



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Jacob Condran

Thesis title: Refugee Interest Groups in the Czech Republic and Issue Framing in Light of the War in Ukraine

Programme/year: MAIN/2023 (this review is written for the purpose of the evaluation of the thesis within the double degree programme with University in Konstanz)

Author of Evaluation (supervisor at Charles University): Michal Parizek

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	7
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	19
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	23
Total		80	49
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	7
	Style	5	4
	Formal requirements	5	5
Total		20	16
TOTAL		100	65



Evaluation

Major criteria:

The thesis seeks to map the system of Czech refugee interest groups in the context of refugee crises and in particular the last one connected with the War in Ukraine. The thesis tackles an original topic and does address relevant aspects of the problem of interest group formation in this field on the basis of original data collection.

At the same time, the thesis has several important weaknesses which I will address in individual points below. These have to do with the localization of the thesis within relevant literature, the theoretical framework, the research design, data collection and analysis, and the execution.

First, the thesis is primarily located in the literature on interest group formation and organizational/population ecology. I cannot judge how well it deals with this literature, as it lies outside the scope of my expertise. But what I completely lack in the thesis is a robust connection to the literature on migration and refugees as a specific transnational problem and on the politicization of migration and asylum seeking in the EU. The 'migration crisis' of mid 2010s is perhaps politically the most charged situation in the EU in years, the crisis with massive political repercussion within EU states and across them, at the EU level. Much of the dynamic connected with the political discourse surrounding refugees and migration is inherently linked to that. I do not think it is possible to meaningfully address this topic without engaging with that political dynamic, and the literature dealing with that explicitly should have been robustly included. Prominent studies highlight how attitudes toward migration essentially constitute a key dimension of political contest in the EU (Hooghe, Marks). Ignoring that literature seems to ignore, or at least not connect to, a fundamental political dynamic and a major reason for why refugees and migration constitute an important topic in IR as a discipline especially in the last years. Similarly, one could have easily linked the thesis to such literatures as on international norms or on burden-sharing in the EU. It is a pity these obvious links are not drawn in the thesis.



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Second, I have some problems with the research design. For example, the dependent variable is not entirely clearly specified and justified. There are two variants of the DV: the formation rates of interest groups, but earlier in the introduction also “improvement in the condition of those fleeing the war” is mentioned as factor to be investigated. As for the latter (the actual DV) it is not clear why that purely quantitative indicator of the number of IG is a meaningful DV (eg. p 26). Would it not make better sense to include information on number of members or supporters of these IGs? Their budgets? Allocations of public/private funds for their work? How accurate is the picture we obtain if we completely ignore the size of these bodies?

Third, methodologically, the thesis is rather basic. The “test” of the central hypotheses 1-3 is based almost solely on visual representation of the number of IGs (formed) in the field. So, the evaluation is based on a mere visual observation of one aggregate pattern. The collection of the data for that task clearly constitutes a value added of the project, but the evaluation of the hypotheses is not very robust. As for hypotheses 4 and 5, I have serious doubts that what is presented is a systematically employed critical discourse analysis. It is rather a descriptive overview of the positions of the key political figures in Czechia (and from the perspective of the richness of the debate in the region, a somewhat predictable). I do not see a systematic work with a well-defined corpus of texts on the topic, exploring inter-textual relations and the power context underlying the construction of the language and meanings connected with the crisis.

Fourth, as for the execution, the thesis is relatively sparsely referenced throughout the text. The case study could have been substantiated with far more evidence, perhaps drawing systematically on large-scale data on attitudes towards migration, civil society engagement within the Czech population, or so. In this form, the empirical analysis does not go much beyond commenting on several (well-chosen and highly relevant) political leaders’ statements. More should have been done here.

Minor criteria:

The thesis is well-written and clear, it satisfies all formal criteria. I am not entirely clear on the structuring with some sections spanning across up to 20 pages and other sections (at the same level) literally just one paragraph (p 13).



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Assessment of plagiarism:

There are no signs of plagiarism.

Overall evaluation:

The thesis has merit in a selection of a highly relevant topic and in the collection of original relevant empirical data. The main weaknesses of the thesis lie in the very weak link to the literature in IR on migration and refugees and the EU role in the migration/refugee crisis, relatively small amount of the newly collected data, the generally rather basic methodology and data analysis and evaluation of the hypotheses – both that focused on the description of IG formation patterns and that focused on political discourse.

Suggested grade: D

Note: The exact same review was submitted for the purposes of grading at the University of Konstanz. I indicated in that review that my evaluation of 65% (D) translated into 3,0 in the grading system at the University of Konstanz.

Signature: