



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

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Title: Islamic State Narrative on Internet: A French Sociology and Social Network Theory Approach Understanding the Propaganda

Programme/year: MISS (2016)

Author of Evaluation (external assessor): Dr. Ondrej Ditrych

Criteria	Definition	Maximm	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	5
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	10
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	20
<i>Total</i>		80	35
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	10
	Style	5	5
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	20
TOTAL		100	55



Evaluation

Major criteria:

The present thesis aims to compare Salafi jihadist propaganda to causes of radicalisation as identified by the french sociology school of radicalisation and the social movement / network perspectives. It sets several research questions, inquiring whether there is a systematic correlation between sociological issues leading to radicalisation in propaganda narratives (RQ1), whether it is the narrative directed to Western-specific audiences (RQ2), whether it is “powerful” enough to radicalise individuals (RQ3) and finally, whether virtual network social ties can be regarded as equal to real world interactions (RQ4). Due to flaws in the research design, ultimately it only succeeds in substantively answering RQ1. In the first theoretical chapter, it summarises the main perspectives in radicalisation theory as surveyed by Dalgaard-Nielsen (2010). Not only does this chapter not lead to any research protocol that would structure the empirical research conducted later; it comes on the verge of plagiarism as it consists, by and large, of an extended paraphrase of the Daalgaard-Nielsen’s article (maintaining even her argument’s structure). The protocol is not established in the next theoretical chapter dedicated to summarising expert knowledge about internet radicalisation either. While bringing together a number of perspectives, the author here argues, problematically, that the subject of online radicalisation and recruitment is neglected in the academia – a claim defied by her own *exposé* as well as by references to some of the authors she herself engages, e.g. Sageman (2008). The next chapter seeks to answer RQ2, which it does, unconvincingly, only by means of pointing out poor English language proficiency in the MENA.



It is followed by a chapter on propaganda channels which contains the thrust of the author's empirical analysis. The thesis suggests to compare three channels specifically: al-Awlaki's discourse, the Dabiq magazine and "social media". It does not make any more clear what the archives of documentation submitted to analysis will be, however. (The methodological section in the beginning, which is moreover rather fragmented – the thesis includes several parts *before* introduction – contains no statement on methodology, while in the conclusion the author casually informs the reader that in the course of the research the methodology had to be changed since there were no established methods of measurement the efficiency of online propanda in the radicalisation process. The occasional references to otherwise undetailed "survey in my social network" moreover do not testify to a solid command of methodology.) In the end, however, the reading provides some analytical insight structured along categories of alienation/humiliation, grievances and coolness – appearing as (albeit problematic) "summary of the theories" in the first theoretical chapter – which are consolidated and presented in a form of table. These findings are then reiterated in the conclusion, which otherwise contains several unwarranted (and moreover unrealistic) policy recommendations as well as an emphatic call – related to a tendendiously posed RQ4 – not to neglect the need to comprehend the modern lifestyle of millenials.

Minor criteria:

The amount of sources used in the thesis is sufficient. Not all references are included in the bibliography, however (Callimachi, Nissen), some references are circumvential (e.g. Nesser's typology of cell members), and some passages (e.g. Hegghammer's criticism of Weimann) are not referenced adequately. In terms of writing and style, the thesis is satisfactory.

Overall evaluation: The thesis sets ambitious objectives which it does not realize due to poor research design. The lack of discipline in conducting the research and presenting its outcomes prevents the realization of the project's potential.

Suggested grade: Good.



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Signature: