

## REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

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

<b>Title of the thesis:</b>	Intelligence communities vs. counterterrorism
<b>Author of the thesis:</b>	<b>Claire Bouchard</b>
<b>Referee (incl. titles):</b>	<b>RNDR. Jan Kofroň, 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>	17
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	10
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	9
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	17
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	16
<b>TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)</b>	<b>D</b>

### **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 is rather dealing with concepts and theory (in its proper meaning) is built in the work. The institutional theory prepared by the author is rooted in rational choice theory, which is a logical starting point (if not necessarily empirically valid). As a reader I would appreciate more elaborated discussion of the logic of the theory. It seems to me that while there is a discernible logic behind the theory (2 interacting independent variables and the dependent variable) an unsympathetic reader could raise many questions asking "why do you expect this or that effect".

**2) Contribution:** My general perception is that the thesis struggles to deliver clear contribution. Firstly, the topic is extremely complicated because of the lack of primary sources and thus even secondary literature dealing with the subject is limited. Thus quite often one has to bet on proxy variables instead of focusing on variables that are closer to the latent concept of interest. It means that the author should have explained and discussed carefully conceptual proximity (or distance) of measured variables (e.g. public perception) to latent concepts of interests. Unfortunately, the thesis works with some rather implicit ideas about relatedness of measured concepts/variables with the fundamental concepts of interests. Thus one can wonder if the final arguments are correct. It seems to me that the author engaged with a topic hard to study and she deserves praise for her courage. On the other hand, selection of such a topic calls for very methodical work and any sloppiness in thinking or in presentation of the research may severely affect perceived value of the work. Unfortunately, the work is not – at the level of argument – polished enough to persuade reader that the conclusions are correct, or that the analysis is strong enough to adequately support the conclusions.

**3) Methods:** As I have already hinted, the main problem of the thesis lies in persuasiveness of its analysis. This shortcoming has roots in rather weak methodology. An attempt to build a prototypical model is interesting and valuable. What is rather missing is a strong test of its empirical validity. There are three key problems. (i) The author claims that she will keep some variables constant (e.g. Human rights) – it is hardly true as she included the USA on the one hand and the

KSA (with horrific human rights record) on the other. Simply the states she investigates differ significantly in human rights record. Second problem is that one would expect detailed information about variables measured in the empirical part. Why they were selected, what they reflect, how good are data used for their measurement etc. The point here is not that the variables are necessarily wrong or useless, rather that it is the author who is obliged to explain his/her logic of research. Third problem is connected with the previous two – one wonders if the variables and the cases can support the final argument. My general impression is that had the thesis been more explicit methodologically, it would have been easier for author to see potential problems with the argument and to adapt the thesis accordingly. It is fair to say that the topic – as it is truly challenging – creates huge obstacles and clearly some of them would remain even if the thesis was methodologically flawless.

**4) Literature:** As I am not a specialist in the terrorism studies it is not easy to identify gaps in the literature. Claire worked with wide range of literature especially if one considers objective limits related to the topic. Interestingly the thesis does not (explicitly) engage with any methodological literature. Considering above mentioned criticism one could expect that more explicit engagement with methodological texts would have resulted in significant improvement of the thesis and its main argument. The point here is not that citing methodological literature is a must, rather that works dealing with complex and empirically problematic material/issue should be as methodologically explicit and well thought as possible – and explicit engagement with methodological literature is one way how to achieve it.

**5) Manuscript form:** While the manuscript displays some minor deviations from prescribed format, overall it is well prepared manuscript without truly significant problems. It is however unfortunate that pages indicated in the table of content are not fully consistent with the text.

**In sum, it seems to me that the thesis is a bit victim to the topic. On the one hand I admire Claire's willingness to engage with this important and policy relevant topic. On the other hand, I am sure her thesis would have been among the best theses had she stick with her original topic.**

**DATE OF EVALUATION:**

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**Referee Signature**

**The referee should give comments to the following requirements:**

**1) THEORETICAL BACKGROUND:** Can you recognize that the thesis was guided by some **theoretical fundamentals** relevant for this thesis topic? Were some important theoretical concepts omitted? Was the theory used in the thesis consistently incorporated with the topic and hypotheses tested?

Strong                      Average                      Weak  
20                              10                              0                      points

**2) CONTRIBUTION:** Evaluate if the author presents **original ideas** on the topic and aims at demonstrating **critical thinking** and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and relevant empirical material. Is there a distinct **value added** of the thesis (relative to knowledge of a university-educated person interested in given topic)? Did the author explain **why** the observed phenomena occurred? Were the policy implications well founded?

Strong                      Average                      Weak  
20                              10                              0                      points

**3) METHODS:** Are the **hypotheses** for this study clearly stated, allowing their further verification and testing? Are the theoretical explanations, empirical material and **analytical tools** used in the thesis relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the aspiration level of the study? Is the thesis **topic comprehensively analyzed** and does the thesis not make trivial or irrelevant detours off the main body stated in the thesis proposal? More than 10 points signal an exceptional work, **which requires your explanation "why" it is so**.

Strong                      Average                      Weak  
20                              10                              0                      points

**4) LITERATURE REVIEW:** The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and **command of recent literature**. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way and disposes with a representative bibliography. (Remark: references to Wikipedia, websites and newspaper articles are a sign of **poor research**). If they dominate you cannot give more than 8 points. References to books published by prestigious publishers and articles in renowned journals give much better impression.

Strong                      Average                      Weak  
20                              10                              0                      points

**5) MANUSCRIPT FORM:** The thesis is **clear and well structured**. The author uses appropriate language and style, including academic **format** for quotations, graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables, is easily readable and **stimulates thinking**.

Strong                      Average                      Weak  
20                              10                              0                      points

**Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:**

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Czech grading
91 – 100	<b>A</b>	= excellent
81 - 90	<b>B</b>	= good
71 – 80	<b>C</b>	= satisfactory
61 - 70	<b>D</b>	= satisfactory
51 - 60	<b>E</b>	
0	<b>F</b>	= fail (not recommended for defence)