



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Karolína Farská

Title: Eroded resilience of democracy: Attacks on journalists as a part of a political agenda in Slovakia

Programme/year: Security studies / 2024

Author of Evaluation (second reader): Jan Ludvík

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	8
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	25
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	37
<i>Total</i>		80	70
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	10
	Style	5	5
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	20
TOTAL		100	90



Evaluation

Major criteria:

- The overarching rationale for the topic is well articulated. However, the justification for the thesis's specific investigation could be strengthened. While there are two clearly defined research questions, a common issue seen in many theses, including this one, is the lack of justification for the specific questions being addressed, despite the broader phenomena being well justified.
- The first half of the literature review is well-grounded in scholarly literature. However, the second half seems more focused on providing context rather than reviewing existing scholarly accounts related to the specific topic under investigation. Additionally, the chapter would benefit from a concluding synthesis that summarizes how others have addressed the thesis's research questions.
- The methodology is well described, but it is not consistently executed as outlined. This is particularly evident in the theoretical section, which was intended to apply grounded theory. I had difficulty identifying any theory development in the thesis. The theoretical section leans heavily on empirical data, and it was unclear what contribution it made beyond the Slovak case.
- There is no clear conceptual delimitation of what constitutes an "attack on journalists," even though this is central to the thesis. This lack of clarity makes it difficult to determine what qualifies as an attack, which presents a challenge. At times, the thesis gives the impression that actions generally considered legitimate, such as suing a journalist for libel, are framed as attacks simply because the journalists interviewed view them unfavorably.
- This leads to another area of concern. The thesis commendably draws on a relatively large number of original interviews, which is worthy of praise. However, the analysis of these interviews could benefit from a more rigorous approach. First, it is unclear how the interviewees were selected and why, which opens the possibility of selection bias. Second, the interviews are treated at face value, without sufficient critical engagement. While I understand the author's implicit sympathy for the journalists and their clear disapproval of Robert Fico's government, the analysis should adopt a more critical stance toward its sources.

Minor criteria:

- The thesis draws from solid knowledge of literature, uses an appropriate style, and fulfills all formal criteria.



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

Overall evaluation:

Overall, the thesis demonstrates a strong grasp of the overarching topic and features commendable empirical work, particularly in its extensive use of original interviews. While there are areas that could be improved, such as providing clearer justifications for the specific research questions, refining the literature review, and adopting a more rigorous analytical approach, these shortcomings do not overshadow the thesis's strengths. Given the solid engagement with relevant literature, the appropriate methodology, and the quality of empirical research, the thesis deserves a grade in the A or B range.

Suggested grade: A/B

Signature: