

Evaluation of master thesis of Alper Cakir „Critical Discourse Analysis of Turkish Newspapers on Gezi Protests and Arab Spring: A Comparative Analysis of Sabah and Cumhuriyet Newspapers. “

The aim of the master thesis is rather ambitious; however, the student had managed it quite well. In the first step it compares three selected cases of protests in the Middle East: Egyptian and Syrian uprisings as part of the Arab Spring as well as Gezi protests of 2013 in Turkey. In the second step it uses critical discourse analyses to analyse the way in which the three cases of uprisings are covered in two leading Turkish newspapers of competing ideological leanings (a secular one versus a conservative one).

The student did quite a bit amount of work, both in terms of desk research, and empirical research.

Formally the methodological and the theoretical section should be both part of methodological section (critical discourse analysis and comparative case study are both methodological approaches utilised to answer the research questions). As for the structure of the thesis, it generally makes sense. The way of writing is also excellent, it fulfils all formal requirements. Finally, I would like to highlight large list of literature studied and used to write the thesis.

The thesis tends to see common causes of the uprisings/protests in all three countries (neoliberal policies and growing inequalities, growing authoritarianism). It also sees similarities in the performance of the uprisings/protests (being peaceful, social media). Finally, it sees the state reaction as similar (foreign brutality, foreign agents discourse). In the second step of the analyses, it concludes that the Cumhuriyet newspaper was more supportive towards the three protests, however the Sabah newspaper was more ambivalent about it. The biggest difference was in case of Gezi protests, oppositional, leftist and secular Cumhuriyet much more supportive of it. I consider that among the main findings is the final finding that the discourse of the two newspapers on the three revolts differs (however Syria debatable) due to its ideological background and the position towards the Turkish state (and its policies).

Debate:

1. It seems to me that the thesis overestimates the similarities of the three cases in terms of causes, performance and state reaction to protests/uprisings (environmental aspects and internal migration/urbanization in the Syrian case, completely different role of the military forces, heterogeneous population in Syria in terms of ethnic and sectarian cleavages that partly intersect with socioeconomic and political ones, most probably irrelevant role of the regional and world powers in case of Gezi protests). If you want to find similarities, you will find them. And also, the true is the opposite case.
2. How do the findings of the thesis contribute to the general theory of revolution? And how do it relate to historical sociology?

I recommend mark “excellent”.

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