



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Jaklin Atanasova

Title: Russia's Use of the "Energy Weapon" and Bulgaria's Foreign Policy

Alignment: Balancing Dependence on Russian Natural Gas Supplies

Programme/year: International Security Studies/2024

Author of Evaluation (supervisor): Jan Mazač

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	10
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	25
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	17
<i>Total</i>		80	52
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	10
	Style	5	5
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	20
TOTAL		100	72



Evaluation

Major criteria:

This thesis examines the Bulgarian government's foreign policy responses to its dependence on Russian natural gas and the strategies it has adopted to enhance its energy security. The objective of the thesis is clearly stated - the author seeks to determine how Bulgaria's dependence on Russian natural gas affects its foreign policy decisions and alignment with the European Union over time. Moreover, the topic is particularly relevant in the context of the evolving EU gas market in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

I appreciate the comprehensive historical overview and the analysis of energy data that contextualises the research. Furthermore, the author provides an overview of the existing literature on the subject, identifying the current state of academic research and highlighting the gaps in knowledge that this thesis aims to address. Nevertheless, there are minor inaccuracies that could easily be corrected:

- Section 1.3 (p. 26) statement that IP Kireevo/Zaychar facilitated the connection of Bulgaria to the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) is inaccurate. It represents the cross-border point along the route of the TurkStream extension, situated between Serbia and Hungary.
- Section 2: There is a discrepancy in the units of measurement used. On p. 30, the author compares volumes of natural gas imports in terajoules (TJ) and billion cubic metres (bcm), whereas on p. 35, the author uses terawatt-hours (TWh). It is feasible but challenging for the reader to comprehend. Similarly, the figure on p. 31 is in cubic feet. I understand that different sources used have a different unit, but the author should endeavour to ensure that everything is converted to the same unit.

The chapter on theories is logically laid out and well structured. The author commences by delineating the main theories, subsequently analysing the concept of energy security and ultimately examining the concept of statecraft and energy as a tool of power.



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However, the thesis is somewhat deficient in terms of empirical depth, particularly with regard to the section where the author interprets the results (section 5). The author employs a content analysis in order to identify predefined categories. Despite the author's best efforts to extract pertinent information from the collected data, the interpretation of results is somewhat disorganised and, in some instances, exhibits a lack of coherence.

The most significant limitation of the study is the author's decision to interpret the correlation between observed categories without calculating any correlation coefficient, such as Pearson's correlation coefficient. The author's interpretation is based exclusively on the observation of changes in the values of a restricted number of data points. This is an inappropriate approach, as the correlation is a statistical tool that measures the degree of linear relationship between variables. Therefore, the interpretation of a correlation analysis should be based on the calculation of a correlation coefficient that examines the strength and direction of the relationship. Furthermore, it is essential to ascertain whether the correlation between variables is statistically significant, as indicated by the p-value. It is regrettable that neither of these steps was taken.

Minor criteria:

The thesis complies with all formal requirements.

Overall evaluation:

The principal strengths of the thesis lie in the intrinsic merit of the topic and the methodological ambition displayed in its construction. The introductory section of the thesis presents a compelling overview of the phenomenon and its theoretical and methodological foundations. However, the subsequent sections on the interpretation of the results display a lack of rigour and are therefore less compelling. It is regrettable that the restricted timeframe for the completion of the final section of the thesis has resulted in certain shortcomings.

Suggested grade: C

Signature: