

MASTER'S THESIS EXAMINER REPORT

IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies

Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Thesis title:	Can't Buy Me Love: The Limitations of EU Intervention in Promoting Tunisian Democracy
Student's name:	Kelsey Elizabeth Roman
Referee's name:	Viera Martinková, Ph.D.

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Contribution and argument (quality of research and analysis, originality)	50	25
	Research question (definition of objectives, plausibility of hypotheses)	15	13
	Theoretical framework (methods relevant to the research question)	15	7
<i>Total</i>		80	45
Minor Criteria			
	Sources, literature	10	9
	Presentation (language, style, cohesion)	5	3
	Manuscript form (structure, logical coherence, layout, tables, figures)	5	4
<i>Total</i>		20	16
TOTAL		100	61

Plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score: Turnitin 14%

[NB:] If the plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score is above 15%, the reviewer has to include his/her assessment of the originality of the reviewed thesis in his/her review.

Reviewer's commentary according to the above criteria (min. 1800 characters including spaces when recommending a passing grade, min. 2500 characters including spaces when recommending a failing grade):

Major criteria:

The thesis focuses on a relevant and still under-researched issue of the effectiveness of democracy promotion. It offers a rich overview of existing research on the Tunisian case; however, its research design and analysis have several significant shortcomings.

The theoretical framework of the thesis is limited to a few sources on the role of elites in the democratic transition and populism, concluding that while foreign actors need to engage elites, "it is the satisfaction of populist grievances through the redistribution of elite wealth and influence that guarantees democratic state consolidation." (p.9). This is the starting point for the analysis, but the theoretical section ignores most of the existing literature on democratic transition, the role of civil society in such transition, etc. The methodology is

limited to a few sentences on a case study and meta-synthesis of literature. The resulting thesis is a compilation of existing literature without any original analysis.

The "empirical context" of the thesis would benefit from a more concise introduction to the developments in Tunisia after 2011, as the snippets presented here and there do not offer sufficient factual background for a reader who is not profoundly familiar with the events. The description of the EU's assistance is somewhat random, based on a critique of the EU acting as a normative or civilising power, but then silently shifting to a critique of the EU's motivation behind cooperation with Tunisia and other countries of the region. While these claims can be found in literature that is referenced in the thesis, there is little to no original analysis.

This "empirical context" chapter was probably intended as some sort of analytical framework. Still, there is no attempt to conceptually differentiate between democratic criteria (that should be universal), EU values (based on Europe's specific history and circumstance and therefore not necessarily universal) and EU motivations, even if such differences are the basis for the author's argument. Moreover, later in the thesis, the author seems to equal democratic government with a "socially just" government, again without any theoretical references or even deeper argumentation. Similarly, the differentiation between democratic transition and economic transitions is blurred. This severely undermines argumentation in the empirical parts, especially in the chapters on migration, trade and debt. The EU's assistance described in the thesis is also limited to policy consultations and policy application while mostly ignoring other important parts of transition assistance, such as civil society capacity building, youth organisation support, training for journalists or educational professionals, training for political parties, etc.

Minor criteria:

The empirical part relies heavily on existing research, the main argument based entirely on Weitlandt (2019, 2022) and Khakee and Weilandt (2021).

The thesis would have benefited from further proofreading, as it contains random punctuation marks and other mistakes. The reference format is inconsistent and sometimes incomplete. There is no differentiation between references to two works of the same author in the same year (Weitlandt 2022).

Proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F): D

Suggested questions for the defence are:

I recommend the thesis for final defence.

Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	A	= outstanding (high honor)
81 – 90	B	= superior (honor)
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.