



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Joy El Hajaly

Title: Instability and Upheavals in Post-2011 Lebanon: A Regional Security Perspective

Programme/year: International Security Studies / 2023

Author of Evaluation (second reader): Jonathan Collins

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	6
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	20
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	25
<i>Total</i>		80	51
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	8
	Style	5	2
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	15
TOTAL		100	66



Evaluation

Major criteria:

The thesis attempts a lofty goal of highlighting the role that civil society organisations and social movements play in post-2011 Lebanon, bringing into the fold the country's security dynamics vis-à-vis the Regional Security Complex theory. The "loftiness" of the thesis' objectives, however, plays into the work's oftentimes confusing nature, weakening the overall argument. The review highlights these complexities and offers some key questions/comments for the author to consider.

Outlining the lofty critique is the research question and sub-questions (pg 2-3), which set the study up for a very difficult task and set the tone for the rest of the paper. The primary question is relatively strong and could have led to some interesting insights on its own. Nonetheless, the five subsequent questions which range from the civil society/social movements influence on the country (good) to a critique on RSCT (q3) and the role social movements have for broader Lebanese society (q5) / their challenges and opportunities (q2), is too much to answer in a 60-page thesis. What that leads to is a lack of depth in the discussion section where the author attempts to cover each component.

Which leads to the hypothesis and methodology (which should usually come after the literature review and theory). I am not sure of the purpose of the hypothesis, especially as the author notes the exploratory nature of the study. The point of exploratory work is to uncover the relationships between these movements/devices/objects, where coming in with preconceptions on their connection skews the analytical process. This combined with a non-descriptive "careful document selection and a critical assessment of the data" (pg 6) to avoid bias makes me skeptical. I would ask the author to be much clearer in the defense about their data selection, and the processes they used to ensure that their selection procedure was appropriate. The use of document analysis as an interpretivist approach makes sense, but then thematic analysis is also brought up. Is the study using mixed-qualitative methods? And how does the author differentiate between the two interconnected but distinct techniques within their analysis?

The literature review outline (pg 7 – 9) speaks about the importance of the section for highlighting the gap. But then I miss out on the quite-extensive body (a quick google) of research linking civil society / social movements in the Lebanon context. Without the literature review on these specific texts, I miss out on why this research is important to the field or what questions it answers that others have not.



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I enjoyed the different overview of social / civil society movements that was brought in the analysis. There is some interesting research here which should be noted. While I think the work could have done a better job at connecting RSCT (the operationalized theory) to the context of the analysis, the research questions make it very difficult to try and cover everything.

However, for a work that focuses on operationalizing RSCT and applying it within the social movement / civil society context of Lebanon, having only a small role in both the discussion and the analysis is disappointing. There are some interesting components to its application in the sections of regional actor influences (Iran's role in the 2019 uprising) which should have been more pronounced throughout these sections. But the focus was predominantly concentrated on the role of social movements and civil society (which was insightful in its own right).

Minor criteria:

The work is nicely written, and I enjoyed the read about the different movements within Lebanon. Some of the flow and structure of the work is a bit confusing (why is the method coming before the theory/lit review). There is a decent amount of research and citations put into the work.

Assessment of plagiarism: Work is cited appropriately with no obvious issues.

Overall evaluation:

The thesis offers an important look into the value of civil society and social movements in countries defined by instability (with Lebanon post-2011 a great example and choice). However, the lofty goals and overcomplex formulation of research questions meant the author struggled to comprehensively answer all their various components. What the reader is left with is an interesting read, but one that does not match up to the intended goals. There are some key elements outlined in the review which the author would do well addressing in the defense. Ultimately, I believe the work to be interesting and worthy of defense but think the author would have flourished more in delving deeper into the influences of social & civil society movements within the Lebanese context without bringing in a theory (RSCT) which goes seldom used throughout the work.

Suggested grade: D



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Signature: