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: International Security Studies/ 2024

Author of Evaluation (supervisor): Aliaksei Kazharski

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	**10**	10
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	**30**	30
	Methodology, analysis, argument	**40**	32
Total		***80***	72
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	**10**	10
	Style	**5**	5
	Formal requirements	**5**	5
Total		***20***	20
TOTAL		***100***	92

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Evaluation

Major criteria:

Minor criteria:

Assessment of plagiarism: I could see no indications of plagiarism.

Overall evaluation:

The thesis addresses the very important and timely topic of pro-Russian narratives in the Global South and the discrepancies with the way the war against Ukraine is generally framed in the Global North. The author uses Zimbabwe as an underresearched case study in order to demonstrate how the local media echo Putin's storyline about the war. The thesis is well-written and well-structured and includes a solid theoretical and methodological discussion. The author goes about her analysis carefully and diligently. While the choice of sources on the Russian side may seem limited, it is supplemented by a discussion of the secondary literature on the major Russian ideological constructs. The main contribution of the thesis lies in digesting the rhetorical strategies of the Zimbabwean media and demonstrating how they are aligned with the main ideologemes promoted in Putin's speeches and articles. Here, I would, perhaps, welcome more illustrative direct in-text quotes from the Zimbabwean sources as well as a bit of a discussion on what kind of media it is that we are dealing with here. For example, whether they are fully under government control and what their actual scope of impact is domestically. There are also some minor shortcomings in the thesis as regards reconstructing the historical background to the 2022 invasion, but they should probably be attributed to the way the whole affair had been narrated for years by the bulk of the existing literature in the first place - containing obvious pro-Russian biases and typically omitting important facts like the election rigging attempt in 2004 and the Moscow-backed attempt at an authoritarian takeover by Yanukovych in early 2014. So, the author is not fully to blame here and also this does not affect the quality of the main analysis. I hope the author develops her research into a published study at some point.

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Suggested grade:

92 ("A")

Signature: