Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Vittorio Macagno

Title: Artificial Intelligence as the upcoming Revolution in Military Affairs:
The cases of the United States and China through the lens of Strategic Culture

Programme/year: MISS 2022

Author of Evaluation (supervisor):

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	**10**	8
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	**30**	25
	Methodology, analysis, argument	**40**	34
Total		*80*	67
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	**10**	8
	Style	**5**	5
	Formal requirements	**5**	5
Total		*20*	18
TOTAL		*100*	85

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Evaluation

Major criteria:

The thesis deals with an important, though not very innovative, issue of the strategic studies. It addresses the question whether the AI brings about a new revolution in military affairs and explores the possibility of different application of AI to military affairs based on strategic culture.

The thesis presents a solid definition of key concepts (AI in the military field, strategic culture, RMA) and a competent, though rather brief, literature review.

The analysis is divided into two chapters. The first one addresses the question of the AI-RMA. It demonstrates that AI is likely to cause significant changes at all levels of warfighting – tactical, operational, and strategic – which is the basic qualification for the RMA status.

The second analytical chapter applies the US and Chinese strategic cultures to get a bit more specific understanding of the shape of the AI RMA. The thesis argues that Chinese strategic culture is more likely to utilise the AI in the strategic decision-making (fighting systems with system), whereas the US forces may have a greater tendency towards a bottom-up approach employing AI in the unmanned weapon systems.

Although the thesis provides a competent overview of the AI-RMA topic and presents sound arguments on both research questions, it suffers on two fronts. First, the evidence is far from robust. It is understandable that the exercise of foresight limits the available empirical evidence; nonetheless, the analysis could go deeper. Second, the two research issues (the existence of AI-RMA and its shaping by strategic cultures) remained disintegrated. I wonder if, based on the author's analysis, it is not possible to claim that the Chinese strategic culture is more likely than the US to employ AI with revolutionary consequences.

Minor criteria:

ok

Overall evaluation:

Vittorio's thesis presents a competent contribution on the AI-RMA. The application of strategic culture has great potential to enrich the RMA debate. Unfortunately, Vittorio did not manage to link the question of AI existence and the role of strategic culture into a single argument.

Suggested grade: B

Signature:

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