



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Camila Lyra de Magalhães Melo

Title: Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Peacekeeping Operations: the cases of MONUSCO and MINUSCA

Programme/year: MAIN/2021

Author of Evaluation (opponent): Mgr. Anna Kotvalová

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	7
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	20
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	19
<i>Total</i>		80	46
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	7
	Style	5	4
	Formal requirements	5	4
<i>Total</i>		20	15
TOTAL		100	61



Evaluation

Major criteria:

Presented thesis titled *Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Peacekeeping Operations: the cases of MONUSCO and MINUSMA* aspires to investigation of the effect of sexual exploitation and abuse by UN personnel on effectiveness of the missions in question. Although the topic of the thesis holds a great potential, it has not been fulfilled.

Although the research question is well defined and stated, I am concerned about the possibility to effectively answer it based on the research design developed in this thesis. In IR, the ways how to research such a topic are numerous but the question, methodology and ontological assumptions must be in symbiosis. In the presented thesis, it is not clear at all from which theoretical and therefore ontological position author drives the assumptions from. In fact, the thesis lacks heavily any profound theoretical background. Author does mention certain conceptual grounds, such as an elaboration of the concept of effectiveness of UN mission and introduction to peacekeeping and sexual abuse and exploitation within, but that is not sufficient for theoretical roots of the thesis. Especially in the case of such a topic, certain IR theories could be extremely beneficial for the thesis. Obviously feminist theory, postcolonial theory or other critical theories come in mind. It would be especially useful for explaining the concept of rape in UN operations and to frame it within feminist perspective on the issue and to deal with the issues discussed in the thesis from more profound perspective. Without any theoretical and conceptual background (except the concept of effectiveness) the research suffers from shallowness, it does not fall into the amount of IR research which have been done on this and similar topics and additionally, it does not hold any ontological and epistemological position.

From the methodological perspective, this thesis also lacks sufficient elaboration on the methods used in the original analysis. Although author pinpoints that the thesis combines qualitative and quantitative methodology, it is not a sufficient explanation, and it only additionally confuses the reader what are the ontological and hence methodological stances of the thesis. Moreover, it brings out a question whether the research question can be answered through such an analysis where there is not stressed out the concrete methods used in order to analyse the data but also where the elaboration on data is also missing. Therefore, we somehow understand what kind of data were used but we do not know how or in which way author analysed them, processed, or interpreted them.



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The concrete terminology used for processing the data is not clear since nor is the nature of the research. This combined together raises a question whether it is possible to draw any relevant conclusions from such an analysis. Additionally, it is crucial to mention that also the data set is extremely insufficient and unreliable (as the thesis admits) therefore, the results derived from it might also be quite weak.

In terms of the original analyses and conclusions derived from it, I also do have several critical points. Most of the text what should have been an original analysis, is a historical and factual descriptive text of the context and realities of both UN missions where quite limited space is devoted to the issue of sexual abuse and exploitation. Unproportionally more space is devoted to the context of the individual mission. Moreover, also a lot of space is devoted to other aspects which potentially influence the effectiveness of the mission such as the nature of the conflict, commitments of the parties or the interest of major powers. Which is obviously extremely relevant to the analysis, but more space should have been devoted to the original analysis of the topic of the thesis which is sexual abuse and exploitation. Additionally, the thesis addresses the problem that these three factors might not have been the only one crucial for understating the effectiveness of these missions, but this crucial shortcoming is not reflected in the methodology of the thesis nor there is the possible adjustment of research question reflecting this issue.

The original analysis is quite descriptive, and it concludes in both cases (to different extend) that sexual abuse and exploitation do not have severe influence on the effectiveness of the mission. But I would severely challenge the idea that it is possible to draw these conclusions from the analysis as it was presented since author's argumentation was rather weak, the thesis lacks profound theoretical background, explanation of used methodology and methods and also it lacks robust data set.

Minor criteria:

From the perspective of sources, style, and other formal requirements the thesis suffers from several shortcomings. Thesis does not work with sufficient body of relevant academic literature and does not provide a reader with a literature review relevant to the topic of the thesis. The context of academic literature could be useful for exploring the topic on practical and theoretical level so it could have been beneficial for more elaborate analysis and also for more profound theoretical frame. In terms of style and other formal requirements, the thesis could use a little more structure, to separate and divide individual sections more strictly and visibly so the text would be more



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comprehensive. Moreover, the thesis project should be at the end of the thesis, not the beginning.

Overall evaluation:

The presented thesis lacks heavily crucial components of diploma thesis, theoretical background, explanation of methodology and concrete methods, literature review of the scholars who have dealt with similar topics and issues and to certain extent it lacks an original analysis since the analysis is quite descriptive. On the other hand, it is still well written text on relevant and crucial topic in the field of IR, the cases of US missions are well established, and the thesis does provide certain insight into the workings of US missions in Mali and Congo and the role of sexual exploitation and abuse within.

Suggested grade:

D

Signature:

Mgr. Anna Kotvalová