

Joint Dissertation Review

Name of the student:	Mert Kocan
Title of the thesis:	The Evolution of Turkish Asylum Policy Structures: The Effects of Europeanization and the Syrian Refugee Crisis
Reviewer:	Dr. Evren Yalaz

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

(relevance of the research question, research objective, literature review):

The thesis aims to evaluate Turkish Asylum policies overtime and inquires the extent of which asylum laws and regulations in Turkey catch and extend beyond the EU norms and standards. Considering the current controversies and political clashes around asylum regulations, this is a timely contribution to the field. The research question and research objectives are clearly stated. The thesis covers the relevant literature for the case study. Yet, the literature review misses further theoretical analysis; and is merely descriptive in this sense. The thesis could have benefitted from broader literature on 'causes of policy change'. The author mentions two models of policy change, yet further information is needed on these models.

2. ANALYSIS

(methodology, argument, theoretical backing, appropriate work with sources):

The thesis conducts policy analysis through evaluating the main policy documents of Turkish asylum regime. The overtime analysis of the policies enabled Mr. Kocan to analyse the historical evolution. In this sense, he benefits from the tools of 'process tracing'. I find this methodological approach appropriate to analyse his research question and achieve the objectives.

The main argument of the thesis is Turkish asylum laws are Europeanized (attaining European standards and norms) throughout the Turkey-EU accession negotiation process. Even though this accession process stumbled and came to a point of stand-by, Turkey kept on improvements in its asylum laws and even went beyond the EU standards. While this argument is an interesting one, the empirical evidence fails to support it to an important extent. As the author shows important steps have been taken in Turkish asylum laws. Yet, as also clearly shown by the thesis, these steps were not seen as sufficient enough to catch international standards. As many critics rightly point out that the main driving mechanism of Turkish asylum reforms was security rather than humanitarian-concerns. Not lifting the geographical limitation to the Geneva Convention can be seen as an important proof of this. Therefore, the thesis could have benefitted from more refined argument that also takes these restrictions into account.

As I stated in the previous part, the thesis could provide more theoretical depth. An individual part on theories of policy change could be helpful in this respect. The two mentioned models of policy change could have been elaborated further.

3. CONCLUSIONS

(persuasiveness, link between data and conclusions, achievement of research objectives):

One of the weak points of this thesis is the link between data and conclusions. This weak point necessarily undermines its persuasiveness. Mr. Kocan does a very good work in mapping the historical evolution of Turkish asylum laws. His analysis is neat and detailed. He accounts for both the improvements in Turkish asylum policies and criticisms. After this comprehensive analysis, the main argument seems to be simplistic and not really referring to what the data is showing.

4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

(appropriate language, adherence to academic standards, citation style, layout):

The thesis has improved significantly compared to its earlier versions in his respect. Yet, considering that the author is not a native user of English, the thesis still has some language issues. Overall, the thesis demonstrates good academic writing standards, layout, and citation style.

5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

(strong and weak point of the dissertation, other issues)

Overall, this is well-written thesis, with clear objectives, argument, and research questions. It deals with an important and timely topic. It presents a detailed and neat analysis of the policy documents. It appropriately reviews the historical evolution of Turkish asylum laws starting from the period of the Ottoman Empire. It is rich in its sources and wisely chooses its methodological approach. The thesis could have been further improved in terms of its theoretical framework. The link between the research question, the main argument, and data could have been more consistent. A careful proof-reading could have helped the thesis.

Grade (A-F):	8 (out of 10)
Date: June 21, 2019	Signature: EVREN YALAZ