



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Anastasiia Peleshenko

Title: **Evolution of the Idea of 'Russian Threat' to the Security of the EU and NATO**

Programme/year: MAIN/2022

Author of Evaluation (supervisor/second reader): Dr. Ondrej Ditrych

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	8
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	22
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	25
<i>Total</i>		80	56
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	7
	Style	5	5
	Formal requirements	5	4
<i>Total</i>		20	16
TOTAL		100	71



Evaluation

Major criteria:

The thesis seeks to trace the evolution of the threat posed by assertive, antihegemonic foreign policy strategy by the Russian Federation in the period since the annexation of the Crimea (2014-). To that end, the author suggests to mobilise the conceptual and methodological toolboxes of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) to interrogate discursive material produced in NATO and the EU.

The thesis has a clear basic structure. However, the argument is developed in a somewhat nonlinear fashion. While literature review would normally be expected to situate the research in the state of knowledge about the subject matter, here it serves more as a theory chapter, defining the general terms – while the genesis proposed for CDA and PDA is somewhat unconventional and omits the Frankfurt School or the linguistic turn. The author correctly points to the commitment of the CDA to assuming a critical normative position on ideology as the straitjacket of consciousness, yet does not embrace this commitment or reflect it, as much as the particular tools of either method, in her own later analysis. The chapter, including in a second part a narrative discussion (rather than literature review) of the relations between Russia and the West after the Cold War, could be better organised and on the sources of Russia's behavior, more sources (and perhaps more relevant) could be used. (I would be hesitant to support the author's point that until 2014, territorial defence was not NATO's focus. The 2010 Strategic Concept clearly foregrounded it in comparison to the other two core tasks. Also, Putin's MSC speech in 2007, Bucharest Summit and the invasion in Georgia could perhaps deserve a more prominent place in the story.)

The following chapter, titled *Research Framework*, is in fact a continuation of the earlier narrative, detailing – with undeniable competence and making some interesting insights – the various facets of Russia's threat; in fact, making a series of securitising moves in the process. It also includes what could occasionally pass for conclusions of the discourse analysis, at one place even mentioning directly “as the discourse analysis has revealed” (p. 46). It is somewhat curious that the author references Galeotti while at the same time speaking about Gerasimov Doctrine as a *fact* in the scope of the same paragraph.



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The next chapter, *Methodology*, provides a basic, very parsimonious statement on which sources have been chosen for the discourse analysis.

The analysis itself is based on a study of a decent amount of documents that are interpreted in a solid, albeit atheoretical manner. (I would only expect the 2016 *EU Global Strategy* to be mentioned, including the preceding security environment assesment that is publicly available.) It does manage to capture a general change in vocabulary used in statements made in the milieus of the both organisations and reflecting the deteriorating security environment caused by Russia's assertive actions, both overt and covert. It also succeeds in making a point that in addition to the threat becoming more discursively prominent (as one could expect), the discursive moves often entailed more *isolation* – along Self/Other dividing lines (here the author could have benefited from the extensive literature on Russia's otherness, cf. Neumann) – rather than clear labelling as a *threat*.

Minor criteria:

The thesis is competently written and draws on a sufficient amount of resources which at time could be more more representatively chosen. At times, the formatting could be done more carefully.

Assessment of plagiarism:

No plagiarism detected.



Overall evaluation:

The thesis succeeds in conducting a discourse analysis of a solid amount of well chosen documents and producing relevant conclusions. It suffers from a certain lack of organisation and the disconnect between the theoretical framework it proposes to deploy, and the actual analysis. As a result, the interpretive potential of the latter is not fully exploited.

Suggested grade: C

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ondřej D. A.', written over a horizontal line.