

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Title of the thesis:	The Challenges and Prospects of Democratization in The Muslim World: The Case of Pakistan
Author of the thesis:	Mazhar H.Bari
Referee (incl. titles):	Mgr.Martin Riegl, PhD.

Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the five numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).

1) Theoretical background:

The author has chosen a topic of great importance which continues to be a very topic since the 9/11 events and subsequent invasion of Afghanistan, or Iraq, where the most influential thinkers such as F.Zakaria, F.Fukuyama, or A.Garfinkle tried to figure out whether there is a compatibility between democratic values and respective societies or not. The author has framed his research within reformist and modernist theories of Islamic political thought, which is a relevant approach.

2) Contribution:

The topic of paper „The Challenges and Prospects of Democratization in the Muslim World: The Case of Pakistan” promises more than it actually delivers and the presented research question (“Are the key principles of Islam compatible with core values of democracy?” or “Is Islam inherently authoritarian?”) are researched somehow shallowly. While the theoretical part accounts for the core of thesis, the empirical part (the case study itself) comprises only some eight pages thus the potential of the topic lies fallow.

There is also to much stress put on a criticism of S.Huntington’s conclusion, I am not saying that Huntington does not deserve to be criticized, however author’s conclusions are rather vague and shallow. “*Muslim countries such as Tunisia, Malaysia and Pakistan have rejected the argument presented by Huntington (p.69)*“. Other statements are also a bit too general („Majority of the people in Pakistan are Muslims“), or outdated „*According to the recent report published by Pew research centre, most Muslims strive for Democracy, Islam and personal freedom. The report noted that they “embrace specific features of a democratic system, such as competitive elections and free speech” (Pew Research Center, 2012 – p. 10).*“

Overall conclusion: “*As proven in this paper, the principles of Ijtihad, Ijma or wasatiyyah are present in Quran and Sunnah and proves that Islam and democracy is possible if the societies reach consensus with independent reasoning (p.70)*“ is not well grounded. It is necessary to go much deeper as A.Garfinkle’s argument (about Arab political culture not a religion per se) that: „*the Arab Middle East lacks the prerequisites for democracy*“ **is somehow in a direct contradiction to Mazhar’s findings.**

3) Methods:

The author based his research on a qualitative analysis of the single case study of Pakistan which serves him to answer his research questions: “*Are the key principles of Islam compatible with core values of democracy?*” or “*Is Islam inherently authoritarian?*” I have no major objections to Mazhar’s research design which is a relevant. Mazhar puts a strong emphasis on the conceptual part of the paper where he introduces the reader into several important concepts. Unfortunately in many cases he misses the point. For example he does not discuss the negative impact of colonialism on the perception of liberal democratic values in Muslim countries, also concepts of essential importance such as Zakaria’s

illiberal democracy is missing, or the concept of liberal democracy is oversimplified as synonym to representative democracy. Other terms such as polyarchy, or direct democracy seem to be redundant a bit.

4) Literature:

I do miss seminal works of F.Zakaria, or A.Garfinkles whose works are essential, considering the chosen topic.

5) Manuscript form:

Overall, the paper meets formal criteria of the master diploma. However, considering its layout, relatively frequent misspellings (including mangling author's name" Sorse instead of Sorensen). Alos G.Sorensen is an IR scholar and not an expert on theories of democracy,

Box for the thesis supervisor only. Please characterize the progress in the working out of thesis (e.g., steady and gradual versus discontinuous and abrupt) and the level (intensity) of communication/cooperation with the author:
 ...

Suggested questions for the defence are:

I recommend the thesis for final defence.

SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED (for details, see below):

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20 points)</i>	15
<i>Contribution (max. 20 points)</i>	8
<i>Methods (max. 20 points)</i>	15
<i>Literature (max. 20 points)</i>	14
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20 points)</i>	15
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)	67
The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)	D

DATE OF EVALUATION: 2.1.2019

Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	A	= outstanding (high honour)
81 – 90	B	= superior (honour)
71 – 80	C	= good
61 – 70	D	= satisfactory
51 – 60	E	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	F	= failing. The thesis is not recommended for defence.

The referee should give comments to the following requirements:

1) THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: Can you recognize that the thesis was guided by some **theoretical fundamentals** relevant to this thesis topic? Were some important theoretical concepts **omitted**? Was the theory used in the thesis consistently **incorporated with the topic** and hypotheses tested? Has the author demonstrated a genuine **understanding** of the theories addressed?

Strong	Average	Weak	
20	15	< 10	points

2) CONTRIBUTION: Evaluate if the author presents **original ideas** on the topic and aims at demonstrating **critical thinking** and the ability to draw **conclusions** based on the knowledge of relevant theory and relevant empirical material. Is there a distinct **value added** of the thesis (relative to knowledge of a university-educated person interested in given topic)? Did the author explain **why** the observed phenomena occurred? Were the **policy implications** well founded?

Strong	Average	Weak	
20	15	< 10	points

3) METHODS: Are the **hypotheses** for this study clearly stated, allowing their further **verification and testing**? Are the theoretical explanations, empirical material and **analytical tools** used in the thesis relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the aspiration level of the study? Is the thesis **topic comprehensively analyzed** and does the thesis not make trivial or **irrelevant detours** off the main body stated in the thesis proposal? More than 12 points signal an exceptional work, **which requires your explanation "why" it is so**.

Strong	Average	Weak	
20	15	< 10	points

4) LITERATURE REVIEW: The thesis demonstrates the author's full understanding and **command of recent literature**. The author **quotes** relevant literature in a **proper way** and works with a **representative bibliography**. (Remarks: references to Wikipedia, websites and newspaper articles are a sign of **poor research**. If they dominate, you cannot give more than 8 points. References to books published by prestigious publishers and articles in renowned journals give a much better impression. Any sort of **plagiarism** disqualifies the thesis from admission to defence.)

Strong	Average	Weak	
20	15	< 10	points

5) MANUSCRIPT FORM: The thesis is **clear and well structured**. The author uses appropriate **language and style**, including the academic **format for quotations**, graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables, is easily readable and **stimulates thinking**. The text is free from typos and easy to comprehend.

Strong	Average	Weak	
20	15	< 10	points

Remarks for the referees:

- 1) Download the thesis from the SIS. If you have no access to SIS, please ask the secretary of IPS (jana.krejcikova@fsv.cuni.cz, tel. 251 080 214) for sending you the thesis by e-mail.
- 2) Use the IEPS Thesis Report form only for your comments. **It is a standard at the FSV UK that the Referee's Report is at least 400 words.** In case you assess the thesis as "non-defendable", please explain the concrete reasons for that in detail.
- 3) Retain your critical stance. You cannot confer more than 80 points upon a thesis that does not satisfy research standards in top European universities.
- 4) Upload the Report as PDF/A file into the SIS. Instructions on how to convert .DOCx to PDF/A): „Save as“ – select „PDF“ – check-in „Options or Možnosti“ that „PDF options“ tick „ISO 19005-1 compliant /kompatibilní s/ (PDF/A)“ – „Save“. If you have no access to SIS, please send the unsigned PDF file to the secretary of IPS (jana.krejcikova@fsv.cuni.cz).
- 5) Please deliver to the IPS Secretariat, U Kříže 8, 15800 Praha 5 Jinonice, **two hand-signed** originals. Unfortunately, a photocopied report with signature does not suffice. Sorry.
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