BSSn4495:
Qualitative Research in Security Studies

Research Proposal Assignment:

Stage II

This paper will include the paper from Stage I (edited as appropriate based on the feedback) and it should be about **eight double-spaced** pages in length (in 12-point Times New Roman with standard margins).

Leave out any discussion of the background or the broader literature. Devote all the space to the tasks of the assignment. You will need to also hone your exposition of each theory and its logic to ensure that you are explaining it clearly but concisely.

The paper must contain the following three elements:

1. Primary theory (about 1.5-2 pages)

Same instructions as in Stage I but a few things to keep in mind:

- **Only include the following main elements and nothing else**:
  - The IV, DV, and any intervening variables PLUS their directions. This means you must clearly state the logic of the relationship between the variables.
  - Describe the causal mechanism (i.e., how your IV causes your DV).
  - Note the assumptions on which the causal mechanism stands.
- Try to keep this part to **2 pages max**.

2. Alternative theory (about 1.5-2 pages).

The alternative theory should be a theory that could potentially explain the same outcome as the primary theory. I **strongly** recommend that you draw this alternative theory from the **existing literature.**

We are looking for a competition between two theories that will enable us to think through how process tracing can help us distinguish among causal explanations. The alternative theory could take one of two forms:

1) A theory that explains the same dependent variable as the primary theory but using a **different independent variable.**
   - The causal logics of the two theories should be quite different from each other.

2) The alternative theory could be a theory that has the same independent variable and dependent variable as the primary theory but a **very different mechanism.**

3. Causal process-related observable implications (4 pages).

You will describe tests that you could carry out, using process tracing, to determine which theory best explains the outcome in a case. You do **not** need to have any specific real-world case in mind, but it will be helpful to *imagine* a case in which the outcome did (or did not) occur – and then think about what you should observe in the process between IV and DV that would indicate the presence of one causal logic or the other.

For each theory, ask yourself: if this theory explains the outcome in a case, what **features of the theorized causal mechanisms/logic** should we be able to observe **within that case**? We are looking for predictions of "causal process observations" (CPOs) that we should be able to make in a case if each theory is true.

At the bottom is a list of types of tests. These are adapted from three of Van Evera's test types, but here I specify them somewhat more precisely.

- You should come up with **3 observable implications in total**.
- These observable implications should **cover 3 of the 5 types of tests** below.
- For each observable implication, explain clearly what we should observe under this prediction. You do not need to get into a lot of detail about measurement of variables, but you need to make clear that the CPO you're predicting is something that is *observable*.
- For each observable implication, label the type of test clearly. **Explain why the prediction fits that type of test.** In other words, you will need to explain carefully why you think the probabilities of making this observation under each theory are high, moderate, or low (as required, respectively, for each test type listed below).
- You will need to be specific about the *type* of case to which a test is intended to apply: that is, about the value on either the IV of the two theories or the DV (or both). In general, when specifying the values of the IV to which an observable implication applies, you will need to specify the values taken on by the IVs of *both* theories (if they are different). And you will want them to either both be taking on a value that is expected (by the respective theories) to cause the outcome or both to be taking on a value expected *not* to cause the outcome. The reason is simple: if you were to examine a case in which one independent variable took a value expected to cause the outcome, and the other didn't, you would immediately be able to strongly undermine one theory by simply looking at whether or not the outcome occurred. No process tracing would be required.
- If your theory involves a **conditioning variable,** you will want to think of observable implications that relate.

TYPES OF TESTS

The "p=" expressions here refer to the **probability with which we think we should observe a certain thing under each theory.** Note that these probabilities are operationalizing the concepts

of certainty and uniqueness. Use these probabilities as a rough approximation and a general guide to your thinking.

Hoop test for Theory 1

Theory 1 (p=0.9): High probability we should observe this CPO if theory 1 is operating

Theory 2 (p=0.4-0.7): Moderate probability we should observe this CPO if theory 2 is operating

Hoop test for Theory 2

Theory 1 (p=0.4-0.7): **Moderate** probability we should observe this CPO if theory 1 is operating

Theory 2 (p=0.9): High probability we should observe this CPO if theory 2 is operating

Smoking gun test for Theory 1

Theory 1 (p=0.3-0.6): Moderate probability we would observe this CPO if theory 1 is operating

Theory 2 (p=0.05-0.1): Low probability we would observe this CPO if theory 2 is operating.

Smoking gun test for Theory 2

Theory 1 (p=0.05-0.1): Low probability we would observe this CPO if theory 1 is operating

Theory 2 (p=0.3-0.6): Moderate probability we would observe this CPO if theory 2 is operating.

Doubly decisive test

Theory 1 (p=0.9): High probability we should observe this CPO if theory 1 is operating

Theory 2 (p=0.05-0.1): Low probability we would observe this CPO if theory 2 is operating.

OR

Theory 1 (p=0.05-0.1): High probability we should observe this CPO if theory 1 is operating

Theory 2 (p=0.9): Low probability we would observe this CPO if theory 2 is operating.

Given the above setup, you'll want to formulate your observable implications something like this:

"**Hoop test for Theory 1:**

Assume that X_1 and X_2 both take on a high value in a case.

Under Theory 1, we should then observe _____ with a high probability. This observation is very probable under Theory 1 because…..[substantial justification here].

Under Theory 2, should observe _____ with a moderate probability. This observation is only moderately probable under Theory 2 because…[substantial justification here]."