



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Daniel Dvořák

Title: Beneficial or Detrimental Relationship? The Case of State-Sponsored Terrorism and the Identity of Violent Non-State Actors

Programme/year: ISSA 2022/2023

Author of Evaluation (second reader): Jonathan Collins

| Criteria | Definition | Maximum | Points |
|-----------------------|---|------------|-----------|
| Major Criteria | | | |
| | Research question, definition of objectives | 10 | 9 |
| | Theoretical/conceptual framework | 30 | 26 |
| | Methodology, analysis, argument | 40 | 32 |
| Total | | 80 | 67 |
| Minor Criteria | | | |
| | Sources | 10 | 10 |
| | Style | 5 | 4 |
| | Formal requirements | 5 | 4 |
| Total | | 20 | 18 |
| TOTAL | | 100 | 85 |



Evaluation

Major criteria: The author conducts a fascinating study looking at the relationship between the benefactor (Iran) and its non-state violent actor proxies (Hamas and Hezbollah), with identity discrepancies as the foundational basis of the work. The thesis is guided by the question: “How do identities of Hezbollah and Hamas clash with the goals of Iran, considering Iran’s role in sponsoring these groups within the framework of proxy warfare in the Middle East?” which is broken into two different examinable pieces/empirical sections.

The literature review offers a cacophony of information and well-placed sources, effectively defining the author’s position for the thesis and setting up the different theoretical and conceptual components. Namely, the change to our intersubjective understanding of non-state actor identity through a refined constructivist approach bodes well for the study’s future analyses. Moreover, Figure 1. (Pg 14) offers an interesting (albeit not entirely clear) picture of the studied relationships. However, the most prominent criticism in this section is the definition of identity. Wendt’s identity construction works well when understanding states and their goals – which the author offers as a surface-level description between Self and Other – but it only scratches the surface when we examine other actors (including non-state groups/movements). The main critique would be that some of the outlined components of the concept (goals, ideology), which predominantly feature in the analysis, miss the mark and are not appropriately defined on Pg 11. To remedy this apprehension, I would ask some possible questions in the defence: how does the author conceptualize identity in this context? How do goals and ideologies relate to identity? Overall, a more extended definition of identity – with the author’s different outlined components – and how it is used would have aided the work.

Again, the analysis packs a good amount of research and attention paid to the two main research questions of the study. The main critique of this section relates to the methodology. Although described very briefly, critical discourse analysis is not the primary mode of analysis. Yes, there are some fantastic usages of discourse analysis (see the breakdown of Hamas’ ideologies and goals Pg 30 – 32 or on Hezbollah’s interest shift Pg 39 – 41), but most of the study offers itself as an interesting secondary-source analysis/literature review. This method works well for the given circumstances as the author is admittedly not proficient in the case studies’ languages. Ultimately, the mixed method walks the line between being simply descriptive (secondary source review) and analytical (discourse).



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My final want for the thesis is to have a discussion section to connect all the results to the existing literature and explain why the findings offered something new to the research community. Although a summary of the results is included within the conclusion, it does little to make those much-needed connections on the work's explicit importance for the field and the other literature on the topic. A greater focus on relevancy would have taken the work over-the-top.

Minor criteria:

There are many sections within the analysis, and overall, there is lots of fascinating information to unpack. The work is written at a very high level, with only a couple of writing/citation issues. The literature review especially needs some acclaim, as it is expertly done. Moreover, due to the nature of the method, the number of sources is exceptional and makes evident the amount of effort put in.

Assessment of plagiarism: Work is cited appropriately with no obvious issues.

Overall evaluation:

The author conducts a fascinating thesis on the relationship between benefactors and non-state violent actors (terrorist organizations in this case) in proxy wars. In attempting to outline whether these relationships are beneficial or detrimental, it offers a novel way to unpack the phenomena and some interesting insights into the 'hows' and 'whys' of Iran's cooperation with Hamas and Hezbollah. However, some factors are holding it back, including the definition of identity and its empirical application, the short methods section and whether CDA or DA are the main/only tools of analysis, and a missing discussion section to connect all the results and underline their relevance. Barring these details, this well-done thesis offers an exciting and novel approach to the academic community, which should be explored further.

Suggested grade: B

Signature: