



## Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Bianka Béres

Title: *The future of NATO: between territorial defense and out-of-area operations*

Programme/year: International Security Studies / 2021

Author of Evaluation (external assessor): Jan Ludvik

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
<b>Major Criteria</b>			
	Research question, definition of objectives	<b>10</b>	7
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	<b>30</b>	10
	Methodology, analysis, argument	<b>40</b>	20
<i>Total</i>		<b>80</b>	37
<b>Minor Criteria</b>			
	Sources	<b>10</b>	0
	Style	<b>5</b>	4
	Formal requirements	<b>5</b>	0
<i>Total</i>		<b>20</b>	4
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>	41



## Evaluation

Major criteria:

This thesis asks, “*what could be the central issues in the NATO’s next Strategic Concept?*” (p.12). On the one hand, this research question is relevant and has significant policy relevance. On the other hand, it is quite unfortunate and leads to a deeply problematic dissertation.

I think the question is only relevant if it could be answered with sufficient detail. This is not the case in the thesis’s current form, and I am not sure it can be easily fixed. Predicting the future is possible but immensely difficult. Below, I outline several points that need to be addressed to make the thesis defensible.

- Most importantly, the thesis needs an analytical strategy to be able to say what will be the key issues in the future strategic concept; or at least to say it with enough detail and meaningful reliability. One can draw inferences from the history, explore how were the previous strategic concepts prepared and seek generalization, which can then be applied to the present case. It is possible to use simulations and models to predict what will be in the future strategic concept. It is also possible to survey experts, which I think is the easiest way. This thesis, however, lacks any strategy that could lead to the identification of the key issues for NATO’s new strategic concept. I think this needs to be fixed.
- Second, the thesis largely describes and does not analyze. What is written appears to have limited relevance for the future strategic concept. In its current form, the thesis mostly cherry-picks from NATO’s history and current international security debates. Why does the thesis (superficially) review NATO’s history? What does the past tell us about the future strategic concept? Why are some topics listed as current tasks and challenges, and others are not? For instance, there is almost no debate about future enlargement, even though what to do with Ukraine and Georgia’s aspirations will have to be addressed during the negotiations that will lead to NATO’s future strategic concept. On the other hand, the thesis extensively discusses North Korea, which is a topic that concerns NATO far less. Why are some topics included and others are not?
- Third, the thesis needs a central argument, and both the argument and the research question need motivation. Why is the research question important, or perhaps more accurately, why is the answer/argument the thesis provides (to this question) important? The thesis argues that



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“to answer the research question set at the beginning (“What could be the central issues in the NATO’s next Strategic Concept?”), the primary identified points are: 1) defence, 2) deterrence and resilience, 3) values and partnerships, 4) climate change, 5) new technologies” (p.58). Why is this answer important to an expert community? I am afraid such an answer is relatively shallow and borders what is obvious.

- Last, I am not convinced by the thesis theoretical/conceptual framework. The thesis pays one-page lip service to “liberal institutionalism”. However, these five paragraphs do not even describe what liberal institutionalism is. This is not to say the thesis needs to be deeply theoretical. I would applaud a policy-oriented thesis had it been able to make a robust policy-relevant argument and marshal appropriate evidence to support it. However, the current theoretical section with a brief reference to liberal institutionalism does not work.

Minor criteria:

The style, sources, and adherence to formal requirements are equally problematic. First, the sources used in this thesis are far too limited. The references include almost no academic sources. Going through the references, I found only two articles from high-ranking journals and not a single monograph. I must say I am a bit surprised why the thesis does not utilize literature from the courses. Just in the *NATO and EU in Crisis Management*, students work with influential literature on NATO, including Gier Lundestad’s seminal book *The United States and Western Europe since 1945: from "empire" by invitation to transatlantic drift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); M.J. William’s Enduring, but irrelevant? Britain, NATO and the future of the Atlantic alliance. *International Politics*, 50(3), 360-386; or Mat Kroenig’s Facing reality: Getting NATO ready for a new Cold War. *Survival*, 57(1), 49-70. I am sure there is more.

To make matters worse, the thesis is plagued with citation malpractice. In fact, the thesis at least borders plagiarism if not being beyond the red line. For instance, the three last paragraphs in chapter 1.2 Conceptual Anchoring are essentially copy-pasted from Tana Johnson and Andrew Heiss, “Liberal Institutionalism,” chap. 8 in *International Organization and Global Governance*, 2nd ed., ed. Thomas G. Weiss and Rorden Wilkinson (London: Routledge, 2018), 123–34, doi: 10.4324/9781315301914. Half of the paragraph about the Iran nuclear deal (p.34)



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is copy pasted from Council on Foreign Relations web page (<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-iran-nuclear-deal>) with no reference to the original source. Another almost entirely copy-pasted paragraph appears in the chapter on Cyber threat (one starting with “An example of such hostile action...”). These are just examples. There is much more. All these malpractices can be easily seen in the Turnitin report on IS system.

Last, the thesis would greatly benefit from copyediting. I know it is not easy to write in one’s second language, and errors are inevitable. However, errors in the thesis hamper clarity. Sometimes, I was wondering what the sentence says. Sometimes, the sentence probably says the opposite of what it should. Below I list several examples, which I think represent this problem.

- *In the last decades the NATO experienced that out-of-area missions strengthened its ability to provide strong territorial defense to its members states (p.9).*
- *In my dissertation I will prove that the Organization never intervened in any country against the will of the legal leadership of the troubled country (p.13).*
- *China wants to have greater authoritarianism and expand its territory, which raises questions among the NATO member states (p.33).*
- *My research question is based on the one handwritten facts and documents and on the other hand prediction of outcomes represented by secondary sources, like essays, articles and political analyses (p.11).*
- *NATO membership required a general conduct line: member states built similar internal political system and in the international policy they were committed to solve conflicts in a peaceful way among each other (p.13).*
- *The NATO’s relation with Iran also includes key players in the crises such as France, United Kingdom, Turkey and the United States. While the Alliance is aware of the threat Iran poses with its missile-defense program, there isn't any comprehensive action taken against it (p.34).*
- *Since they are not reliant on export, they can produce their engine for advanced ballistic missiles (p.35).*



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Overall evaluation:

I am really sorry to write this, but this thesis is not defensible. The thesis needs argument, analytical strategy, deeper empirics, better sources, and copyediting. Furthermore, it needs to get rid of citation malpractice, which borders plagiarism. I know this is tough, but I think the best thing Bianca can do is to withdraw the thesis and rework it throughout the summer.

Suggested grade: F

Signature: