

At the Department of International Studies meeting, held in 2025, the Master Thesis Defense Commission (hereby the Commission) for the candidate Ines Jovanović was formed including the following members: prof. dr. Alexandra Perišić (mentor), prof. dr. Katarina Lončarević and prof. dr. Nemanja Džuverović. The Commission, consisting of members approved by the Council for the Second and Third Cycle of Studies, is responsible for overseeing the defense of the master thesis.

After a review of Ines Jovanović's master thesis, the Commission is submitting the following comprehensive report.

Report

Ines Jovanović's master thesis, titled "Unveiling Power: Gender, Identity, and the Politics of the Hijab in Algeria, 1954–2021", analyzes the hijab as a historically contingent and politically charged symbol across two pivotal periods in Algerian history: the War of Independence (1954–1962) and the Hirak movement (2019–2021). The candidate examines how the hijab functions as a site of power, identity, and agency, challenging reductive binaries of oppression versus liberation and foregrounding women's strategic use of the veil in anti-colonial and contemporary democratic struggles.

The thesis is clearly structured and systematically developed, comprising an Introduction, Literature Review, Theoretical Framework, Methodology, two in-depth Case Studies, Comparative Analysis, and Conclusion. The literature review demonstrates strong familiarity with postcolonial and feminist scholarship, identifying a gap in comparative, cross-period analysis of the Algerian veil that the thesis convincingly addresses.

The theoretical framework productively integrates postcolonial theory (Fanon, Said, Bhabha),

feminist critiques of nationalism, and Islamic feminist thought (Ahmed, Abu-Lughod, Mahmood, Wadud), treating the hijab as a dynamic political signifier situated within broader struggles over representation, agency, and sovereignty. This multi-layered approach is conceptually coherent and appropriately tailored to the research question.

Methodologically, the thesis adopts a qualitative, interpretive, and comparative design. It combines historical analysis of memoirs, testimonies, and films from the independence period with discourse and visual analysis of media, protest imagery, and digital materials from the Hirak movement. The candidate carefully reflects on issues of positionality, voice, and representational limits, and treats sources not as transparent facts but as discursive constructions, which demonstrates methodological maturity and ethical awareness.

The case studies are analytically rich. The first case study shows how colonial power sought to fix the meaning of the veil through unveiling campaigns and propaganda, while Algerian women re-signified veiling and unveiling as tactics of resistance, mobility, and symbolic counter-claim. The second case study traces how, in the Hirak, veiled and unveiled women appropriate public space and digital platforms to articulate democratic demands, transforming the hijab into a marker of civic presence and plural political identities. The comparative analysis effectively draws out both continuities and ruptures between the two periods, arguing that the hijab operates as a “living discourse” through which Algerian women negotiate agency, citizenship, and memory over time.

The thesis is written in clear and precise academic language, with a consistent argumentative line, appropriate citation practice, and a well-structured bibliography. It demonstrates originality, theoretical sophistication, and analytical depth, offering a valuable contribution to scholarship on postcolonial feminism, gender and nationalism, and the politics of symbolism in North Africa.

Following a thorough review, the Commission concludes that Ines Jovanović’s master thesis successfully fulfills all necessary formal and substantive requirements for public defense. The thesis exhibits a high level of academic competence and is fully prepared for presentation to a broader scholarly audience.

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Belgrade,
September 2025