

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

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

Title of the thesis:	MEANS TO AN END: ARAB SPRING
Author of the thesis:	Stefan L. Tanev
Referee (incl. titles):	MA Zora Hesová

Remark: It is a standard at the FSV UK that the Referee's Report is at least 500 words long. In case you will assess the thesis as "non-defendable", please explain the concrete reasons for that in detail.

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

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20)</i>	10/20
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	10/20
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	8/20
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	12/20
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	12/20
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)	52
The proposed grade (1-2-3-4)	2.7

You can even use a decimal point (e.g. giving the grade of 2.5 for 60 points).

Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the 5 numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).

1) Theoretical background:

The author appeals to "Critical theory" and "Comparative politics" as to his theoretical background, without specifying what particular theories would be helpful in answering his questions beyond a rather broad idea of an economic background to politics. In the text itself, he makes no use of those theories as he did not pursue his initial question in any analytical manner. A major weakness of the present work is its lack of a specific question and clear delimitation of area of study.

2) Contribution:

The thesis does actually not discuss an open-ended question, neither does it analyze a concrete problem, it rather paints a rather large picture of the last 50 years of Egyptian politics. The author does not start off with an analysis to then come to a conclusion, he presents mostly unreferenced views of his own on Egypt without fulfilling the analytical and comparative claim from the introduction. His conclusion: "(According to my analysis throughout this research paper, I have deduced that In Egypt the Arab Spring did not in fact bring any democratic notion") is unwarranted.

To the author's credit, his description is rather well informed about Middle East politics, he mentions relevant facts and at times relevant (yet quickly stated and unreferenced) analyses and possesses a broad, realistic view of the recent political processes. Unfortunately, there is little distinction between description and judgement, and between quoting someone's views and actually pursuing a concrete personal analysis. Despite the major flaws, the grade reflects his knowledge of the subject matter.

3) Methods:

The lack of a clear questioning and analytical structure makes the present thesis into a loose, quickly written description of Egypt's political history. Despite its declared comparative aims, the text mostly concerns Egypt, Tunisia is fully absent as a topic. The text has no focus, passes a large series of facts of political history in review without any clear analytical aim.

In the only part where the author claims to compare and analyze, page 44 to 47, the text is particularly superficial, disjointed and again, confused as to the aims of analysis: there is no conceptual conclusion but a quick judgement instead: (“The cooperative argument I am trying to make is that those countries who have had a long history of charismatic, military leaders as presidents should be allowed by themselves to politically and culturally evolve at their own pace and not be pushed by international powers.” P. 46)

The text has major methodical flaws – jumping from description to value judgments: First, the author pre-empts judgement in the introduction without any backing up by arguments or facts on several occasions (“Middle East was pushed naively”, “few people who went out to protest”, both p. 11). He switches from a descriptive to a prescriptive mode (p. 19). He also frequently abandons analysis for commonplace (“Even though to certain extent it was true, let us not forget that to destabilize stable regimes is the specialty of U.S., examples can be given like Afghanistan, Iraq in the recent years“, p. 19). or plain unreferenced and unsupported judgmental stance („While other countries condemned Mubarak’s regime, and thought he was a totalitarian leader, which he was, they naively thought that Morsi’s regime was freely and fairly elected.“)

Above all, the text does not even follow the topic mentioned in the title and in the introduction: the Arab spring and its relation to democracy. It would have been more useful to focus on the last 10 years and on the democratization process in Egypt, rather than to tell such a large story without focus.

4) Literature:

The text contains almost no references, especially when facts are stated or large theses advanced. Systematically, the author uses analysis from unreferenced sources (such as the five crises in political development, notions of semiauthoritarianism and crony capitalism, p. 21, 22)

5) Manuscript form:

The manuscript contains numerous minor flaws: unfinished sentences (p. 11, 12), numerous syntactically flawed sentence (eg. p. 16, 25), spelling mistakes (p. 17, 22, 42, 46 etc.); its style is far from academic and at times not even journalistic (“t of the people who joined those movements were fighting for some democratic notions but once the Arab Spring ended and the governments changed, they didn’t know what to do“); its formatting inconsistent. The style indicates that the second part of text probably was written very quickly and left unfinished.

DATE OF EVALUATION:

1. 2. 2016

Referee Signature

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 for this thesis topic? Were some important theoretical concepts omitted? Was the theory used in the thesis consistently incorporated with the topic and hypotheses tested?

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

2) CONTRIBUTION: Evaluate if the author presents **original ideas** on the topic and aims at demonstrating **critical thinking** and 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 10 0 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 10 points signal an exceptional work, **which requires your explanation "why" it is so**.

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

4) LITERATURE REVIEW: The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and **command of recent literature**. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way and disposes with a representative bibliography. (Remark: 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 much better impression.

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

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

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Czech grading	US grading
81 – 100	1	= excellent	= A
61 – 80	2	= good	= B
51 – 60	3	= satisfactory	= C
41 – 50	3	= satisfactory	= D
0 – 40	4	= fail	= not recommended for defence