



## Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Nelson Tang

Title: We Are Family: The Welfare State Agendas of European Populist Radical Right Parties Between 1990 and 2021

Programme/year: Master's in International Security Studies / Summer 2024

Author of Evaluation (second reader): Jonathan Collins

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
<b>Major Criteria</b>			
	Research question, definition of objectives	<b>10</b>	10
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	<b>30</b>	28
	Methodology, analysis, argument	<b>40</b>	35
<i>Total</i>		<b>80</b>	73
<b>Minor Criteria</b>			
	Sources	<b>10</b>	10
	Style	<b>5</b>	4
	Formal requirements	<b>5</b>	5
<i>Total</i>		<b>20</b>	19
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>	92



## Evaluation

### Major criteria:

The author offers a fascinating look at the welfare agendas of post-communist EU states from 1990 to 2021 and compares them to their "old member" counterparts. Providing a comprehensive look into the phenomenon, the thesis dives into the question with a wealth of quantitative and qualitative empirics. My opinion of this work is that it is of expert/excellent standing, and my comments below reflect that.

The introduction sets the tempo for an outstanding read. Navigating the complexities around radical right parties and their manifestations across Europe, the author not only provides a good amount of depth into the topic but also does well to showcase the many literature gaps in the field. In a paper where getting the definitions correct to avoid any labelling discrepancies across the far-right spectrum is essential, the author does splendidly.

Operationalizing historical institutionalism into four determinative factors (welfare state, other political actors, ideas, and critical junctures) provides a fantastic framework for both quantitative and qualitative interpretations of the problem. Figure 1 offers an interesting perspective into the author's conceptualization of the theory, albeit it is confusing in its current state. If there is time during the defense, I would ask the author to explain the outlined interactions within this figure.

At some points, the author overexplains – for example, with the study's ontology and the ideas behind positivism and interpretivism. While the author does well rationalizing their position and how it relates to their investigation, it comes off as unnecessary and a detractor from the actual research design. Are such details needed to commit to a mixed-methods study?

The quantitative and qualitative data analysis approaches seem appropriate for the study. The author does an excellent job of outlining the different methodological components and the steps for each. While not explicitly stated as such, the mixed-methods design is very much appreciated and provides some much-needed qualitative depth to the quantitative measures. However, the author could have explained their argumentation better behind the choice of methods used rather than diving directly into their application and simply citing a popular author in the field.

I am not a quantitative scholar, so I cannot comment on most of the analysis and methodological section. Instead, I will focus on the interpretive analysis, which is expertly done. The author used a magnitude of sources and manifesto material across the political parties, showcasing their commitment to an empirically rich study. The thesis does well in balancing the interpretative analysis across the post-



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communist states. However, given the number of manifestos and states the author was working with, it is difficult. I also do not think everything needed to be translated via the footnote function, but this speaks to the writer's thoroughness.

Finally, as a scholar based in the security studies program, at times, this thesis reads as an exclusively political science piece. How does the author conceptualize their contribution to the security studies field? I see representations of dangerous rhetoric in line with far-right political narratives presented within the thesis, but no larger ideas behind why this field should care. The author could be more explicit here during the defense.

**Minor criteria:**

Following suit from my praises in the previous major criteria section, I cannot find much wrong when it comes to the minor evaluation. The author has utilized a plethora of sources throughout their research, the thesis meets all formal requirements, and I have no problems with the structure utilized.

**Assessment of plagiarism:**

The Turnitin score sits at 8%, with a couple of documents that match around 3% (probably owing to the manifestos highlighted in the text, footnotes, and abstract). I do not see any misconduct or improper citations in the text.

**Overall evaluation:**

This thesis is of excellent quality and is more than worthy of defense. I have commented/questioned where I saw most appropriate and think there are some interesting opportunities for discussion with the committee. Overall, a job very well done.

**Suggested grade: A**

**Signature:**