



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Bc. Jana Truchlá

Title: 'Processes of radicalisation: Foreign fighters from Western Europe who fought for Islamic State'

Programme/year: Political Science (N6701) / 2021

Author of Evaluation (external assessor): Mgr. Nikolena Hristova

| Criteria | Definition | Maximum | Points |
|-----------------------|---|-------------------|------------------|
| Major Criteria | | | |
| | Research question, definition of objectives | 10 | 8 |
| | Theoretical/ conceptual framework | 30 | 23 |
| | Methodology, analysis, argument | 40 | 32 |
| <i>Total</i> | | <i>80</i> | <i>63</i> |
| Minor Criteria | | | |
| | Sources | 10 | 10 |
| | Style | 5 | 4 |
| | Formal requirements | 5 | 4 |
| <i>Total</i> | | <i>20</i> | <i>18</i> |
| TOTAL | | <i>100</i> | <i>81</i> |



Evaluation

Major criteria:

Research question / Definitions of objectives

This dissertation is built on an extensive literature review, which manages to cover a large amount of radicalisation research. The thesis aims to measure the impact of factors contributing to radicalisation, and to test whether behavioural or cognitive radicalisation is more relevant to three case studies. To do so, it analyses instances of foreign fighters in Belgium, France, and the United Kingdom. The main research question is set as: 'What were the principal factors affecting the number of radicalised foreign fighters from the UK, France, and Belgium who fought for the Islamic State during 2014-2019?'. Yet, the analytical angle of the work could have been further narrowed down, and better defended. More precisely, apart from mentioning that the UK, Belgium and France share commonalities in the amount of foreign fighters, this comparative analysis does not specify which research gaps it intends to fill. This crucial drawback becomes evident when we note that there is a significant amount of already existing scholar engagement with radicalisation research in these respective countries. Similarly, a justification for the time-frame of this research, which is set to fall between 2014 and 2019, also appears to be absent from the analysis.

Theoretical Framework / Methodology:

The student engages with a substantial amount of theories, whose main findings have later been rephrased into working hypotheses. The hypotheses of these existing theories are then analysed based on a poorly justified comparative criteria, which mainly describes the radicalisation climate in the respective countries. The 1) Social movement theory and social network theory 2) Socio-psychological and psychological approaches and 3) Conversion theory, paired up with the PET and NYPD model of radicalisation, are used to assess 'which one of the behaviour or cognitive methods appear to be more explanatory in the three distinct cases.

The criteria for the actual comparison were to be better specified and empirically fulfilled. Although the empirical part has been built on a detailed literature review, it is, at times, fairly descriptive, repetitive and it contains very limited attempts to feedback the findings into the theory part.



The lack of a strong overall theoretical framework, comprehensive analysis and the absence of the student's own critical input, penalise the analysis and limit the result of the comparative exercise.

Minor criteria:

At the formal level, the dissertation does well in relying on a wide range of relevant sources. It also illustrates crucial information by organising it into tables and figures. Some minor grammatical mistakes and inaccuracies of expression are present. The thought organisation and flow or argumentation, can remain obscure due to the sentence construction. Most importantly, the three case studies are not analysed comprehensively. This leads to structural repetitions, which could have been prevented, had the comparative angle of this work been polished.

Overall evaluation:

Overall, this thesis serves to justify the student's great abilities to engage with vast amounts of research material. The student shows a fair understanding of the topic, and makes a good effort to showcase the complexity of the task at hand. However, exactly this great engagement with existing scholarly publications prevents the student from voicing their own critical opinion. Many intriguing points remain superficially mentioned through statistics, such as the personal motives of perpetrators, the complex involvement of families, and the role of identity, altruism, kinship, heroism, etc. A more worrisome trend is the pairing of Muslims and foreign fighters, which discusses Muslims, and 'host societies', while neglecting other crucial analytic elements. In the case of the UK, there are mentions of stigmatisation and integration failure for Muslims. Yet, the PREVENT UK strategy, surveillance projects, discourses about 'risk society' have not been included. In the case of France, there is no in-depth analysis of colonial legacies, assimilation policies, nor the ban to wear ostentatious religious signs. These are the main problems, which relate to an otherwise interesting and promising work.

Suggested grade: **B2 (Very good lower)**

Signature: Mgr. Nikolena Hristova