



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Tobias Erik Stefan Herrmann

Title: Two Sides of the Same Coin? A Comparative Analysis of Right-Wing Extremists and Jihadists

Programme/year: MISS 2021

Author of Evaluation (supervisor): Mgr. Markéta Kocmanová

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	10
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	26
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	20
<i>Total</i>		<i>80</i>	56
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	10
	Style	5	5
	Formal requirements	5	3
<i>Total</i>		<i>20</i>	18
TOTAL		100	74



Evaluation

Major criteria:

Tobias's Master's Thesis *Two Sides of the Same Coin? A Comparative Analysis of Right-Wing Extremists and Jihadists* seeks to examine radicalization pathways of two ideologically divergent extremists. He attempts to map the radicalization process of a German Jihadist Denis Cuspert and a Norwegian far-right terrorist Anders Breivik for potential similarities in causal factors leading to their radicalization at different levels of analysis. After the boom of Salafi-Jihadist inspired radicalization literature, recent scholarly findings in fact demonstrate that the differences in religiously-motivated political violence and that of the far-right leaning do share numerous commonalities, for example psychosocial dynamic at the micro level of the radicalization process and certain revisionist tendencies at the societal macro level. Thus, Tobias's intention seems commendable, especially with respect to better understanding of seemingly different outcomes of radicalization processes that should be considered by both academics and practitioners in the area of (countering) violent extremism.

The greatest asset of the work lies in very solid theoretical foundations secured by Veldhuis and Staun's Root Cause Model of Radicalization that enable to analyse the pathways within established sets of causal factors at the micro level (individual and social) and at the macro level. Furthermore, Tobias was able to critically assess the terminological nuances surrounding religiously-motivated extremism of Salafi-Jihadism and grasp the conceptual essence of right-wing extremism sufficient to meet the objectives of his work.

The empirical analysis then benefits from well devised theoretical framework that enables to focus the data clearly, but tends to be rather descriptive throughout the whole empirical section even though there are some valuable empirical observations made and successfully framed by the theory. The weakest part is definitely the conclusion, I would imagine an additional analytical chapter that would summarize the comparative findings and/or apply the technique of process tracing. This would be desirable to achieve the necessary analytical depth of the text as the conclusion the way it is presented seems to provide a pure comparative summary.



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As for the methodology, the intended comparison of the two cases is generally successfully accomplished and efficient when it capitalizes mainly on a carefully designed analytical framework rooted in Veldhuis and Staun's radicalization model. However, the author seems to have abandoned his plan for an application of process tracing to the empirical base. Although it can be implicitly assumed from the thesis structure, the establishment of the necessary causal link against the temporal perspective is lacking in both radicalization pathways. Thus, explicit causal explanation, i.e. how the cause brings about the effect, of potential convergence or divergence of radicalization pathways of a right-wing extremist v Jihadist is missing in the conclusion. Another major lapse can be attributed to the confusion between operationalization, inherent in quantitative methods, and the process of conceptualization that is actually in effect in this piece of qualitative research.

Minor criteria:

The structure is clear and coherent, even the conceptualization performed within particular empirical chapters does carry certain logic as due to the complexity of processes, it proves more apt to deal with these specific conceptual categories always at the beginning of each analytical (sub)chapter. The overall highly sophisticated academic writing suffers, in parts, from occasional typos, minor grammatical mistakes, and textual inconsistencies. Furthermore, the chapter formatting does not follow the required faculty standards. The work is not affected by any plagiarism issues.

Overall evaluation:

In sum, Tobias's Master's Thesis can be certainly recommended for defence. It proves student's intimate familiarity with a very complex area of radicalization studies, his ability to work with large amounts of empirical data and sort them into analytically coherent categories. The setback represented by partially unsuccessful application of a rather complex and sophisticated methodological approach cannot undermine the sincere and worthwhile effort Tobias invested in his work.



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Suggested grade:

C

Signature:

Kormannová