



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Köksal, Berk

Title: Comparative Negotiation Analysis of the Syrian Peace Process

Programme/year: MAIN/2020

Author of Evaluation (external assessor): Dr. Ondrej Ditrych

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	10
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	25
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	32
<i>Total</i>		80	67
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	8
	Style	5	4
	Formal requirements	5	4
<i>Total</i>		20	16
TOTAL		100	83



Evaluation

Major criteria:

The thesis' objective is to examine the causes of difference in success ("fruitfulness") of two parallel peace processes related to the conflict in Syria. The puzzle, therefore, is why the Astana process, steered by countries with seemingly incompatible preferences, has yielded better results than the Geneva process under the auspices of the UN.

The subject is clearly theoretically and practically relevant, and the author seeks to shed light into the matter by mobilising three distinct theoretical perspectives (realism, liberalism, constructivism). While not utilising theories of conflict resolution, the thesis distills from the first two of these perspectives key relevant concepts guiding the analysis: exercise of capabilities and preferences. It is less clear, on the other hand, how the third concept of procedural / distributive justice is immediately related to the constructivist theory.

In terms of structure, the argument proceeds somewhat unconventionally. There is no chapter on methodology (it is only discussed briefly in the introduction), and a sizeable descriptive chapter, including a large amount of sound and well-presented facts with relation to the conflict resolution in general (including geography, population patterns, economic assets etc.) yet not immediately to the RQs, precedes ones on theoretical discussion and evaluation of hypotheses. On the other hand, even in the descriptive chapter the author exhibits analytical skills, e.g. in presenting the evolution of the war by means of mobilisation of Brahm's conflict cycle.

The theoretical discussion is also rather extensive with elements unrelated to the core argument and RQs (e.g. when focusing on core differences between realism and liberalism, or Finnemore and Sikkink's norm life cycle theory). It is also worth noting that Hobbes was indeed a philosopher of peace, which was the ultimate subject and objective of his political philosophy, even as he was concerned with *domestic* peace and was content to accept a certain level of international violence in his political utopia.



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The evaluation of capabilities scale in the analytical section appears somewhat arbitrary. Moreover, it does not seem to relate clearly to the RQ and thus confirm or falsify the corresponding hypothesis. It does show, convincingly, that Turkey, Iran and Russia collectively surpass other outside actors involved in the conflict resolution process. However, provided that they do not exhibit a significant overlap in preferences, as the author demonstrates later, it is not immediately clear from the argument why they prefer the Astana format and why this format has been more fruitful in terms of outcomes. (The situation would be different if membership in both formats was exclusive, i.e. did not overlap.) The author is thus advised to clarify his conclusion with respect to H1 during defence.

Minor criteria:

The thesis is generally well written, only at times it lacks clarity that makes the author's reasoning more difficult to follow. This concerns also the argument related to H1 discussed above.

Overall evaluation:

The thesis identifies a clearly theoretically and practically relevant problem and proceeds to examine the causes of divergent outcomes of two peace processes related to the Syria problem based on a sound empirical knowledge and command of several theories of international relations. While elements of the research design are a subject of discussion, and the argument sometimes verges on opaque, overall the author demonstrates a sound analytical skill and reaches nonintuitive yet generally substantiated conclusions.



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Suggested grade: B

Signature: