Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: **Anastasiia Peleshenko**

Title: **Evoluton of the idea of the "Russian threat" to the security of the EU and NATO**

Programme/year: **MAIN 2022**

Author of Evaluation (second reader): **Viera Martinková, Ph.D.**

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	**10**	10
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	**30**	20
	Methodology, analysis, argument	**40**	28
Total		*80*	58
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	**10**	7
	Style	**5**	3
	Formal requirements	**5**	3
Total		*20*	13
TOTAL		*100*	71

Evaluation

Major criteria:

The thesis aims to analyse the evolution of the perception of the Russian threat by "the West", specifically the EU and NATO, between 2014 and 2021. The introductory chapters provide an excellent literature review of the issue itself and the employment of the selected method, discourse analysis, to such issues. The richness of these first three chapters is the strongest point of the thesis. While the research questions are clearly stated in the Introduction, and the intended theoretical and methodological frameworks are well-suited to answer them, they are not explicitly revisited in the analysis or the conclusion. This might be the result of shortcomings within the theoretical and methodological framework.

Chapter 3 should have served as a theoretical framework but works mainly to introduce factual context and Russian strategy, albeit with many conceptual remarks referring to terms such as identity, self, and the other. While the theoretical framework of the thesis is apparently constructivist, it is not explicitly named as such.

Chapter 4 on methodology is limited to one page, explaining the selection of texts for analysis. While the Introduction of the thesis mentions the critical discourse analysis and political discourse analysis as its methods, and the chapter 2.1 "Applicaton of Critcal Discourse Analysis to the Study of Threat Perceptions" explains the use of both methods, there is very little reference to how such analysis is conducted.

As mentioned above, the methodology chapter states that the selection of cases was based on a search for negative terms such as threat and then asserting their relevance by looking for texts that would "refer to, explain, condemn, condone, or define the relations with Russia" (p. 50). Seeing as the main goal of the thesis is to analyse how the idea of Russia as a threat was construed, would it not have been more reasonable not to limit the text search to negative words but look for "relations with Russia" in general?

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The analysis itself comprises a description and extensive citations from selected texts. While the citations are relevant, and the author refers to appropriate constructivist terms in relation to the texts (such as self vs other), the results offer only a little more than description and commentary. More explicit method usage, such as distinguishing the levels of analysis of the CDA, is lacking.

There are also minor terminology issues, such as indirectly referring to the current West-Russia relations as a Cold War (see chapter 2.2.2 "In-between Cold Wars"). While this usage is not new, it is by no means firmly established and thus requires at least some debate and references.

Minor criteria:

The text should have been proofread one more time before submission, as there are some issues with style, grammar and referencing. Sentence structure and length make the text harder to follow (see, for example, the last paragraph of the Introduction). Punctuation is sometimes missing. Some references were clearly meant to be added to the text (as indicated by "???", see, e.g. the bottom of p.19, repeatedly on p.24 etc.) or are simply missing (What discourse analysis' results are referenced on p.47?). The last chapter refers to the "theoretical framework in Chapter 4", which is, in fact, methodology. The bibliography is not structured (subheadings only for documents subject to analysis).

In my position as a coordinator of the programme, I am aware that Ms Peleshenko faced personal challenges during the writing of the thesis, but also that she requested an extension of the submission deadline, which was approved by the vice-dean. Unfortunately, in the end, she did not use it, although it would have given her just the time needed for final proofreading.

Assessment of plagiarism:

There are no issues apart from some missing references mentioned above. The relatively high similarity in the Turnitin analysis is caused by the usage of direct quotations, which are largely justified.

Overall evaluation:

The author has clearly put a lot of work into the thesis. The main strengths of the thesis consist of a comprehensive literature review, a well above-average literature review for a Master thesis, the selection of suitable methods and references to relevant usage of those methods in previous research.

On the other hand, the main weakness of the thesis is the lack of explanation of how such analysis is done and, therefore, insufficient application of the method in the thesis.

In sum, while the text definitely contains all the necessary literature background and relevant and sufficient material for discourse analysis, the method is not employed properly, which diminishes the analytical value of the thesis.

However, the thesis fulfils all the required criteria, and I recommend it for defense, with a suggested grade of C.

Suggested grade: C

Signature:

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