



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Antoine Lopez

Title: The Extent of Russia's Information Warfare Capabilities: A Danger to the West and the Global World Order

Programme/year: International Security Studies / 2022

Author of Evaluation (~~supervisor~~/second reader): Jan Ludvík, Ph.D.

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	7
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	18
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	25
<i>Total</i>		80	50
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	8
	Style	5	5
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	18
TOTAL		100	68



Evaluation

Major criteria:

I think this is an interesting thesis. It tries to elicit “to what extent are Russia’s Information Warfare capabilities a danger to the West and the global world order”, addressing the topic which is both timely and politically relevant. While there is much to like about the thesis, I think some changes would have been beneficial:

- I think the introduction does a good job introducing the topic of Russian information warfare, but it tells relatively little about the analysis itself. I would like to know more about why the thesis’s research question arises, what previous literature has been written on this question, what answers the thesis offers, what research strategy it uses, and what structure follows.
- I would like to see a bit more detailed explanation of the research strategy. In particular, I would like to see the justification for the case selection and an explanation of how the thesis measures to what extent Russia’s information warfare endangers the global world order.
- I think more emphasis should have been given to the synthesis. The case studies pay too much attention to various examples of disinformation, which has been allegedly spread by Russia. It is easy to think one reads the list of disinformation. I would like to know the overall story of Russian information warfare in the four cases and most importantly how effective the information operations were.
- Unfortunately, the thesis largely succumbs to the storyline about the bogymen of Russian disinformation, which is produced by the growing cottage industry of “anti-disinformation” think tanks. The thesis concludes that “evidence presented and arguments made have demonstrated a clear, systematic Russian effort which poses a danger to the West and the global order” (p.80). This would be an important conclusion. Unfortunately, this conclusion is not substantiated by the analysis. Like the aforementioned think tanks, the thesis fails to connect disinformation and people’s opinions, so it is not at all clear that people think something because they have been exposed to Russian disinformation.



Minor criteria:

- I think the literature review put too much emphasis on the description of the concepts of information warfare, psychological operations, and revisionism. The debates about these concepts are certainly interesting, but they make the literature review quite disconnected from the research question. I think it would be beneficial to focus the literature review on what previous literature thinks about the effectiveness of Russian information warfare. While this literature is still nascent, it is critical for this thesis and should have been engaged by it (e.g. Lanoszka, Alexander. "Disinformation in international politics." *European journal of international security* 4.2 (2019): 227-248; Erlich, Aaron, and Calvin Garner. "Is pro-Kremlin Disinformation Effective? Evidence from Ukraine." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* (2021): 19401612211045221).

Assessment of plagiarism:

- Based on the anti-plagiarism software checks, it is formally confirmed that the submitted thesis is original and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, does not, in an ethically unacceptable manner, draw from the works of other authors.

Overall evaluation:

The dissertation addresses a timely topic of utmost political importance. I think it could have done more in terms of measuring the effects of information warfare. However, despite the caveats above, I think this is a good dissertation.

Suggested grade: D

Signature: