



## Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: **Gillian Stark**

Title: The Regional Push: Hezbollah Terror Attacks against Israel in the Context of Regional Conflict

Programme/year: MISS/2024

Author of Evaluation (supervisor): prof. Oldrich Bures

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
<b>Major Criteria</b>			
	Research question, definition of objectives	<b>10</b>	7
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	<b>30</b>	13
	Methodology, analysis, argument	<b>40</b>	22
<i>Total</i>		<b>80</b>	42
<b>Minor Criteria</b>			
	Sources	<b>10</b>	7
	Style	<b>5</b>	4
	Formal requirements	<b>5</b>	4
<i>Total</i>		<b>20</b>	15
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>	57



## Evaluation

### Major criteria:

The reviewed thesis aims to answer the following research question: “How do the timing and frequency of Hezbollah attacks against Israel in 2000 to 2015 align with broader regional geopolitical events such as the Second Intifada, the Iraq War, the Syrian Civil War, and the 2014 Gaza War?” The author attempted to use a quantitative approach to answer this question, specifically a Poisson Bayesian regression model. At the same time, the author claims to have attempted to answer the question “through a sociological normative constructionist lens.” While in principle commendable, as well as the use of the R software, both attempts suffer from significant shortcomings.

First, a quantitative approach necessitates a proper hypothesis based on a literature review covering the existing state of the art. Neither is present in the thesis in an appropriate scope and form. As such, the author’s quantitative analysis is limited to a rather limited set of variables – attacks and casualties. These are not derived from either any “sociological normative constructionist lens” literature or from a plethora of other antecedent literature on terrorist attacks in general and Hezbollah’s attacks on Israel in particular. This literature would also suggest several control variables that any proper quantitative research design would necessitate – none are included/tested in the thesis. As such, the thesis cannot really prove even correlations. At best, the thesis conclusively only shows the obvious – that the direct war between Israel and Hezbollah in 2006 (not part of the research question) inevitably led to a major spike in both attacks and casualties. After all, attacks and casualties are key defining features of any war. In contrast, the findings for the impact of „regional geopolitical events” (e.g., the Second Intifada, the Iraq War, the Syrian Civil War, and the 2014 Gaza War) are, at best, inconclusive. One cannot expect more from the presented research design – not only due to the absence of control variables but also because the selection of these “events” is rather arbitrary since some included some direct Israeli-Hezbollah confrontation while others did not.



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The thesis claims to offer an interpretation of its empirical findings via a sociological normative constructionist lens. However, the thesis does not offer either a proper theoretical chapter (what is included in Chapter 1 is a very generic discussion of constructivism being opposed to material factor explanations, but mostly it is a contextual/historical/descriptive overview) or a proper literature review which would at least clarify which constructivist strand/argument the thesis will build one and how is it compatible with a quantitative research design? In the final chapters of the thesis, the author repeatedly claims that she interprets the findings from “a sociological normative constructionist lens”, but these are again mere contextual/historical/descriptive overviews (and which were originally part of a lengthy historical chapter in the only previous version of the thesis that I have seen).

**Minor criteria:**

Regarding minor issues, it is unclear why the list of references is included twice in the thesis. There are minor stylistic issues throughout the thesis.

**Assessment of plagiarism:**

It was not detected, albeit it is problematic that some subchapters are essentially a rewrite of a single source.

**Overall evaluation:**

The thesis barely meets the required criteria. As the supervisor, I have to note that the thesis was finalized shortly before the submission deadline in July and submitted without my approval. This was in direct contradiction to the instructions the author repeatedly received from my side during the supervision. In the middle of my family holidays, I still read and commented on the first and only draft of the thesis I had received. In response, the author claimed that the file with my comments was “corrupted,” albeit she clearly managed to open it and performed several reshuffles before submitting it shortly after. Moreover, I repeatedly raised all of the major shortcomings discussed above during the project proposal discussion stage.

**Suggested grade: E1**

**Signature:**