



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Eline Elisabeth Gerdina Beijnsens

Title: Strategy of Survival: the Resilience of the Assad Regime

Programme/year: International Security Studies, 2021

Author of Evaluation (supervisor): Jaroslav Weinfurter, PhD

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	8
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	28
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	36
Total		80	
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	10
	Style	5	5
	Formal requirements	5	5
Total		20	20
TOTAL		100	92



Evaluation

Major criteria:

- Broad research aims are stated and defined, even though they are not distilled into a particular statement of a research question.
- Theoretical section should provide more background on the debate of regime change and, possibly, of hybrid regimes. For instance, an entire branch of “post-democratisation studies” has been developed and advocated, as well as its various critical revisions and suggestions for theoretical upgrading/deepening (e.g. Valbjørn, Teti, etc.). What are the broader implications of this scholarship for the conceptual and practical (in-)efficiencies of liberal peace? How may they contribute to the reconciliation between liberal and authoritarian forms of peace? Such context, if present, would both further demonstrate the author’s knowledge of the literary terrain and serve as a (however limited) literature review.
- Even though the methodological and analytical choices are sensible and well chosen, they remain merely implied and unstated. A more explicit discussion of methodology (perhaps best done by the inclusion of a methodological section) would help frame the research and explain (and justify) the individual research choices made throughout the text/argument.
- Argument is well-developed and well-supported through a measured use of conceptual and empirical analysis.

Minor criteria:

- The text adheres to all stylistic, literary and formal specifications of a diploma thesis and exemplarily upholds them.

Overall evaluation:

The thesis produced and submitted by Miss Beijnsens examines the post-Arab Spring developments in Syria and, in particular, the regime maintenance strategies of Bashar al-Assad. In developing the argument, Miss Beijnsens makes use of concepts pertaining to authoritarian rule and management, especially so of the notion of “recombinant authoritarianism” in order to demonstrate the structural and procedural flexibilities of Assad’s regime, both in general terms and in its tactical and strategic responses to the unfolding civilian conflict in Syria.



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Furthermore, Miss Beijens ponders the implications of Assad's domestic policy on the prospects for and processes of assisted (external) settlement, war termination and liberal peacebuilding.

The thesis concludes by stating that Assad's authoritarian forms of peacebuilding and conflict management, achieved through the practices of binary othering and manifested through political discourse, spatial geography and economic policy, is likely to have long-lasting effects on the Syrian society and, indeed, on Syria's entire concept of nationhood.

Miss Beijens has managed to produce a first class thesis that not only meets all of the expectations and requirements associated with a Masters degree, but also, in some regards, exceeds them. Her sharp sense for conceptual precision, the measure of ease with which she handles and operationalises concepts and paradigms, as well as her analytical scope more than make up for the above-listed shortcomings. Overall, the work is well-conceived, very well written, elegantly constructed and uses up-to-date literature, even some of the most recent developments in the scholarly literature on (illiberal) peacebuilding.

For these reasons, I highly recommend the thesis for defence.

Possible additional questions during defence:

- Briefly outline your guiding methodological principles and your research design.
- In what ways is the international community (including Assad's allies and backers) complicit in the facilitation of authoritarian peace, whether intentionally or unintentionally?
- May the notion of authoritarian peace be applied elsewhere, outside of Syria? If so, where?
- What are the future prospects for authoritarian peace vis-à-vis liberal peace?

Suggested grade:

A (92%)

Signature: