development affected from the corruption?

The author used a two-fold methodology, one which sought to saturate corruption within the ethno-cultural context of Armenia first on the state-level followed by analysis on the social level. The relationship between theoretical usage and methodology is not quite clear. The author did not sufficiently discuss the potential domains of theoretical application for the research inquiry or provide explanations as to why one theory is more suitable over others. Moreover, the selected methodology is not completely clear either. The author's central focus rested on a 2016 survey conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centre Armenia (CRRCA). There are many other surveys in Armenia produced by many different civil society and international organizations that span across a wide range of public sectors. There is no real explanation as to why this survey was essential for the research inquiry or why others survey results were not combined or used at all.



The methodology further suffered as the author did not establish a protocol for analysis, constrain conditions to analyze relevant information, or produce statistical robustness measures to check the veracity of the findings.

Despite the methodological shortcomings, the author excelled in providing a solid foundation for corruption-related literature along with a sound overview. The author provided a large amount of citation sources for corruption research and covered many of the prerequisite citations for any corruption research endeavor. The literature helped improve many of the nuances about corruption typologies along with various distinctions as to how both the research and policy community define corruption. One of the successes of the paper was using a set of question proposed by Christoph Stefes (2007) on page six to consider the manner by which corruption manifests as well as some insight as to how the problem becomes systemic.

The thesis style and text editing is perhaps one of the weakest aspects. The paper is replete with grammatical errors (starting with the abstract) combined with inconsistent citation styling and text-related formatting issues. The grammatical and stylistic flaws detract somewhat from the effectiveness of the author's argumentation. This is rather unfortunate as the author excelled in producing some anti-corruption policy intuition. For example, the author alluded to failures in previous Armenian anti-corruption policies due in part to a severe lack of engagement with civil society. Issuing legal constraints are inefficient and often inept without grounded feedback from civic initiatives. I believe the author is quite in tune with the core essence of Armenia's plight on the criticism of Armenian policy. Additionally, an interesting finding is 46.8% of the respondents perceive that whistleblowing on corrupt actions will yield adverse punishment. I find this to be highly consistent with the characteristic of systemic corruption and a very critical finding.

With all factors considered, and in spite of a few shortcomings, I believe this thesis possesses legitimate value for academic work in corruption research. I recommend this diploma thesis for defense and the student receives a grade of "good (C)".

Suggested Questions for Defense

1. How do you operationalize "systemic corruption" and what are the specific characteristics which define the Armenian case?
2. How do we conceptually differentiate between systemic corruption and individualized corruption? Is perception-based survey data sufficient to capture the essence of a systemic corruption problem?

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Signature:



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