# Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Angela Mehrer

Title: Information Warfare and the Politics of Threats: An analysis of Russian Information Warfare on Germany and its Perception by German politicians

Programme/year: MISS / 2020

Author of Evaluation (external assessor): Mgr. Vojtěch Bahenský

| Criteria | Definition | Maximum | Points |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Major Criteria** | | | |
| | Research question, definition of objectives | **10** | 8 |
| | Theoretical/conceptual framework | **30** | 27 |
| | Methodology, analysis, argument | **40** | 27 |
| *Total* | | *80* | 62 |
| **Minor Criteria** | | | |
| | Sources | **10** | 10 |
| | Style | **5** | 4 |
| | Formal requirements | **5** | 5 |
| *Total* | | *20* | 19 |
| | | | |
| **TOTAL** | | *100* | 81 |

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# Evaluation

Major criteria:

The main strengths of the thesis are the scope of empirical material studies in the thesis and extensive utilized theoretical literature. At the same time, the thesis has some problems, mainly in the area of congruence between postulated question, method and data. In general, the thesis is conflicted in nature in multiple respects. The most fundamental of those is the nature of the aim of the thesis.

While questions are explicitly causal in nature, lot of the thesis including most importantly the analysis of Information warfare (IW) as a threat is of more descriptive nature. The difference between dependent variable and independent variables is often more implied then explicitly reflected and employed in the analysis. In case of IW, the dependent variable seems to vanish almost completely with silence (absence of cases) being the other value of the dependent variable. In case of Russia, the thesis is faring much better, but it focuses on independent variable of political party affiliation to the detriment of others. It is hinted at in the conclusion, that the author also checked for personal ties, but it is unclear, whether it refers to all politicians. Given the fact, that entire speeches were classified based on dependent variables, presumably using frames which were derived from independent variables, there is a concerned, whether this does not bias the analysis (e.g. everyone who invokes energy security has to be coded as friendly). In relation to this, it would be beneficial for thesis to discus the inherent limitation of the speeches as source of (especially independent) variables. There is preciously little recognition of the fact, that reasoning given in public speeches may or may not match the real sources of threat perception (or may even reflect party line more than personal opinion).

The second dimension in which the thesis seems conflicted is inclusion of both type of warfare and foreign state as a threat. Given the overlap and substantive differences in factors explaining their variance (see above), it might have been better to focus just on Russia or to focus on Russian information warfare.

The last point in which the thesis is somewhat unclear is position of the author on the nature of threat posed by Russia or Information warfare. The author seems to have some 'objective' benchmark showing her, that information warfare and Russia indeed are a threat, but at the same time employs more constructivist approach to threat perception/construction. The result is that the author's opinion regarding the 'correct' threat assessment seems to be seeping through the text at some places but is nowhere clearly stated or explained and defended.

Some smaller puzzling choices by the author involve use of managerial literature for definition of threat perception (p.6).

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Minor criteria:

The thesis is overall well written and sufficiently clearly structured. There are some puzzling choices (e.g. using line in a figures to denote averages across nominal variable). The presentation of results could also be clearer, and more structured according to postulated tested hypotheses. It is shame, that thesis gets to clear presentation of responses to research questions only in conclusion. The thesis would also benefit from some extra editing, as there are some mistakes left (e.g. first line of page 66, where Russia as a partner frame is misidentified as the one of two originally developed).

Overall evaluation:

Overall, the thesis is well thought-out and carefully crafted piece of scholarship on relevant contemporary topic. It suffers from lack of clearer focus and to some degree on less then optimal match between method and data on one hand and research aims and results on the other hand. Despite these shortcomings, it can still be considered as solid thesis, straddling a line between B and C grades.

Suggested grade: B

Signature:

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