



## Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Mark Nairn

Title: Neutrality as a tool of persuasion: the Lisbon experience in Ireland 2008

Programme/year: Master in International Security Studies 2016

Author of Evaluation (supervisor/external assessor): Dagmar Rychnovská

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
<b>Major Criteria</b>			
	Research question, definition of objectives	<b>10</b>	8
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	<b>30</b>	23
	Methodology, analysis, argument	<b>40</b>	36
<i>Total</i>		<b>80</b>	67
<b>Minor Criteria</b>			
	Sources	<b>10</b>	10
	Style	<b>5</b>	4
	Formal requirements	<b>5</b>	4
<i>Total</i>		<b>20</b>	18
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>	85



## Evaluation

Major criteria:

Research question:

The aims of the diploma thesis are clearly stated from the beginning, where the author also explains the relevance of his work. However, a specific RQ does not appear in the thesis, making it thus more difficult for the reader to situate the thesis in broader scholarly debate and explain the very focus and the “research puzzle” of the work.

Theory and concepts:

The key concept that appears in the thesis is neutrality. The author offers an extensive literature review, demonstrating clearly his knowledge of IR theory and different approaches to neutrality under the key theoretical traditions in IR. However, the literature review may perhaps be a bit more specific and given the constructivist stance that the author adopts, the merits of constructivist reasoning in the study of neutrality might be more elaborated. Also, it would be also useful to hear more about more concrete constructivist works that deal with the changing notions of neutrality in Europe (as well as elsewhere). On several occasions, somehow inaccurate use of established concepts (e.g. collective security on p. 7 certainly does not relate to the 1648 Peace of Westphalia) can be observed.

Methodology, analysis, argument:

The link between the robust theoretical chapter and the empirical analysis is not very straight-forward. The author claims to use critical discourse analysis, which is a suitable approach to the selected topic, but more elaborated research design, describing more concretely the work with data is unfortunately missing. The use of the method in this context would merit more explanation. For instance, the author argues on p. 30 that CDA is a problem-solving mechanism, which is thought quite inaccurate description of the method.



However, what certainly deserves appreciation is the original empirical research based on a broad scope of relevant data. In some respects, the analysis is perhaps too broad – both in terms of data included as well as regard the analytical categories (frames). How did the author identify the master frames to contextualize his analysis? Are the master frames really shared across the whole population? The analysis itself, though, is quite impressive and interesting. The author draws on concrete examples of parliamentary speeches to link them to the master frames and traces the changes to these broader frames. This is very useful and illustrative, even though structuring the analysis more would certainly help the reader to navigate in the analysis and understand the key changes in the meaning of master frames that the parliamentary discourse on neutrality under Lisbon treaty carries on.

#### Minor criteria:

Sources: the author works with a variety of sources that are relevant for the thesis

Style: the author writes in an easily comprehensible language and uses the scholarly concepts when appropriate. What could be improved is the structure of the thesis, e.g. the inclusion of summary sections at the beginning and at the end of each chapter.

Formal requirements: apart from minor issues (e.g. longer direct quotes not separated from the standard text), the thesis fulfils all standard requirements

#### Overall evaluation:

The author presents a well written and especially properly researched thesis, which offers an original empirical research into one of very topical security issues in the current EU – the cooperation in the area of CSDP and the integration of previously neutral states into the common security architecture. Coming from constructivist tradition and using CDA, he analyses master frames related to the Irish neutrality in the domestic discourse and examines how the political debate on Lisbon treaty links to these frames, complicating the deepening of the CSDP co-operation. The overall argument of the thesis might come more to the forefront with more stringency, yet overall, this is a good piece of research that without any doubts fulfils the criteria for a diploma thesis.

Suggested grade: 1



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