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Thesis evaluation Yan Yip

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Programme details

Programme: European Politics and Society

Specialisation:

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Thesis details:

Title: Eroding Human Rights in Hong Kong: The National Security Law, EU Responses, and the Evolving Dynamics of EU-China Relations

Is the thesis in your assessment free of plagiarism?

Yes to my knowledge the thesis is free of plagiarism

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Can the thesis be made publicly available in the Leiden University Repository?

by J.C.Trivino-Salazar: it can be made public throught the repository.

Summary assessment/comments

Strong point: very complete data collection and very well-informed and full of references. The writing style is engaging and convincing.

Weak point: too many ideas that somehow dilutes the overall message. Maybe it was necessary to streamline the part of the story the author wished to focus on.

Criteria

Knowledge and insight

This is a very well-informed and engaging thesis that makes a significant contribution to the understanding of EU's ambivalent position regarding human rights in Hong Kong. The thesis poses two research questions: How has the implementation of the National Security Law in Hong Kong impacted human rights and democratic processes from its enactment in 2020 up to the present (2024)? How has the EU responded to these violations, and what are the implications for EU-China relations? From here, it structures the thesis around the literature on Hong Kong, China and EU-China relations. After this, it offers a theoretical framework composed by several IR theories and make a case for case-selection of Hong Kong, the data collection and data analysis.

As a point for further improvement, the literature overview is complete and well-written but it is too focused on the HK case. This is, it is pretty much centred on contextualizing the case but not so much on exploring what the literature has said about e.g., the emergence of the EU as a normative power, EU's responses to other human rights violations in other parts of the world or how the theories at hand has been used to study this kind of situation. This is, what is the scientific contribution the author wishes to make.

Assessment: very good

Weighing: n/a

Application of knowledge and insight

I would like to praise the author's impressive data collection strategy. The thesis is very well-informed and it has plenty of references that builds from the literature overview and analysis. The outcome is a well-informed thick description of the state of affairs in HK. Also, the writing style is pleasant which makes the reading quite easy.

My main caveat regarding the thesis is that I believe it is overly ambitious. The paper deals with various questions that in my view could have been treated separately. Just the EU position on human rights in China through the HK case makes for one important study, the HK – China relations regarding human rights makes for another thesis, the HK - (transnational) pro-human rights civil society makes for another paper and so on. So, I believe that what I missed was a clearer focus regarding the part of the story the author wishes to centre. Not only that, the author uses different theories: are all of them absolutely necessary? I believe that by clarifying the initial focus of the thesis, this question would have not emerged. Moreover, why using a plethora of data analysis methods? Just by using thematic analysis would have been more than sufficient to make the claims the author makes. When looking at the cases, there is not a clear justification of why they were selected or what are they representative of. Somehow the analysis is informative but fragmented by various incidents under study. By using various sections an important distance among themselves emerge as the analysis does not allow for an in-depth understanding of them.

Assessment: good

Weighing: n/a

Reaching conclusions

It is a part that summarizes the main findings in relation to the theories used. Perhaps, a better connection to the theories used and the contribution could have strengthened this p

Assessment: good

Weighing: n/a

Communication

Excellent use.

Assessment: very good

Weighing: n/a

Formal requirements

Excellent use.

Final assessment

This thesis is graded with a 7.7

Signatures

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Juan Carlos Martínez". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and 'M'.

