



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Virginia Maraglino

Title: Old Space vs New Space: New Players between Space Economy and Space Warfare

Programme/year: MISS, 2023

Author of Evaluation (external reviewer): Mgr. Luka Nikolić

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	8
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	15
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	33
<i>Total</i>		80	56
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	8
	Style	5	4
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	17
TOTAL		100	73



Evaluation

Major criteria:

It is beyond a doubt that the thesis deals with one of the most relevant topics for the contemporary global security. Commercialization of the traditional security apparatuses, private actors trailblazing (relatively) virgin strategic domains, blurring the boundaries between political decision-making and business, are just some of the issues tackled in the thesis. The topics are treated in a diligent, informed, and logically coherent manner. Arguably the strongest aspect of the piece is the effort put into crafting primary sources through the expert interviews, coupled with solid methodological assumptions.

Nevertheless, there are areas whose significant improvements could have provided more analytically valuable research outputs. I will stress five points upon which the previous claim is based.

First, starting from the title, the thesis lacks proper definition of the main notions used throughout the work. When I say definition, it can be either an attempt on operationalization or the mere perception of the author. If the reader is left without any, then conceptual confusion is all but inevitable. The fact that the title mentions space warfare, while the crucial difference between militarization and weaponization is briefly mentioned at the p.42, speaks volumes about it. Space assets are used interchangeably with space weapons. Research question read 'military applications of space' which is a non-existent concept, and should be appropriately substituted with applications of military in space or military utilization of space. Substantialization of space economy is completely absent. While this does not critically endanger the thesis, accuracy and clarity should always be important parts of a research strategy.

Second, theoretical framework is by far the weakest point of the thesis. While an eclectic approach is a legitimate option to choose, it should go hand in hand with robust justification and extreme caution. Especially when you merge three grand paradigms. The essence of eclecticism is not to take from each basket what one needs in order to create a 'Frankenstein' which will fit a pre-defined scheme. It is a complex process where a new scheme is a consequence of a new approach. Taking a bit of selfish realist interest, fruitful liberal cooperation, and abstract constructivist identities, does not lead towards any surplus academic explanatory solution. Therefore, bridges between theoretical and empirical part are very thin, causing the topic to be treated in an a-theoretical, policy manner.

Third, when it comes to the second research question of support of private space companies for the Ukrainian war efforts, the impression is that there is not sufficient motivation to turn this into a major case study. On the p.13 we can find a description of the biggest breakthrough of private-military nexus: 'involved in the preparation of an armed attack'. In other words, one attack where a private



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company provided SIGINT. Certainly, this event raised many legal, ethical, and political concerns, but its disruptive potential is far from being a game-changer in the theater. The thesis failed to provide a realistic reflection on how important the event is, while focusing on how much some of the possible events can be. Fourth, a minor methodological remark would be that it is not a good academic practice to avoid critical reflection on the primary and secondary sources. Namely, literature review aside from enlisting available sources, is supposed to address the gap in the literature. And when the gap is existent, it means that at least some of the referenced works did a foul job. The same goes for the expert interviews which are the main source of logical fallacies. Here, if a critical attitude does not exist, one commits a so-called 'Appeal to Authority' and 'Appeal to Ignorance' fallacies. Fifth, support of private companies for the military actions of Ukraine are labeled as exclusively one way process. There exists a complete disregard for security risks caused by allowing the third party (particularly non-military) to penetrate a defense apparatus. Moreover, a free lunch is non-existent, and accordingly, aside from the revenue motive, private space company in this case can serve as either hybrid authority or a medium for power projection of the state behind it. In both cases there are significant socio-politico-security contributions to be made by Ukraine.

Minor criteria:

The thesis satisfies all the formal criteria, there are no traces of plagiarism. Sources are abundant and diverse, both primary and secondary, referencing style is consistent. Language used throughout the thesis could have been more accurate, but it does not interfere with the smooth flow of the text.

Overall evaluation:

The thesis deals with the promising topic in a very dedicated and comprehensive manner. Methodologically strong, it lacks a coherent theoretical foundation which would make results more analytically valuable and externally valid.

Therefore, I recommend the thesis for the defense. Unfortunately, because of all the aforementioned, I cannot grade it better than C-.

Suggested grade: C-

Signature: