



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Andessa Santos-Joswig

Title: Female Suicide Terrorism: A Structural Analysis of Women's Active Participation in Jihad

Programme/year: Master's in International Relations (MAIN, AY 2023/2024)

Author of Evaluation (second reader/reviewer): Mgr. Tereza Plíštilová

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	8
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	21
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	30
<i>Total</i>		80	
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	8
	Style	5	4
	Formal requirements	5	4
<i>Total</i>		20	
TOTAL		100	75



Evaluation

Major criteria:

The author presents an engaging and highly relevant topic within the field of International Relations and Security Studies. Specifically, the thesis examines the motivations behind female suicide terrorism through a structural analysis approach, constructing the **following RQ**:

"What is the motivation for women to commit suicide bombing?" (p.14).

While the research question is well-formulated, several issues arise upon further reading. Firstly, the author focuses on five highly contextual cases of Palestinian female suicide bombers during the Second Intifada. In my opinion, the broad research question cannot be adequately answered by these specific cases alone. The analysis primarily illuminates the motivations of Palestinian women during the Second Intifada rather than providing generalizable insights into the motivations of female suicide terrorists more broadly.

Additionally, there are structural and conceptual issues within the thesis. Firstly, the author presents the following hypothesis "(...) factors driving women to commit suicide bombings initially stem from individual issues but are ultimately shaped and grounded in collective motivations" (p.13). However, this hypothesis does not logically follow from the research question, as hypotheses are typically designed to answer the research question. In this case, the hypothesis was formulated first and the RQ second. Moreover, the thesis is not structured as a hypothesis-testing study, making the hypothesis seem redundant at best.

Secondly, the **organization of the thesis is also problematic in my view.** The methodological chapter directly follows the introduction, while the theoretical chapter and literature review are part of the method section. This can be viewed as a fundamental error in research design and thesis structure. Furthermore, I think that the Chapters 3) "Organizational Structure and Strategies" 4) "Female Suicide Terrorism" and 5) "Motivations and Factors" should be part of the literature review since they summarize the current state of knowledge on the given topic.

The most significant shortcoming of the thesis lies in its methodology and data. The author employs a comparative case study approach but does not justify the selection of the five case studies or explain their relevance. This issue clearly stems from the reliance on secondary data, particularly the work of Barbara Victor in "Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers" (2003).



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The analysis heavily depends on Victor's interviews, making it difficult to discern the author's original contribution. Notably, the analysis of the fifth case, based on the documentary "Terrorism Close Calls: The Israel Honey Trap," is well-executed and clearly the author's own work.

Regarding the theoretical framework, the author mentions potentially relevant theories such as post-colonial feminism, third-world feminism, and transnational feminism, but unfortunately, she does not effectively apply them to the study of female suicide terrorism. A mid-range theory from terrorism studies might have been more appropriate in this case.

Finally, I wasn't sure about the relevance of "Implications for Public Policy" section. It remains rather vague and lacks specificity. Policy recommendations should target specific policymakers; however, the intended audience here is unclear.

Minor criteria:

The thesis is generally well-written despite occasional typos and grammatical errors. I think the thesis would benefit from better work with references since many of them are outdated (most of the cited works were published in the early 2000s). More importantly, some claims are improperly referenced or not referenced at all. Just to provide a few examples:

the author does not cite which studies

- "While there is considerable interest in the phenomenon of female suicide, many studies do not consider the individual issues faced by women" (p.23)

the author needs to provide page number(s)

- "In a similar vein, Cook and Zedalis argue that approval for suicide bombing acts derives from a social logic based on political and religious arguments "(p.24)

p. 28 is missing references in general

In overall, I also think that the text would benefit from using the passive voice less frequently.



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Assessment of plagiarism:

The plagiarism score (Turnitin) is 22%, (it involves direct quotes that are referenced).

Overall evaluation:

Overall, while the thesis is well written and it addresses a relevant and intriguing topic, however, some essential methodological and theoretical shortcomings prevail.

I recommend the thesis for defense.

Questions for the author:

- 1) Based on what criteria did you choose the analysed cases? And why?
- 2) How does post-colonial feminist theory inform us about possible motivations behind female suicide jihadists?
- 3) Are there any other relevant theories that could be relevant/more suitable to illuminate why women decide to participate in suicide terror attacks?

Suggested grade: C

Signature: