



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Alexander J. Sherwood

Title: A Framework to Weaponize Risk, Targeting an Opponent's Supply-Chain Vulnerabilities

Programme/year: MISS 2024

Author of Evaluation (second reader): Mgr. Luka Nikolić

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	10
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	24
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	38
<i>Total</i>		80	72
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	10
	Style	5	5
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	20
TOTAL		100	92



Evaluation

Overall evaluation:

Even though the task of an opponent is to track down possible flows and fallacies in a paper, in this case it would be an utterly unrewarding job. With the most immense pleasure, I can state that the thesis in front of us represents an effort that emanates very high academic standards. It indicates that the author has been diligently committed towards polishing a set of necessary analytical and epistemological traits to produce such an output. Starting with clear research aims, focused and highly technical methodology, going over an extremely robust in-depth literature review, all the way to the refined treatment of the case study, this thesis is well crafted and logically coherent. It satisfies all the formal requirements, data sources are valid and reliable, referencing style is consistent throughout the thesis, while academic English is without a doubt at the highest possible level.

The thesis predominantly deals with the security of supply-chains in the domain of critical raw minerals, attempting to define a relevant framework on how to weaponize risks. The topic is relevant both in academic and practical sense, with many theoretical layers to be analyzed, retaining its primary importance of applicability in strategic and operational realities.

However, three are the potential problems I would like to address:

- A) Atheoretical treatment of the topic – the level of theoretical ambition is stated at the p. 16: "realism provides a convenient framework for contextualizing risk weaponization, nothing more." Therefore, the theory in the text is (ab)used as a set of convenient "baskets" that fit predefined and always-already finished objects. The true meaning of theory is exactly the opposite, to give birth to those objects (concepts), not to be a mute witness of their application. Consequently, despite the initial promise, the thesis treats topic in an atheoretical manner.
- B) Security Studies as a redundant context – if the author removed every single mention of Security Studies and International Relations from the text, the thesis would still stand on its own as a coherent academic piece. In my opinion, in that iteration it would be an even better piece (especially since the discipline of Security Studies is arguably on its deathbed). SS and IR here serve as logical corollaries, at best of secondary importance, whose presence is welcome and justified, but not vitally important for the argument.
- C) Weak prospects for generalization – the eternal research dilemma is whether to opt for grand theory which will be universally valid or to micromanage and master a single narrow niche. In the case of this thesis, the answer could undoubtedly be found in mid-level analysis, incorporating something from both approaches. However, the thesis is overwhelmingly focused on creating a framework which will suit the case of magnesium, even to the level that one could imagine the thesis being cognitively mapped precisely from the case onwards. While this is certainly a valid method, it raises suspicions about the possibilities



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for generalization or any kind of plausible intervention in the higher-order categories.

My remarks, representing food for thought rather than fully-fledged criticism, do not even attempt to deny that this thesis is an academic output of very high quality. Under proper guidance and the imperative of theoretical refinement, this material can be a great starting point for research at a doctoral level!

For the very end, it is my pleasure to recommend the thesis for the defense and to assess it with the highest grade.

Suggested grade: A

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cuba. M.'.