



## Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Arnima Singh

Title: **Can Terrorism be Morally Justified? An Ethical Inquiry into the Moral Justifications for Terrorism**

Programme/year: MAIN/2022

Author of Evaluation (supervisor/second reader): Dr. Ondrej Ditrych

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
<b>Major Criteria</b>			
	Research question, definition of objectives	<b>10</b>	8
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	<b>30</b>	20
	Methodology, analysis, argument	<b>40</b>	15
<i>Total</i>		<b>80</b>	43
<b>Minor Criteria</b>			
	Sources	<b>10</b>	6
	Style	<b>5</b>	3
	Formal requirements	<b>5</b>	3
<i>Total</i>		<b>20</b>	12
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>	55



## Evaluation

### Major criteria:

The thesis seeks to provide an ethical investigation to a provocative question whether terrorism can (ever) be justified, and if so, under what terms and conditions. It does so from the standpoint of sidelining the situational perspective of claiming that terrorism is a form of violence always condemned for being conducted by a morally reprehensible Other – instead looking at it as a form of political violence which is indeed morally reprehensible but which from the perspective of certain theories of justification of violence may *possibly* be legitimate. The author also points to the fact that terrorist acts are often justified by the perpetrators themselves in (dubious) ethical terms, thus underlining the importance of ethical interrogations into the subject matter.

Unfortunately, the thesis struggles to meet this objective due to issues with the coherence and logical development of the argument. The kind of inquiry put forward by the author does not require a use of social science methodological toolbox. Yet the argument should be disciplined, *au point*, logical, coherent and built up from general to the particular. While the author should be commended for making attempts at revisions following feedback on elements of the thesis in the writing process, the thesis struggles to meet these criteria.

More particularly, the introduction includes a good thesis statement which however is made unclear by the end of the chapter – e.g. no precise ethical theories that would be used as lens to explore possible justifications are mentioned. The argument then does not properly discriminate between the theories' presentation and their application on the subject matter. The author makes a problematic claim that the thesis does not need to be concerned with the issue of the definition of terrorism – as something that is to be justified – instead claiming later on that ethical theories can 'circumvent' the issue. I suggest that she is asked during her defence to explain this move in more detail.



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Limited resources are used to make general statements both here and in the following chapters, with the argument lacking the clarity and exactness expected in this kind of investigation, instead bordering on convoluted at times. (For example, the distinction between moral and ethical is first discarded then invoked in the conclusion as important.) In the chapter on just war theory, it is not immediately clear what Walzer's position is, nor to how the claims presented here feed into the earlier exposition of different ethical theories. The key chapter on justification of terrorism seeks to focus on the (central) issue on what it means to engage in indiscriminate killing of *innocent civilians*, suggesting in a cursory way the controversial character of these concepts, but does not engage with this issue in more detail.

**Minor criteria:**

The thesis is written in a way that makes it difficult to understand the argument at times. No common citation standard, including all necessary information, is used, and referencing is rather sparse. The structure of the argument lacks a clear line, proceeding from the general to the particular (or *vice versa*).

**Assessment of plagiarism:**

No plagiarism detected.



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**Overall evaluation:**

The thesis engages in an intellectually interesting domain of justifications of political violence, including that which from particular moral standpoints is condemned a priori due to the politically loaded term terrorism. The author makes a good case for such interrogation, which however does not meet its potential due to the way in which the argument is developed.

**Suggested grade: E**

**Signature:**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ondřej D. A.', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.