



## Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Nina Alexandra Schoenbaechler

Title: Russian Disinformation on Social Media: Uncovering Narratives in Moldova Since the 2022 Onset of the War in Ukraine

Programme/year: MISS/2024

Author of Evaluation (supervisor): Kristián Földes

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>	38
<i>Total</i>		<b>80</b>	76
<b>Minor Criteria</b>			
	Sources	<b>10</b>	10
	Style	<b>5</b>	5
	Formal requirements	<b>5</b>	4
<i>Total</i>		<b>20</b>	19
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>	95



## Evaluation

### Major criteria:

I want to congratulate Nina on her remarkable dedication to this thesis. She demonstrated her competence in the field by actively engaging with her research, often consulting, and working autonomously throughout the process. The thesis effectively establishes precise and well-defined research objectives, namely in investigating the influence of Russian disinformation in Moldova during the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Opting on Moldova as a case study was a wise decision, considering the country's significant geopolitical significance and susceptibility to external manipulation. This emphasis not only aids to comprehending the situation in Moldova but also provides broader insights into the dynamics of information warfare in post-Soviet republics.

An exemplary feature of the thesis lies in its robust theoretical structure. Nina adeptly incorporates fundamental principles from concepts such as hybrid warfare, information warfare, and theories such as agenda setting and framing. She utilises these theories/concepts to demonstrate her profound comprehension of the construction and dissemination of disinformation operations, particularly in their impact on public sentiment and political outcomes. Furthermore, her methodological approach is quite praiseworthy. Nina independently gathered data by extracting more than 185,000 messages from Telegram channels. Furthermore, employing Structural Topic Modelling and Large Language Models to analyse these messages introduces a state-of-the-art aspect to her research, enabling her to uncover the (meta)narratives and methods ingrained in the disinformation efforts. The work is enhanced by the inclusion of time series and causal effect analysis, which demonstrate how the Ukraine conflict has heightened these efforts in Moldova.

### Minor criteria:

The writing is characterised by clarity, precision, and professionalism, which enables the comprehension of intricate concepts. The thesis exhibits a coherent and comprehensible structure, wherein each section seamlessly progresses from the previous one. Visual aids are effectively employed to enhance comprehension of important information and statistics. Only minor formal deficiencies have been detected – spacing etc.

### Assessment of plagiarism:

The Turnitin check shows 19% similarity with other texts, but after a detailed assessment no serious issue has been detected.



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**Overall evaluation:**

Ultimately, Nina's thesis provides a noteworthy and current addition to the field of Security Studies. Her thorough research and application of theoretical frameworks lead to a detailed and well-conducted analysis of Russian disinformation operations in Moldova. This research is applicable not only to Moldova but also to the wider examination of information warfare in the field of international affairs. I am convinced that the current state of research has the potential to be a high-quality project proposal for a PhD if Nina decides to continue in academia.

**Suggested grade: A**

**Signature:**