



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Mikhail Mkrtchyan

Title: *The Russian Federation in Front of the 21st Century Security Challenges: Cooperation or Confrontation*

Programme/year: International Security Studies/2022

Author of Evaluation (external assessor): Anzhelika Solovyeva

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	4
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	5
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	29
<i>Total</i>		80	38
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	8
	Style	5	3
	Formal requirements	5	3
<i>Total</i>		20	14
TOTAL		100	52



Evaluation

Major criteria:

The introduction does not clearly state the goal of this research. Rather, it presents a general historical overview, with a couple of controversial judgemental statements (e.g. “The failure of the USSR to comprehend and understand the fact that the world-realities had been rapidly changing led to the ultimate collapse of that state.”; “The adaptation to the new realities and cooperation with the West should be prioritized. The agenda of the unnecessary rivalry with the West and securitization of NATO must be reconsidered and left in the past.”). The only research direction it introduces is the “security dilemma” for Russia (i.e. “either to cooperate for ending stalemate with the West and focus on the existential threats or continue confronting the West, economically and politically losing”), but this is not a research question and even the formulation itself is judgemental.

The unfortunate consequence of this is that the thesis lacks a clear focus throughout most of the text. To be more specific, it brings onboard a lot of empirical material and academic arguments but lacks a clear line of argumentation. Even more importantly it lacks a solid underlying theoretical and methodological framework and, as a result, analytical rigor that would generally be expected of a master’s thesis. It begins with a general outline of what the author calls “Cold War 2.0”, then puts together different facts related to “Russia-U.S. Nuclear Confrontation”, then tells the story of “Western sanctions on Russia”, then discusses “Domestic challenges” (seemingly, in view of Russia’s confrontation with the West, but there lacks a systematic interpretation of all the presented facts in this light), then reviews the relationship between Russia and Turkey, Russia and China, and finally ends with “Russia’s strategic deadlock in Ukraine”. Overall, it reads more like a report.

Minor criteria:

The author sometimes operates with quite long portions of the text copied (with minor rephrasing) from external sources, even though original references are generally provided.

Overall evaluation:

The thesis meets minimum requirements to be eligible for defence.

Suggested grade: **E**

Signature: *Anzhelika Solovyeva*