



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Nicholas Roy Arthofer
Title: Coal and Conflict in Eastern Ukraine

Programme/year: International Relations/WS 2021

Author of Evaluation (supervisor): doc. PhDr. Běla Plechanovová, CSc.

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	5
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	20
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	28
<i>Total</i>		80	53
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	9
	Style	5	3
	Formal requirements	5	4
<i>Total</i>		20	16
TOTAL		100	69



Evaluation

Major criteria:

The thesis addresses an interesting and timely topic of recent conflict in Donbas region in Ukraine, particularly the reaction of the separatist regions to the economic situation after the ceasefire under the Minsk II agreement. It does so by focusing on the aspect of rationality of behaviour of the actors in conflict and their need to support the area under their control by the sources available at the territory. The Author hypothesizes that "...Signatories to the Minsk II protocols violated the ceasefire agreement when they calculated that by observing the ceasefire, the predicted fall of the state's relative power would threaten their sovereignty."

The research design has the ambition to prove, based on realist and rationalist approach, that the fluctuations of the economic indicators of the Ukraine's separatist regions may explain the breakdown of the ceasefire. The argument is rather straightforward, unfortunately without more detailed discussion why this should be taken as a key factor and without discussing the broader context of the dynamics of the conflict that most probably also had its role in influencing the behaviour of the actors. Testing of the hypothesis is based on a binary proposition about the relation between the size of the predicted budget of the of the separatist regions and the size of the predicted income of the region for the year following the ceasefire. Considering the fact that official statistics of key economic indicators for the regions is missing and therefore the data has to be established in an indirect way via subtraction from the Ukraine's data and via collecting secondary data that may indicate the dynamics of the economy of the region, the claim that the hypothesis may be verified or falsified in this way is rather dubious.

The implementation of the research design bears marks of rather hastily collected data and late decisions made on the form in which the data is presented in relation to the key argument. As a result, the presentation is bit disorganized and not exactly coherent. Nevertheless, I appreciate the effort the Author has made to find the information that might be relevant, to fit it into the research framework and to argue about the relevance for the main argument of the thesis.



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Empirically, the thesis brings interesting information on the economic dimension of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine and provokes questions about the motivations of the actors that find themselves in position of a separatist region.

Minor criteria:

The short timespan in which the thesis was written shows negatively in the several dimensions of the thesis. First, the overall coherence of the text. While the leading sections on thesis on the phenomenon of the ceasefire and its theoretical grasp is rather compelling, the way to the claim of the hypothesis and to the choice of the method is much less convincing. Second, the text of the thesis would deserve much better proofreading as the number of typos and stub words, or phrases is rather high.

The scope of resources used is sufficient. The style and the language of the text is adequate.

Overall evaluation:

The strength of this thesis lies in the choice of the topic and the conceptual ambition, the weaknesses lie in the implementation and are mainly due to the lack of time devoted to the research and finalizing or the research design.

Suggested grade: D