



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Joseph Thomas Ellis III

Title: NATO's Deterrence Strategy: Causes of Shortcomings When Facing Russian Hybrid Strategy

Programme/year: International Security Studies

Author of Evaluation (supervisor): Jan Ludvík, Ph.D.

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	10
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	23
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	30
<i>Total</i>		80	63
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	9
	Style	5	4
	Formal requirements	5	4
<i>Total</i>		20	17
TOTAL		100	80



Evaluation

Major criteria:

This thesis addresses an important topic. It asks, "what are the causes or reasonings behind the shortcomings of NATO deterrence strategy when facing a Russian Hybrid Strategy? Such a question has significant policy relevance. Being able to identify why is NATO's deterrence strategy deficient would, of course, help address the deficiencies.

I think there is much to like about the thesis. The literature review is well executed and identifies four streams of inspiration. The theoretical debate about deterrence and hybrid warfare is detailed and well-informed. The analysis provides some interesting insights. Indeed, this is a good thesis.

Having said that, I can also see room for improvement. I believe three points could have been better addressed (or can be addressed during the thesis defense). First, I think the theoretical section discusses deterrence and hybrid warfare separately. The reader can learn what deterrence is and hybrid warfare is, but I think more could have been said about what is (theoretically) expected about deterring hybrid threats. Similarly, the analytical section discusses the conventional military and non-military dimensions of NATO's deterrence (and Russian threat in the domain) separately. Many would object that the whole point of 'the hybridity' is the combination of non-military and military measures.

Second, the communication between the theoretical and empirical sections is somewhat implicit. I think the analytical section could have more explicitly drawn from the theory.

Third, and I think this is the most important caveat, relatively little is said about the actual causes of the shortcomings in NATO's deterrence strategy. The analysis emphasizes identifying these shortcomings, effectively prioritizing the thesis' secondary question (in what ways is NATO's deterrence abilities lacking against Russian abilities) over the main question. Of course, one cannot analyze why the deficiencies exist unless one knows the deficiencies. However, more analysis could have been provided to answer the why question. In the thesis's current form, a more extensive discussion of the causes of NATO's deterrence strategy's shortcomings only appears in conclusion. I think this is a pity. There are interesting observations in this discussion of the causes of shortcomings. I think this would have deserved a distinct analytical chapter.



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Minor criteria:

I only have four comments to the minor criteria, not of them being a significant problem.

First, I think the thesis could have utilized top academic journal more. Some articles appear to be very close to the thesis research question making one wonder why these do not appear among references (e.g. Wigell, Mikael. "Democratic Deterrence: How to Dissuade Hybrid Interference." *The Washington Quarterly* 44.1 (2021): 49-67; Ven Bruusgaard, Kristin. "Russian strategic deterrence." *Survival* 58.4 (2016): 7-26; Halas, Matus. "Proving a negative: why deterrence does not work in the Baltics." *European Security* 28.4 (2019): 431-448; Kragh, Martin, and Sebastian Åsberg. "Russia's strategy for influence through public diplomacy and active measures: the Swedish case." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 40.6 (2017): 773-816).

Second, I think referencing in footnotes is a bit odd. I am not sure to what citation style it adheres, but it is unfriendly for the reader.

Third, I think the style might benefit from some edits. I know I am not a native speaker while J.T. is, but I am pretty convinced the style suffers from excessive verbiage. E.g. why do you say: 'How does the North Atlantic Treaty organization implement a specific deterrent strategy towards Russian hybrid strategies and what shortcomings may exist within this current form of deterrence strategy?' instead of 'What is NATO's deterrence strategy against hybrid threats, how is it implemented, and what are its shortcomings?'

Overall evaluation:

Overall, I think J.T. wrote a good thesis, perhaps a very good one. While the thesis is not free from some weaknesses, its strengths certainly outweigh these weaknesses. I am glad I can recommend this thesis for the defense.

Suggested grade: B/C

Signature: