Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Jakob J. Gilg

Title: **Local Self-Defence Militias as Counterinsurgents: The Possibility, Willingness and Rationality of Selective Violence against Insurgents**

Programme/year: Master in International Security Studies, 2019

Author of Evaluation (supervisor): Tomáš Karásek

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	**9**
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	**28**
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	**38**
Total		*80*	*75*
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	**10**
	Style	5	**5**
	Formal requirements	5	**5**
Total		*20*	*20*
TOTAL		*100*	*95*

Evaluation

Major criteria:

The author put together a strong, convincing and meticulously crafted thesis. Among other features, it demonstrates that a proper conceptual framework can effectively replace a theoretical anchoring. By diligently combining scholarship on civil wars and (counter)insurgencies, the author ably navigates the conceptual terrain towards his own category of Local Self-Defence Militias (LSDMs), with a clearly stated twin question: are these militias less indiscriminately violent than their more mobile (or, less territorially grounded) *doppelgängers*, and is more selective violence to be expected when the LSDMs are employed by the governments of their states?

While the statistical relevance of the authors findings may be limited (mostly due to a small *n* of cases), they do support his original hypothesis. What is more, the hypothesis is clearly corroborated already by the thorough literature review and the illustrative case employed earlier in the thesis. Most importantly, the thesis works nicely as a unified whole, bound from start to finish with a clear research intent, astute conceptual insight, proper methodology and analytical acumen.

Rather than critical remarks, I would like to pose the author two questions: First, based on the cases which he came across during the research on the topic, how strong does he consider the repeated claim that less (or at least more discriminate) violence equals more successful counterinsurgency? And second, is it possible that the more selective violence used by LSDMs is connected not just to the aspects he describes, but also to their material limits ("fewer guns, less violence", to put in in a phrase)?

Minor criteria:

No critical remarks here – it is rare to read a thesis so well presented in its formal requirements.

Overall evaluation:

A strong, confident thesis in practically all of its aspects. It might be worth trying to publish the results of the analysis.

Suggested grade: **A**

Signature:

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