Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Valeria Cavallin

Title: Perspectives on Resilience Against Radicalization in the Ranks: Personal Experiences of the U.S. Ex-Military Personnel

Programme/year: International Security Studies/2024

Author of Evaluation (supervisor): Markéta Kocmanová

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	**10**	10
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	**30**	25
	Methodology, analysis, argument	**40**	36
Total		*80*	71
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	**10**	8
	Style	**5**	4
	Formal requirements	**5**	4
Total		*20*	16
TOTAL		*100*	**87**

Evaluation

Major criteria:

Especially in light of the 2021 Capitol attack, the thesis of Valeria Cavallin titled *Perspectives on Resilience Against Radicalization in the Ranks: Personal Experiences of the U.S. Ex-Military Personnel* makes a much-needed contribution to understanding why there was such a high percentage of military veterans taking part in the attempted insurrection. The originality of the work lies in the combination of the theoretical focus and primary data drawn from qualitative interviews with U.S. military veterans. I am aware of only one such research using in-depth interviewing (Speckhard & Ellenberg, 2021), which however focuses solely on extremist milieus and risk factors. However, Valeria brings in valuable perspectives on the coping mechanisms of regular ex-military personnel, which helps us both by pondering the risk as well as resilience factors.

The strengths of this work are apparent. It is not only the fact that the student conducted her own interviews with US ex-military personnel, but especially the overall theoretical focus of the work. I really appreciate the very elaborate research questions and the comprehensive character of the discussion of her findings, including a powerful conclusion. Valeria persuasively proves her ability to distil such a multitude of relevant theoretical concepts that are at play when considering risk and protective factors against radicalization with military personnel. It is especially admirable given the limited quantity of her interviews, which attests to efficient interview design and her excellent orientation in the field of radicalization studies.

The weaknesses are apparent, too. I would personally welcome more interviews conducted, but I understand the time constraints that limited the student. The structure of the theoretical framework is far from perfect, and the same applies to the empirical findings and the discussion section. It would definitely benefit from a clearer categorization of the findings so that existing scholarship, the glaring research gaps, and Valeria's empirical findings are coherently and more clearly connected.

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Minor criteria:

On the whole, the text reads well and is of sound academic quality. However, I do have a few remarks. Firstly, I would appreciate more interviews being paraphrased rather than cited verbatim. Then, in parts, the citations look slightly sloppy, for example, on p. 34. The empirical section and the discussion could have been better structured.

Assessment of plagiarism:

Based on the anti-plagiarism software checks, it is formally confirmed that the submitted thesis is original and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, does not, in an ethically unacceptable manner, draw from the works of other authors.

Overall evaluation:

I am very pleased to recommend Valeria's thesis for defence. Despite its limitations, her work makes an empirically original and theoretically insightful contribution to the study of radicalization in the military. At the same time, she unequivocally proved her deep grasp of the field and real passion for research.

Suggested grade:

B

Signature:

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