



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Nayan Anand

Title: Jihadisation of Insurgencies (A Corollary of Civil Wars?)

Programme/year: MAIN

Author of Evaluation: Dr. Ondrej Ditrych (Reviewer)

Criteria	Definition	Max.	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	7
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	25
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	25
<i>Total</i>		80	57
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	7
	Style	5	5
	Formal requirements	5	3
<i>Total</i>		20	15
TOTAL		100	72



Evaluation

Major criteria:

The thesis seeks to explore the processes of “jihadisation” of (secular) insurgencies in civil wars. It provides a theoretical discussion followed by two case studies, of Afghanistan and Syria civil wars. The subject matter is clearly relevant, the design is generally sound, and the author has managed to collect and present, in an organised manner, a sufficient amount of empirical material related to both cases.

That said, the thesis includes only a somewhat underdeveloped theoretical and methodological framework. No causal mechanisms that are foreseen are presented. (Later, the author speaks instead of causal *inferences*.) The thesis defines a set of factors that are proposed to influence jihadisation – resource support, foreign fighters’ influx, increase in religiosity during war, grievances that are unaddressed by weak states, intrainsurgency competition and an expected rise in motivation of insurgency members. However, not only is jihadisation not clearly defined – does it entail e.g. embrace of some fundamental social values into the political project of the insurgency, with clear cultural references? –, it is also not made apparent why these factors (somewhat imprecisely yet continually described as *mechanisms*) were actually chosen, and how this choice was informed at a theoretical level. There is a very limited discussion of methodology in which it is suggested that the thesis would consist of a comparative case study. Yet no criteria for comparison are proposed. It is also debatable to what extent the presence of foreign fighters may in *general* be seen as a cause of import of certain values (“jihadisation”), or, as the author argues *specifically*, “the influx of foreign fighters changed the entire course of religion in the Chechen area” (p. 24). (According to e.g. David Malet, in the past two hundred years foreign fighters fought in more than 70 insurgencies, most of them secular and motivated by national selfdetermination. The composition of foreign fighters who arrived to Syria during the civil war has actually been rather varied, as has the roles they have performed for the many groups they aligned with.)



I would also take issues with some claims made in the empirical section of the thesis, e.g. that insurgencies in Afghanistan “found themselves attracted to the idea of global jihad, preached by organisations such as the Al-Qaeda and the ISIS” (p. 33). While I would agree that in the competition for resources some rebels have embraced the ideology of these movements and have aligned with them – to the point e.g. of declaring ISIS-K –, this can hardly be argued to be a defining characteristic of Taliban, for example. The same reservation applies, in fact, to foreign fighters. Their role starting as *mujahideen* in the 1980s in the dynamic of the war is beyond dispute, but not necessarily as importers of the values later defining AQ and ISIS’ global political utopias.) In the end, the thesis strives to apply the defined factors on both cases without reservation and significant differentiation, either internal or mutual, and does so with a varying success.

Minor criteria:

The argument is generally clear and coherent. yet relies on a limited number of relevant sources, includes unnecessary direct quotes at times and does not maintain a consistent referencing standard.

Overall evaluation:

The thesis treats a relevant subject matter and does so in an overall disciplined and cogent manner. However, its potential is somewhat limited by underdeveloped theoretical and methodological framework.

Suggested grade: C



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Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anatoly D. J.', written over a horizontal line.