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Date: June 13, 2023 (yyyy/mm/dd)

Report on the Final Exam

Name of the Chair: Motohide Saji

On behalf of the Dissertation Examining Committee, I would like to report the result of the Final Exam as follows.

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|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Student ID | 1B9D07 |
| 2. Name | Zayar Lay Swe |
| 3. Cluster | International Relations Cluster |
| 4. Dissertation Examining Committee | Supervisor: Maung Aung Myoe |
| | External Examiner: Jun Honna |
| | Advisor: Motohide Saji |
| | Advisor: Kyohei Yamada |
| 5. Dissertation Title | External Leverage, Linkage, and Political Transition in Myanmar |
| 6. Submission Date | Draft: April 10, 2023 |
| | Final: June 12, 2023 |
| 7. Final Exam Date | May 23, 2023 |
| 8. Faculty Meeting Date | June 19, 2023 |
| 9. Degree Title | Ph.D. in International Relations |
| 10. Result | Pass |

I. Dissertation Overview and Summary of the Presentation

Entitled “External Leverage, Linkage, and Political Transition in Myanmar,” Zayar Lay Swe’s dissertation addresses the main research question “Why did political transition materialize in Myanmar despite low linkage to the West and high linkage to a powerful authoritarian neighbour (PAN) or Black Knight (BK)?”

Using the qualitative research design with a single case-study according to its different time frames, the author argues that the ruling regime engendered the transition in order to lessen its overdependence on China.

To fully answer the main question, the dissertation is composed of eight chapters.

Chapter 1 is an introduction where the author conducts a sufficient amount of literature review, thereby stressing the importance of the main research question.

Chapter 2 meticulously discusses theoretical frameworks and highlights a conceptual contribution the dissertation makes to the existing theoretical literature.

Chapter 3 nicely describes external leverage and linkage that Myanmar experienced in relation to the West and China since 1988.

From Chapter 4 to Chapter 6 the author tries to reveal the organizational capacity of the three regimes in order of time: the SLORC/SPDC regime, the USDP administration, and the NLD administration, because the level of the organizational capacity is a decisive domestic factor to answer the research question.

Chapter 7 addresses the issue of political culture in Myanmar as this is a relevant domestic factor.

Chapter 8 considers the global trend of democracy to argue that it does not have a particularly strong impact on the case of Myanmar.

It is clearly written, nicely organized, and systematically argued.

The author made a clear and concise presentation of the above content using well-crafted slides within 45 minutes. This is an achievement because the dissertation is a very long and meticulously argued one: 250-page long, 1.5 line-spaced with 645 footnotes.

After the presentation, overall, the examination committee members unanimously agreed both that, being a good piece of work, the dissertation well deserves a Pass grade and that the presentation is also a fine one.

II. Notes from the Dissertation Examining Committee (including the changes required to the dissertation by the committee)

There are several suggestions proposed and questions asked by the committee members. Suggestions are mostly about how to be more reader-friendly, chapter by chapter, considering the general reader not familiar with Myanmar issues.

Prof. Honna suggests:

Chap.1 The author could try more to navigate the general reader not familiar to Myanmar issues (e.g., the point of political culture chapter) along with the mapping of the overall literature reviewed. The relation between the main research question and the sub-questions could be more clarified and synchronized.

Chap. 2 Conceptual contribution is not clear for the reader until they have read everything. The author could focus only on conceptual framework and mention contribution in a later chapter.

Chap.3 the author could reduce some pieces that are overlapping and repetitive in later chapters.

Chap.4 The author could provide more information to the general reader about some specific issues such as the growth of intelligence sector and the military.

Chap. 5 For the general reader, the author could explain in more detail why in 2016 the military allowed the transition to democracy.

Chap. 6 What is the untouchable area of the military where the NLD tried to intervene in? What's the acceptable boundary for each, how is it set, how and why it is violated by the NLD, where negotiations are possible between the two? Mentioning these issues could be helpful.

Chap.7 About political "culture", it would be better to be cautious about "culture" possibly inviting unnecessary criticisms. Public "attitude" "perception" "behavior" might be better.

Chap. 8 contains both global trend and the conclusion of the entire thesis. An independent chapter for the conclusion would be desirable, where conceptual contribution can be stated.

Prof. Honna asks questions:

- Why is it possible for the military to keep maintaining its high organizational cohesion after the transition? This seems unique. The author answered it effectively at the exam.
- What are the implications beyond Myanmar, to understand politics in other countries. The author mentions the case of former Soviet Union countries.

Prof. Yamada asks the questions of whether the scope of theory is limited to Myanmar and of whether culture could be separate from linkage and leverage. The author answered these at the exam. Prof. Yamada also asks the author to revise figures and graphs in chapter 7.

Prof. Myoe made comments. Why the military made the transition might be clear enough and how they made it happen is interesting. Political culture is constant. The transition is leader-driven.

Prof. Saji asked the questions of what counts as overdependence and of whether there was no alternative but to make the transition to reduce overdependence on China. The author answered these questions at the exam.

III. Confirmation by the Chair that changes have been done to the satisfaction of the committee

The Chair has confirmed that the author has made revisions to the satisfaction of the committee members.

IV. Overall Evaluation

The committee members unanimously have agreed:

As such, the dissertation is clearly written, nicely organized, sufficiently researched and carefully argued. It well satisfies the quality of what the successful dissertation should be like.