



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Daniel Urbánek

Title: Explaining the UN Security Council's Selective Involvement in African Conflicts

Programme/year: Mezinárodní vztahy/2018

Author of Evaluation (external assessor): Jan Daniel

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	10
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	25
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	37
<i>Total</i>		80	72
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	9
	Style	5	5
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	19
TOTAL		100	91



Evaluation

Major criteria:

The thesis seeks to answer a well-defined, interesting and (for a diploma thesis) original research question, which is sufficiently based in the theoretical explanations of international politics. Even though I am not an expert in this area, the methodological approach and its execution is exemplary and its quality is well-beyond most of the master theses, which I have evaluated at the Charles University.

While the methodological qualities of the thesis are indisputable, there are some minor issues in the theoretical part, which would deserve further work:

First, I do not understand, why the author derives his hypotheses from the general theories of the International Relations and why he does not focus rather on the literature dedicated to international organizations, or even the UN more specifically. There are already some studies investigating similar questions with regard to e.g. peacekeeping operations, which could be easily adapted for the author's purposes (or on the other hand, productively criticized).

Second, the discussion of the IR theories seems rushed and somewhat superficial with only few unconnected authors referenced. Why waste space with Grieco and Morgenthau, when there are others, who write on realist underpinnings of the UN decisions?

Third, while the selection of sub-variables seems logical, it is not properly explained. Why these and not some others? Why the "human suffering" subvariable (terrible name by the way) and not e.g. presence of the conflict in the mass-media (which amplifies some forms of suffering and omits others)? I can intuitively understand these choices, but they should be properly explained.

Fourth, and as a purely marginal side note – the type of conflict matters greatly. While civil war in Algeria was a horrible human tragedy, it was framed by Algerian government (and others – such as French government) often in a counter-terrorist terms rather than as a civil war (see e.g. Malmvig. 2006.: State Sovereignty and Intervention). On the other hand, wasn't Burundi high on the agenda as the international community wanted to prevent another Rwanda?



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Minor criteria:

The thesis is properly referenced and very well formatted. My only critique in this regard concerns the missing literature review on the impact of the states' interests and norms on the UN decision-making.

Overall evaluation:

This is an original study, which surpasses most of the standard master theses written at the IPS. I commend especially the research design and high level of methodological craft; however, the case studies are also very well researched and written. The minor flaws of the theoretical part do not overshadow the overall quality of the thesis. Simply said, well done, this is a very good piece of work.

Moreover, I believe that the thesis could be with some additional work easily transformed to a good research article.

Suggested grade: A

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dana'.