



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Selynn Yan Ting Lim

Title: Indonesia: Hotbed for Terrorist Activities?

Programme/year: ISS – 2019

Author of Evaluation (supervisor): Emil Aslan

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	5
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	20
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	20
<i>Total</i>		80	45
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	10
	Style	5	5
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	20
TOTAL		100	65

Evaluation



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Major criteria: The author comes up with a RQ that is too plain to give a targeted answer to the complex questions raised in the thesis. To an extent, this is a result of the author struggling to put together a usable theoretical lens to guide her work, something that would, on the one hand, be narrow and facile enough to allow for the doable analysis of the nuanced empirical material, while, on the other hand, making the task of organizing the empirical material possible. What we do have is a certain disconnect between the straightforward RQ – and the extremely complex empirical data, with its multiple overtones. And while Gurr's basic concept of relative deprivation is facile enough to elucidate any form of conflict (in fact, there are rarely any situations of human life, let alone with conflicting interests and actors, in which relative deprivation is missing – anything is relative deprivation, and anything can be related to this concept), it adds little to our understanding of the multi-layered phenomena outlined in the thesis. Here is where I see the major problem of the thesis: while the author has displayed, understandably, interest in grand topics, which Indonesia's situation with regard to jihadi terrorist groups and their backgrounds certainly is, there is barely any simple concept that could shed light on it in a meaningful way. To actually come up with an interesting finding, the author has to choose a narrow topic – and go in-depth, instead of dealing with grand phenomena. The latter inevitably implicates a loosened focus as the presence of multiple variables makes an theoretically-informed analysis impossible. At the end, the author end up with an amalgam of (usually analytically-unrelated) topics, approaches, concepts, all of which make the work disconnected from the RQ and highly descriptive.

Minor criteria:

The author illustrates detailed empirical knowledge of the researched phenomena.

Overall evaluation:

An ambitious goal, relatively poor outcome concept and theory-wise. While the choice of topic is responsible for the final result (and this is the narrowest one out of half-dozen or so topics suggested by the author which I OK'ed!), I still applaud the author's analytical skills in putting together a strong empirical material. She makes a strong case, using an abundance of data, some of them of local origin. The author's courage and ambition is immense, yet I still encourage her to be focusing, in the future, on more modest and less all-encompassing topics, while diving in-depth analytically.



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Suggested grade: D

Signature: Emil Aslan