

# MASTER'S EXAMINER REPORT

*GPS – Geopolitical Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University*

<b>Thesis title:</b>	Russia and the EU: Oil and Gas as a Source of Power
<b>Name of Student:</b>	Diana Medvedeva
<b>Referee (incl. titles):</b>	<b>PhDr. Magda B. Leichtova, Ph.D.</b>
<b>Report Due Date:</b>	<b>06/06/2022</b>

**Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the four numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).**

**1) Contribution and argument:**

Diana's thesis is highly topical for current discussion about Russia-West energy relations. It has some potential to contribute usefully to ongoing discussion about nature of Western dependence on Russian hydrocarbons. Since the Russian invasion to Ukraine the issue has become almost purely geopolitical, but had Russia perceived the relationship as business-based or rather geopolitics-based before the invasion? This thesis attempts to find responses to this question by tapping into Russian domestic debates about key energy projects. Through analysis of domestic narratives, rather than Western-oriented ones, Diana's gained valuable insight into Russian perceptions of energy relations with Europe.

Unfortunately, this type of reasoning is missing in the text, and readers may wonder why to read an analysis which does not take into account recent dramatic changes in Russia-West energy relations. I understand that author, if citizen of Russian Federation, may face serious limitations and possibly long-term consequences back in Russia when it comes to stating publicly something about the current war, but linking the topic with current situation to highlight importance of the topic itself, could have been done probably without any security risks.

**2) Theoretical and methodological framework:**

I agree that strategic narrative concept is probably useful tool to approach the topic and Diana has shown that she understands the concept and has read the basic relevant literature.

I consider unfortunate that in the latest version of the introduction, research questions are presented which differ from hypotheses and research questions outlined on page 14. It creates unnecessary confusion and blurs goals and focus of the research.

While the selection of media outputs for analysis is explained sufficiently, the analysis itself, and "conversion" of media messages into strategic narratives feel sometimes a bit intuitive. I would encourage Diana to discuss her approach with the commission (for example how the ExNonPol code is analysed on page 41).

**3) Sources and literature:**

There still is added value in Czech environment when a thesis can systematically work with local (non-English) sources. In this sense, it is very useful that author not only understands Russian enough to read in Russian but has that level of proficiency that she is able to follow subtle language nuances and detect implicit meanings. This adds to credibility of her findings and increases the value of the thesis itself.

In some parts author relies heavily on one source which is convenient for her purposes (Szostek), and in some parts I would appreciate more references to relevant sources of data which would support presented arguments (i.e. Russian media ecology).

#### 4) Manuscript form and structure:

Overall structure of the thesis is clear and logical. But when reading the thesis, I still find the practical part rather difficult to navigate. There is a lot of code abbreviations which are not intuitively recognizable and the list of them is not introduced until after the data analysis. Even the data analysis itself is not very reader friendly and difficult to follow.

I did not see the conclusion of the thesis before, and I have to say, that I consider its form highly unfortunate. It is one of the most important parts of every publication, where author has a chance to “sell” all major findings, clarify the structure of all arguments, and summarize her approach. In this form, the conclusion does not fulfill its role and does not serve its purpose.

Finally, as I will not be present to the exam, I would like to inform the commission that despite we had several consultations about the topic with Diana, I only read the thesis shortly before its submission, and only part of my recommendations has been reflected (probably due to shortage of time), which may explain some of my critical remarks above. Regardless of some of the shortcomings, I still consider the thesis interesting, useful, decently executed, and I appreciate all the effort made.

#### 5) Quality of presentation

The thesis is written in decent English, as far as I can tell. I mentioned that some parts are difficult to follow, but I think it is rather structural than stylistic issue.

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Contribution (research quality, analysis, and conclusions) (max. 40 points)</i>	30
<i>Theoretical and methodological framework (max. 25 points)</i>	20
<i>Sources and literature (max. 10 points)</i>	8
<i>Manuscript form and structure (max. 15 points)</i>	8
<i>Quality of presentation (grammar, style, coherence) (max. 10 points)</i>	9
<b>TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)</b>	<b>C</b>

#### Suggested questions for the defence are:

Please see above.

I (do not) recommend the thesis for final defence.



Referee Signature

#### Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	<b>A</b>	= outstanding (high honor)
81 – 90	<b>B</b>	= superior (honor)
71 – 80	<b>C</b>	= good

61 – 70	<b>D</b>	= satisfactory
51 – 60	<b>E</b>	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	<b>F</b>	= failing. The thesis is not recommended for defence.