Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Joy El Hajaly

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

Programme/year: Security Studies/2023

Author of Evaluation (supervisor): Jaroslav Weinfurter Ph.D.

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	**10**	9
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	**30**	22
	Methodology, analysis, argument	**40**	26
Total		*80*	57
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	**10**	7
	Style	**5**	4
	Formal requirements	**5**	5
Total		*20*	16
TOTAL		*100*	73

Evaluation

Major criteria:
- Research objectives of the work are explicitly stated and elaborated.
- With regard to theory, for its claims of regionalism and regional security, the discussion of the thesis severely dilutes regionalism and instead focuses near-exclusively on the domestic sources of Lebanon's turmoil. The work, in other word, needs much more discussion of MENA (post-2011) regionalism in order to justify its own selection of theory and to deliver on its own stated research objectives.
- The previous point also sheds light on some of the problems with the chosen literature. RSCT is always a good starting point (especially given Buzan and Waever's descriptions of Middle Eastern security complexes), but its applications are severely limited when asked to give insight into intra-state processes and the role of non-state actors. While RSCT challenges state-centrism theoretically (as the author correctly observes), it remains state-centric in its methodology. The thesis is aware of the limitations of RSCT, but does not sufficiently engage with the wealth of literature that imports the element of non-state actors into regional security theory. Establishing this connection, however, is a crucial piece to hold the author's overall argument.
- The work's methodology is in need of being more firmly rooted in formal methods (and literature) and should resonate more intimately with chosen theory.

Minor criteria:

- Language is clear, with occasional grammatical errors.
- Although used sources are relevant for the discussion, additional sources (especially those to establish links between non-state actors and regionalism) should be used.
- At times, claims and assertions are made that would require a reference to a source for the purpose of verification.

Assessment of plagiarism:
Closer inspection of the Turnitin analysis (reporting 16% match) has revealed no irregularities to speak of and has confirmed the originality of the submitted work.

Overall evaluation:

The submitted Diploma Thesis sets out to explore the role played by civil society organizations and social movements in post-2011 Lebanon and to assess their overall impact on the country's sectarian-based security dynamics. In addressing these issues, the thesis makes use of the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) and argues that the rising mobility and capabilities of these actors has significant ramifications within and without Lebanon. The central research question is the following one: "*Through the lens of Regional Security Complex theory, how does the active engagement of civil society organizations and social movements in post-2011 Lebanon contribute to the country's security dynamics, societal changes, and the contestation of sectarianism?*"

The work offers, for the most part, a lucid and a well-written account of Lebanon's internal turmoil. I especially praise the author's comprehensive treatment/discussion of Lebanon's sectarian and CS mosaic and of its many implications.

The author's use of theory is admissible on the presumption (which the author does a good job of demonstrating) that the dichotomy of intra-state and extra-state in the post-Arab Spring Middle East has been severely loosened (as it indeed has been). However, the work's lukewarm commitment to regionalism seems to undermine the author's ability to construct a concise argument that would be capable of bringing all parts (and sections) of the work convincingly together. The end result reads more like a free-floating discussion or a series of loosely linked descriptions and assertions instead of a concise and theoretically informed analysis of a given problem. More care, in other words, should have been spent on streamlining all discussion topics and integrating them into a common set of optics.

Suggested questions for defence:
- Could you establish – perhaps with an explicit reference to MENA – a *theoretical* link between non-state actors and regional security? (Or reconcile RSCT with the impact of non-state actors?)
- Elaborate on the security dialectic between post-2011 Lebanon and post-2011 Middle East (L → MENA; MENA → L) and identify the key actors, state and non-state, responsible for this two-way exchange.

Suggested grade: C [73%]

Signature:

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