



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Benjamin Maderstein

Title: Escaping the Bear's Claw: The Effect of Russian Economic Statecraft on the Economic Resilience Efforts of Post-Soviet States

Programme/year: Master in International Security Studies / 2024

Author of Evaluation (second reader): Jan Ludvik

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	9
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	30
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	28
<i>Total</i>		80	77
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	10
	Style	5	4
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	19
TOTAL		100	96



Evaluation

Major criteria:

Thank you for the opportunity to review your thesis. I found it to be an impressive and methodologically rigorous piece of work. The thesis presents a systematic analysis of the chosen topic, showcasing solid engagement with existing literature and a robust use of quantitative data. This is reflective of a high-caliber analytical research paper.

The thesis adopts a methodologically sound approach, using fixed effects regression models and drawing on a carefully curated dataset to test hypotheses related to Russian economic statecraft and export diversification. This demonstrates a solid understanding of quantitative research methods, which is commendable.

You have demonstrated an impressive command of the existing literature. The integration of the theoretical frameworks of economic resilience and trade dependence, along with Hirschman's theory, forms a strong foundation for your analysis.

However, as with all academic work, there are areas where improvement can be made. Below, I outline several specific suggestions for enhancing the thesis. These critiques are meant to guide you toward more advanced levels of analysis and do not detract from the overall quality of the work.

While the research question is compelling, the introduction could better explain the motivation for focusing specifically on export diversification (as opposed to import diversification or other economic variables). Providing more context about why export diversification is the chosen lens to assess Russian economic statecraft would strengthen the foundation of your argument.

The thesis often engages deeply with existing literature, but it can, at times, be difficult to pinpoint where your original contribution begins. This is a common challenge even at the PhD level. I recommend being more explicit in highlighting your unique contribution to the debate, especially in the sections where your empirical findings are discussed.

The section on limitations is extensive, while the conclusion is comparatively brief. Ideally, the conclusion should provide a synthetic discussion that pulls together the key findings and contextualizes them within the broader theoretical and empirical frameworks used in the thesis. I recommend expanding the conclusion to offer a more integrated analysis of the results.

The dataset of 27 Russian economic statecraft events, while methodologically valid, could be further justified. It would strengthen the thesis to elaborate on how these events were selected and why they represent a sufficient sample for your analysis. Additionally, discussing the limitations or implications of this relatively small dataset would add depth to the argument.



Minor criteria:

In several sections, the paragraphs are overly long, making it difficult for the reader to follow the argument. Breaking these longer paragraphs into more digestible parts would improve readability and enhance the clarity of your presentation

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 draw from the works of other authors in an ethically unacceptable manner.

Overall evaluation:

Overall, this is an excellent and methodologically robust thesis. The analysis is rigorous, and the engagement with literature is thorough, demonstrating a high level of academic competence. The areas for improvement are relatively minor and focus on increasing clarity and depth, especially in the articulation of your original contributions and a more balanced synthesis of the findings. These enhancements would further elevate the quality of the thesis, aligning it with even higher academic standards. Given its strengths and scholarly merit, I suggest this thesis be awarded a grade of A.

Suggested grade: A

Signature: