



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Alexander George Hlosek

Title: Russo-Ukrainian war through the lens of Sun Tzu

Programme/year: MISS / 2024

Author of Evaluation (supervisor/second reader): Jan Ludvik

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	5
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	15
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	20
<i>Total</i>		80	40
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	5
	Style	5	3
	Formal requirements	5	2
<i>Total</i>		20	10
TOTAL		100	50



Evaluation

Major criteria:

The evaluation of the major criteria for this thesis reveals significant shortcomings that necessitate a substantial rewrite. The research question posed, "How do Russia's successes and failures in Ukraine relate to Sun Tzu's guide for fighting wars?" is more philosophical than analytical. This approach is inappropriate for a social science thesis, which should systematically analyze data to answer an empirical question. The introduction fails to adequately introduce and justify the research question, offering instead a personal disclaimer and a brief mention of the Budapest Memorandum. This lack of a clear, analytical research question sets a weak foundation for the thesis.

The theoretical framework is heavily reliant on Sun Tzu's "The Art of War" without integrating relevant social science theories. The literature review reads more like a reader's diary, summarizing readings rather than critically engaging with them or connecting them to the research question. This approach fails to show how previous research has addressed similar questions and does not identify gaps that the current research aims to fill. The inclusion of extensive background on Sun Tzu without linking it to the Russo-Ukrainian war further detracts from the coherence and relevance of the theoretical framework.

The methodology and analysis sections are disjointed and lack rigor. The empirical chapters present various unrelated topics in a fragmented manner, such as public opinion on the invasion, terminology used by Putin, and ethnic minorities in the conflict, without clearly connecting these discussions to the research question or each other. This disorganization results in a superficial and descriptive analysis rather than a systematic evaluation. The empirical findings are not systematically analyzed in relation to Sun Tzu's principles, and the overall argument lacks clarity and depth. Consequently, the thesis does not meet the standards of a systematic, analytical social science study.

Minor criteria:

The thesis demonstrates significant weaknesses in its use of sources, writing style, and adherence to formal requirements. The selection of sources shows a superficial understanding of the subject matter, relying heavily on questionable analyses from the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and the UK Ministry of Defence. These sources are criticized for their reliability and biases, while the thesis neglects more reputable and foundational works by RUSI, Kofman, Gady, and others. This over-reliance on biased sources diminishes the credibility of the research and suggests a need for a more thorough and critical selection of literature.



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Additionally, the writing style is problematic due to frequent use of "preacher's statements," which are inappropriate for academic writing. Examples include statements such as "I explored several papers by Galeoti (p.42)" and "I found the answer to this point in Henry Kissinger's book (p. 46)," which detract from the objectivity and professionalism expected in a social science thesis. While the thesis meets basic formatting and structural requirements, the conclusion is notably underdeveloped, consisting of only one paragraph that fails to summarize the research findings, discuss their implications, or suggest areas for future research. This lack of a comprehensive conclusion indicates a need for significant improvements in both writing style and content organization to meet academic standards.

Assessment of plagiarism:

Turnitin's automated antiplagiarism report indicates a similarity score of 42% for the paper. Closer examination reveals that the thesis contains extensive and often unnecessary and inappropriate direct quotations, as well as shorter, copy-pasted segments (some slightly altered, e.g., one on two words in a sentence) that are not cited at all or are cited as if they were paraphrases. While I do not believe that this is intentional plagiarism, I am afraid that it is further evidence of the multifaceted problems with the thesis.

Overall evaluation:

The thesis entitled "Russo-Ukrainian War through the Lens of Sun Tzu" falls significantly short of the standards required for a social science master's thesis and is on the verge of being defensible. The research question is philosophical rather than analytical, resulting in a descriptive rather than evaluative thesis. The theoretical framework relies heavily on Sun Tzu's "The Art of War" without integrating relevant social science theories, and the methodology is disjointed and lacks rigor. Furthermore, the writing style is marred by inappropriate "preacher's statements," and the selection of sources is superficial and biased. The conclusion is underdeveloped and fails to provide a comprehensive summary of findings or implications.

To improve the thesis, several major revisions are necessary. The research question should be reformulated to be analytical and suitable for systematic data analysis. The introduction needs to clearly introduce the research question and provide a rationale for its selection. The theoretical framework should integrate relevant social science theories and critically engage with existing literature. The methodology must be rigorous and clearly outlined, and the empirical analysis should be coherent and systematically connected to the research question. High-quality, reputable sources should be used, and the writing style should avoid first-person narrative and "preacher's statements." Finally, the conclusion should be expanded to summarize the research findings, discuss their implications, and suggest areas for future research.



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Suggested grade: E/F

Signature: