Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Anastasia Wittmann

Title: Exploring the Election Fraud Conspiracy Theory: A Qualitative Comparison of Selected U.S. and German QAnon Telegram Channels

Programme/year: International Security Studies, 2023

Author of Evaluation (supervisor): Emil Aslan

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	**10**	5
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	**30**	25
	Methodology, analysis, argument	**40**	32
Total		***80***	62
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	**10**	10
	Style	**5**	5
	Formal requirements	**5**	5
Total		***20***	20
TOTAL		***100***	82

Evaluation

Major criteria: I have mixed feelings about this thesis. On the one hand, the author, fascinated with the researched phenomenon, did her best to consult her work with me and incorporate, to the best of her ability, discussed nuances into the text in order to improve it. The author has gone the extra mile to study two complex case studies and how they are intermingled; she has researched an extensive amount of data. The author has done solid research on conceptual and methodological issues, as well, apart from familiarizin herself with the relevant literature. On the other hand, though, the author's insistence on two cases – the US and German ones – has pushed her to carry out a comparative case study that rather lacks a central idea. Why is the comparison done – just to illustrate differences and similarities between the two cases? Are these some underlying (causal) explanations of the comparison? If yes, they should be explicitly mentioned and the thesis should have been reorganized along relevant lines. Or is the purpose of the comparison to show how the German case replicates the American original? If the thesis is interpretive (is it?), what's the purpose of the chapter on alternative explanations? How is the thesis innovative? These are all issues that the author and I have discussed on several occasions. While I admit that binding together two cases in an analytically meaningful and theoretically-driven way was thought to be anenormous challenge from the very beginning (which the ultimate outcome is again proving), I still have to acknowledge the massive work the author has done on her thesis, both in empirical, and in conceptual and, to a lesser extent, in methodological way(s). Although the thesis itself has several pitfalls, mainly pertaining to the research design, I have to appraise the author's hard work in bringing together in a fairly comprehensive way a huge amount of convoluted data.

Minor criteria: In spite of the above-mentioned shortcomings, the thesis is still fairly well-organized. It's well-written; engages with relevant literature; and presents a fascinating journey into far-right conspiracy narratives.

Assessment of plagiarism: no plagiarism detected.

Overall evaluation: Overall, a (very) good thesis.

Suggested grade: B

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Signature: