



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Nikola Skladanová

Title: Violent Non-State Actors: The Case of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

Programme/year: Mezinárodní vztahy (International Relations)/2019

Author of Evaluation (external assessor): Jan Daniel

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	6
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	22
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	33
<i>Total</i>		80	61
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	10
	Style	5	5
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	20
TOTAL		100	81



Evaluation

Major criteria:

The thesis seeks to analyse the case of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) by using selected theories and conceptualizations of violent non-state actors (VNSAs). The empirical analysis is of excellent quality and I also appreciate the number and range of sources that the author consulted.

Unfortunately, the thesis suffers from significant shortcomings in the theoretical (or rather conceptual) part and in the overall research design. First of all, even though the thesis is supposed to provide a case study of particular VNSA, it is not clear what purpose the case study serves as it is not linked to any specific argument and the research questions are focused only on the particular case of AQAP.

The author proves her good grasp of the literature on VNSAs, however the literature review often merely lists different studies without critically evaluating them and using them to construct a specific novel argument. More detailed review of previous research on AQAP is missing as well, so the reader is left wondering what gap in the current knowledge the thesis aims to fill. The analytical framework used by the thesis to dissect the actorness of AQAP is then only very loosely related to the theoretical overview and the thesis does not properly explain why it was chosen over its alternatives, how does it contribute to our better understanding of the group and if it serves any role beyond providing a structure for the empirical analysis.

Moreover, the author does not link her findings (and the case study as such) back to the theoretical and conceptual discussions. While the thesis does a great job in analysis of the inner-working of AQAP, its development and its role in south Yemeni politics and society, it does not take these valuable insights further and it does not contribute to the theoretical discussions on VNSAs. Given the lacking literature review of previous studies on AQAP, it is also difficult to say what is the thesis' specific novel contribution to our understanding of this particular organization.

Minor criteria:

I don't have any comments regarding the style or formatting of the thesis. The range and number of consulted sources is more than sufficient.

Overall evaluation:

The thesis excels in its empirical part and the author proved her analytical skills as well as her deep knowledge of AQAP and (south) Yemeni context. Unfortunately, the theoretical part of the thesis and its research design are slightly underdeveloped, and they do not enable the author to provide a novel contribution to the theory or even a refinement of the concept of violent non-state actors.



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Suggested grade: B

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Dana", written on a light-colored background.