



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Josefine Mainka

Title: Russian Influence in the Global South: Analyzing the Portrayal of Russia and the West in Zimbabwe During the Russian War in Ukraine

Programme/year: ISS, 2024

Author of Evaluation (second reader): Emil Aslan

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	9
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	28
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	37
<i>Total</i>		80	74
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	9
	Style	5	5
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	19
TOTAL		100	93



Evaluation

Major criteria: The reviewed thesis seeks to look at how the Putin-constructed strategic narrative is mirrored in the Zimbabwean media landscape during the Russian war in Ukraine. For this purpose, the author carries out a qualitative content analysis of two-tiered sources – Putin’s publications preceding the war and the Zimbabwean media’s publications – in order to shed light on the Russian influence, or rather influence campaigns, in the global South. Related publications in key (?) Zimbabwean media outlets - ZBC News and The Sunday Mail – are observed. The author concludes that the said media use Putin’s narrative as a blueprint and „embed in their own security landscape.“

I find the objective of this thesis timely and important. Sub-Saharan Africa is widely under-researched when it comes to Russia’s media/influence campaigns, with the main strand of research focusing on the European continent. The study of Zimbabwean media landscape might thus enrich our knowledge of the mechanisms deployed by Russian propaganda machine (deliberately?) in the Third World, the role of the latter becoming increasingly critical in Russia’s attempts to revive a global anti-Western agenda.

While causal relationships are difficult to establish – something the author has a tendency to tilt to from time to time in her explanations - I like the author’s research design, methods and analysis. I consider this thesis an original, innovative, and important contribution to the field that can’t be overestimated in terms of its salience.

Minor criteria: The thesis is engaging, well-structured, well-written.

Assessment of plagiarism: none detected.

Overall evaluation: An excellent piece of research on an increasingly important phenomenon. Good research design, good thesis structure, good knowledge of the empirical context, sound methods, interesting analysis. The thesis needs to be published.

Suggested grade: A



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Signature: Emil Aslan