

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Social Sciences
Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism

MA THESIS REVIEW

NOTE: Only the grey fields should be filled out!

Review type (choose one):

Review by thesis supervisor Review by opponent

Thesis author:

Surname and given name: Ana María Sampson van Haeringen

Thesis title: From Witnessing Democratic Backsliding to Being a Journalist in Exile: Navigating Journalistic Authority and Professional Safety As a Journalist From an Authoritarian Context

Reviewer:

Surname and given name: Barbora Součková

Affiliation: ICSJ FSS CHU

1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND THESIS (mark one box for each row)

		Conforms to approved research proposal	Changes are well explained and appropriate	Changes are explained but are inappropriate	Changes are not explained and are inappropriate	Does not conform to approved research proposal
1.1	Research objective(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	Methodology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.3	Thesis structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMENTARY (description of the relationship between the research proposal and the thesis. If there are problems, please be specific):

Thesis adheres to the main research objectives, methodology and structure set out in the approved thesis.

2. EVALUATION OF THE THESIS CONTENT

Use letters A – B – C – D – E – F (A=best, F= failed)

		Grade
2.1	Quality and appropriateness of the theoretical framework	C
2.2	Ability to critically evaluate and apply the literature	C
2.3	Quality and soundness of the empirical research	A
2.4	Ability to select the appropriate methods and to use them correctly	A
2.5	Quality of the conclusion	A
2.6	Thesis originality and its contribution to academic knowledge production	A

COMMENTARY (description of thesis content and the main problems):

Theoretical part: The author presents the literature review together with the theoretical framework; it is more appropriate to divide it into individual chapters. This part of the thesis elaborates on important theoretical concepts such as exile journalism, precarity, and the relationship between journalism and democracy, which is appropriately chosen. In the case of the literature on journalism and democracy, it would have been appropriate to add influential authors, such as Denis McQuail or Brian McNair, who have contributed significantly to the field with their theoretical knowledge. It would also be helpful to incorporate normative journalism theories and concepts such as the fourth pillar of democracy or watchdog vs. lapdog. It would also be beneficial to reflect on professionalism in the theory due to the RQ. The author appropriately identifies the main theoretical concepts, but they deserve a deeper and more critical reflection. The theory thus remains rather superficial. Moreover, the theoretical text is made up of a limited number of academic sources that are repeated.

Methodology: The chosen methods for data collection and analysis are appropriate. Unfortunately, the methodology lacks theoretical support; the author does not rely on any sources of theoretical literature on the

chosen methods. Moreover, she does not discuss them in depth, so the author's research paradigms are unclear from the text. The literature on methodology is essential mainly to clarify the limitations of the chosen methods (e.g. while the author describes the process she followed - she mentions Braun and Clark - but she needs to elaborate further on the six steps of their thematic analysis approach). In the introduction chapter of this thesis, the author presents her hypothesis, but she does not work with it at all in the methodological design. Therefore, it would be more suitable not to include it in the text since she does not base her research on it. Hence, the author mentions that she analysed the data deductively, which is also a procedure associated with hypothesis testing. RQ and their analysis using the chosen method are inductive. However, I appreciate that the author reflects the limitations of the work and her own bias.

Analysis and Discussion: The author presents a high-quality analysis that comprehensively views the topic. She describes each theme that emerges from the analysis and illustrates it with interview quotations. The analysis is well done and presents very interesting findings. It is logically structured and comprehensive and perfectly illustrates some exile journalists' working conditions. Moreover, the author includes critical perspectives and reflection. Moreover, the author includes critical perspectives and reflection, which is also evident in the final discussion of the results, which is of high quality and is critical.

3. EVALUATION OF THE THESIS FORM

Use letters A – B – C – D – E – F (A=best, F= failed)

		Grade
3.1	Quality of the structure	B
3.2	Quality of the argumentation	C
3.3	Appropriate use of academic terminology	A
3.4	Quality, quantity and appropriateness of the citations (both in the theory part and in the empirical part)	C
3.5	Conformity to quotation standards (*)	B
3.6	Use of an academic writing style, and correct use of language (both grammar and spelling)	A
3.6	Quality of the textual lay-outing and appendices	A

(*) in case the text contains quotations without references, the grade is F; in case the text contains plagiarised parts, do not recommend the thesis for defence and suggest disciplinary action against the author instead.

COMMENTARY (description of thesis form and the main problems):

The structure of the thesis is sophisticated, but especially in the theoretical part, it could be better divided into more specific sub-chapters.

The argumentation could be more elaborate, critical, and convincing in the theoretical part.

The author adheres to quotation standards (she uses fewer sources in general; it would be advisable to add more literature to give the thesis a more robust theoretical grounding). She occasionally uses secondary sources, which should not be included in the thesis. At the same time, the theoretical part of the thesis could be enriched with direct quotations that should be used to support specific arguments. It should also be mentioned that if the author presents a typology in the text, she should reference it with the specific page number of the publication (see O'Loughlin and Schafraad, 2016).

The standard of the language of the thesis is high. Its graphic and formal editing is also of a high standard.

4. OVERALL EVALUATION (provide a summarizing list of the thesis's strengths and weaknesses):

Ana María Sampson van Haeringen presented her thesis topic "From Witnessing Democratic Backsliding to Being a Journalist in Exile: Navigating Journalistic Authority and Professional Safety As a Journalist From an Authoritarian Context". This is an interesting and important topic that is definitely worthy of more research as it deals with the specific conditions of journalists in authoritarian and non-democratic regimes or forced exile. It is clear from the text that the author is passionate about the topic and that she is interested in it. The analysis presented demonstrates the urgency of the topic itself. It is chilling to read it, but it demonstrates how important it is. The thesis has evident qualities, which include, first of all, the analysis itself, which is really valuable and enriching. Nevertheless, it also has its weaknesses, mainly concerning the theoretical anchoring of the whole thesis.

Considering the above, I thus propose a grade of B.

5. QUESTIONS OR TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED DURING THE THESIS DEFENSE:

5.1	How did you approach minimising language barriers or shifts in meaning during the interviews, which were collected in two languages and then analysed in English?
5.2	
5.3	
5.4	

6. ANTIPLAGIARISM CHECK

The reviewer is familiar with the thesis' score in plagiarism analysis in SIS.

If the score is above 5%, please evaluate and indicate problems:

6.1	The similarities are mainly in direct quotations or in the thesis template.
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7. SUGGESTED GRADE OF THE THESIS AS A WHOLE (choose one or two)

- A
- B
- C
- D
- E
- F

If the mark is an "F", please provide your reasons for not recommending the thesis for defence:

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Date: 11. 9. 2024

Signature:

A finalised review should be printed, signed and submitted in two copies to the secretary of the Department of Media Studies. The electronic version of the review should be converted into a PDF and uploaded to SIS, or sent to the Department of Media Studies secretary who will upload it to SIS on the reviewer's behalf.

Do not upload PDFs with a scanned signature, the review uploaded to SIS must be without signature.