

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

GPS – Geopolitical Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Title of the thesis:	Chechnya as Russia's Dangerous Frontier: On the Nature of Suicide Terrorism
Author of the thesis:	Karyna Loginova
Referee (incl. titles):	PhDr. Ondřej Ditrych, MPhil. Ph.D.

SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED (for details, see below):

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20)</i>	5
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	10
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	5
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	10
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	15
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)	45
The proposed grade (1-2-3-4)	3-4

Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the 5 numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).

1) Theoretical background:

The thesis claims to be testing Robert Pape's "theory" of suicide terrorism on the case study of the conflict in Chechnya. However, Pape's theory is not articulated in terms of testable hypotheses on motives of suicide terrorism, the thesis' subject matter. The author therefore comes with her own hypotheses, only the first of which is related 1) to the research question, *what are the main motives and reasons of Chechnya to use suicide bombing against Russia*, which in itself is problematic (what is "Chechnya"?), but 2) only in the way of including *all* Pape's *indicators* that suicide terrorism campaign be launched in a conflict (except for the indicator of democratic regime, the absence of which is not explained in any way), rather than *motives*. These (all part of the overloaded first hypothesis) are to be tested competitively, but in the end only an argument is consistently made, but unsupported by substantial evidence, that foreign occupation and nationalism are more important motives than (obvious) religious difference, which is rearticulated later as religious ideology. It remains unexplained how the motive of "nationalism" was measured and why the scale 1-10 was introduced. The thesis promises to test Pape's "theory", but does not make clear how its application onto a single case should expand our knowledge about suicide terrorism. The second hypothesis about targeted public areas seems truistic; however, somewhat surprisingly, because of a particular but inexplicable operationalisation (distance from Grozny, a criterion established on the basis of "theory of gravitation") it is actually rendered false in the thesis' conclusion.

The extensive "literature review" is superfluous since the matters covered here are either unrelated to the thesis' subject (security, sovereignty) or at least are not in any way related to in the course of the argument (*jihad*). Parts of this "review" – which is unsufficiently referenced – such as those discussing the concept of securitisation ("crucial for the purpose of the thesis" but not at all used later), give impression of having been written for an entirely different purpose. The "review" introduces an interesting subject of politics of horror and ("gothic") fear, but again, it is not convincingly related to the thesis' objectives and the argument, while having a certain theoretical ambition, is rather convoluted as demonstrated by sentences such as "the powers of horror are closely related to the concept of contemporary punishment, mostly because power in this regard operates not only under what is has been seen, known or displayed" (p. 22). When suicide terrorism

is finally introduced, little about its origin is said (despite the section title), later inclusion of Japanese *kamikaze* does not seem very helpful in the terrorism context, and the attempts at general, nomothetic statements about suicide terrorism are not substantiated or partial (e.g. psychological effects of suicide terrorism on target audiences may plausibly be argued, but entirely neglected is the problematique of psychological effects on perpetrators that requires a certain level of radicalisation/determination, accounts for failure in a number of cases etc.). When discussing *jihad*, the author does not make clear e.g. how alienating the local population is directly related to the failure of the securitisation process (p. 33); although the link between securitisation within the *Umma* and popularity of *jihadist* ideology is interesting yet undeveloped.

2) Contribution:

The thesis' contribution is limited in particular due to poor methodology, long superfluous passages and convoluted and unstructured argument. A number of conclusions – e.g. that “many Chechens support the idea that apart from terrorist attacks, they do not have any other rational way of solving the conflict with Russia” (p. 47) – are made without the use of any method and even without references to secondary literature.

That said, the thesis includes several stronger passages, namely the descriptive narratives of the first and second Chechen war, which are competently done with the use of solid references.

3) Methods:

No real testing of hypothetical relations between independent and dependent variables is done in the thesis, and generalisations, e.g. about the relationship between foreign occupation and suicide attacks (p. 83) are unsupported by the author's research. The “empirical study” restates earlier arguments and provides some more solid, some more dubious interpretation of secondary data (e.g. why is Dubrovka assumed to have no relation to foreign occupation while some other attacks do?). The thesis demonstrates confusion not only about the nature of the quantitative method, but the scientific method in general. The problem, in the end, is not whether its conclusions are true (I would concur with many of them) but how their truthfulness has (or has not) been established.

4) Literature:

The apparatus of sources on suicide terrorism and on the case study could be more extensive. Referencing is sometimes insufficient, and sometimes the author relies on journalistic accounts instead of academic literature.

5) Manuscript form:

The thesis is not formatted with care, and the argument is not very logical and structured. As noted above, the “literature review” is not a literature review but rather a compilation of observations that amounts to 1/3 of the thesis' content.

DATE OF EVALUATION: 23.1.2017

Referee Signature