



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Hassan Saad

Title: The Challenges of UN Peacekeeping in a Complex Environment: A UNIFIL Perspective

Programme/year: International Security Studies, 2024

Author of Evaluation (second reader): Tomáš Karásek

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	8
	Theoretical / conceptual framework	30	26
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	36
<i>Total</i>		80	70
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	9
	Style	5	4
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	18
TOTAL		100	88



Evaluation

Major criteria:

The thesis represents a mature outcome of student research which is well researched, strongly conceptually anchored and nicely written. The result is, to deliberately refer to the core concept the thesis, a complex analysis of the UNIFIL peacekeeping mission in Lebanon. To state the assessment clearly and shortly: this is a high-quality thesis.

As any excellent research paper, rather than criticism based on apparent mistakes or errors, the text provokes questions: Firstly, does the author understand complexity primarily as a theoretical tool (i.e. a means of explanation), or rather a policy instrument (i.e. a means of improving practice)? Secondly, is the relationship between the complexity (or conflictuality) of the international environment and the complexity of peacekeeping actually not inverse, in the sense that the more complex/conflictual the environment, the less complex peacekeeping missions we can expect?

Besides the questions, some critical comments are still warranted. First and foremost, this reviewer is not fully convinced that the author does not overplay his hand, so to speak, with emphasizing the similarity of complex systems like stock markets and peacekeeping operations. Or rather, I do not see in the thesis an appropriate operationalization and ensuing methodology that would warrant such a comparison. If the author were able to systematically factor in, for example, the decisions of individuals (amongst peacekeepers, locals, or state representatives at the UN) and their impact on peacekeeping, it would change the calculus. The analysis, however, seems to stop at the group-level – and, despite being complicated, the low numbers of groups engaged in mutual relations affecting peacekeeping do not seem to warrant comparison to the large-n of interactions in a truly complex system.

I must also note that the author seems to get lost a bit in the complexity of his writing in chapter 4 whose narrative logic and resulting structure remains somewhat opaque. Finally, in an analysis that starts with questions concerning efficiency and efficacy of peacekeeping, I miss reference to Virginia Page Fortna's work that addresses that question head-on. Likewise, when discussing the local aspects of peacekeeping, Severine Autesserre's studies are hugely influential – but are not mentioned in the thesis.



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Minor criteria:

Apart from occasional fluctuation of the text font and a strange usage of the colon in chapter titles, the thesis needs to be praised for its formal aspects, starting with an enviably rich pool of sources and ending with a fully appropriate academic language.

Assessment of plagiarism:

The thesis does not exhibit traits of plagiarism.

Overall evaluation:

This is an excellent, conceptually anchored, thought-provoking thesis that sheds interesting light on one of the most closely watched peacekeeping operations.

Suggested grade: **B**

Signature: