

## REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

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

<b>Title of the thesis:</b>	<b>Chechnya as Russia's dangerous frontier: On the Nature of Suicide Terrorism</b>
<b>Author of the thesis:</b>	<b>Karyna Loginova</b>
<b>Referee (<i>incl. titles</i>):</b>	<b>PhDr. Irena Valková, Ph.D.</b>

**Remark:** It is a standard at the FSV UK that the Referee's Report is at least 500 words long. In case you will assess the thesis as "non-defendable", please explain the concrete reasons for that in detail.

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

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20)</i>	12
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	10
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	10
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	15
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	15
<b>TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>The proposed grade (1-2-3-4)</b>	<b>2</b>

You can even use a decimal point (e.g. giving the grade of 2.5 for 60 points).

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

#### **1) Theoretical background:**

This research focuses on the driving forces of suicide terrorism in the Republic of Chechnya as part of a wider research on contemporary terrorism. After presenting all major motives of using suicide bombing the author tests Robert Pape's approach on the Chechen case by defining a suicide attack as a dependent variable and foreign occupation, religion, nationalism, geographical location as independent variables. By doing so, she attempts to explain which of these factors proved to be important in the Chechen case, how the implementation of suicide bombing affects the Russian-Chechen relations and how Russian Policy changes towards Chechnya after the suicide attacks.

The main aim of the analysis is to extend the already existing analysis over a new geographic region. The decision to work with Robert Pape's approach has both positive and negative analytical implications. On the one hand, it provides a preliminary framework for understanding the generalized patterns in, and lists several specific factors leading to, global suicidal terrorism. On the other hand, it has serious weaknesses in terms of hypothesis testing not allowing the one to consider it a "theory". Despite a relatively heavy criticism of R. Pape's concept, the author demonstrates that she is aware of its major analytical weaknesses (by explaining them in detail on pp. 36-39). What is missing is the explanation of the connection between the first and the second testable hypotheses and suggestion of the ways of controlling for analytical weaknesses in the final part of the work.

#### **2) Contribution:**

The thesis offers a unique interpretative perspective of an important and widely discussed issue – suicide terrorism. The choice of case study is logical and analytically successful: missing from the original analysis of R. Pape, terrorism in the Chechen Republic is not a too old issue to be irrelevant to the study of contemporary international relations, but it is old enough for a solid number of secondary analyses to be available for this type of research.

Although the work does not bring new hard data on the nature of terrorism in the selected case resulting from formal hypothesis testing, it does provide a detailed description and compilation of facts related to (a) generalized characteristics of global suicide terrorism and (b) suicide terrorism

specifics as observed in the course of the so-called Chechen wars, based on the analysis of an impressive number of secondary sources.

### **3) Methods:**

Methodologically, the work attempts to emulate R. Pape's analysis to extend the latter on the Chechen case. Two testable hypotheses are stated in the introductory part of the manuscript (p. 11), but their wording contains no reference to the process of verification (which is described on pp. 43-44). The process of verification is rather vague and could have been configured and described in a more detailed and formal manner (e.g., the scientific justification for (de)coding of the study variables). Although the topic is described in detail, the work does make some trivial detours off the main body stated in the introductory part. Given the current level of analytical formalization, it is more appropriate to consider this analysis to have an interpretative, rather than explanatory, nature and, therefore, to work with research questions instead of hypotheses.

### **4) Literature:**

The thesis demonstrates author's understanding and command of recent literature and the work disposes with a representative bibliography that includes several books published by prestigious publishers (Routledge, Cambridge University Press, etc.) and articles in renowned journals (Terrorism and Political Violence, Civil Wars, etc.).

### **5) Manuscript form:**

The overall structure of the work is logical: it starts with the wider phenomenon of suicide terrorism and then focuses on its specifics in the particular geographic region. The main idea is clear. However, the work needs language and style correction as some passages are not easily readable (e.g., "There will be one theory used in the study in order to test Robert Pape's theory (2005)" – p. 43).

**DATE OF EVALUATION:**

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**Referee Signature**