



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Stefanie Frenzel

Title: Russia's Critique of Western Liberalism under Vladimir Putin

Programme/year: MAIN (2018)

Author of Evaluation (Second Reader): Dr. Ondrej Ditrych

Criteria	Definition	Max.	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	7
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	25
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	35
<i>Total</i>		80	67
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	10
	Style	5	5
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	20
TOTAL		100	87



Evaluation

Major criteria:

The thesis seeks to investigate the rationale of Russia's foreign policy by means of a discourse analysis of Vladimir Putin's speeches that is grounded in the conceptual toolbox of one of the foremost critics of modern international liberalism, Carl Schmitt. The thesis' objective and research design have been modified when compared to the thesis project. While in general, the declared focus on Schmitt's thought and relative marginalisation of Mouffe seems sensible, in the actual thesis it is defended assertively yet rehearsed only in part as Mouffe, together with other scholars such as Rawls or Walzer are indeed introduced but rather late into the argument and somewhat unnecessarily, forming only a rudimentary basis for the thesis' essentially normative conclusion.

However, in general the thesis is clearly structured and the argument is logically developed. It is only not entirely clear how the analysis builds / differs in conclusions from other, similarly theoretically anchored interrogations (Auer 2015); and, in the end, what precisely is the added interpretive value of reading Putin through Schmitt or indeed, claiming that, to paraphrase, 'There is a lot of Schmitt in Putin'. The interpretive analysis of Putin's rhetoric is profound and well-executed, but arguably it could equally well be done *without* Schmitt. (It is worth remembering here e.g. the words of one of the discipline's most venerated classics, Hans Morgenthau in *Politics among Nations* that 'recognition of the world as war of all against engenders revolt against power – what is actually aspiration for power, then, appears to be something different, something that is in harmony with the demands of reason, morality and justice. The substance, of which the ideologies of international politics are but the reflection, is to be found in the normative orders of morality, mores and law.')



The point about Russia's katechonic identity is interesting but it is not clear whether it is original or borrowed, while the conclusion that 'the analysis has shown that President Putin's rhetoric can be very well explained through Carl Schmitt's political concepts and argumentation' (p. 44) remains unsupported while indeed these concepts are introduced and discussed rather competently even as the engagement with them (e.g. discussion of inconsistencies that are pointed out to) could run deeper. In methodological terms, a transparent choice of assumptions is to be lauded, yet it is disputable whether there indeed is a consistent Western normative discourse (p. 27). Even more problematic is the author's confession that she has 'very clear expectations about [her] research result' (p. 6).

Minor criteria:

In formal terms, there are no flaws in the thesis. The source apparatus is extensive and the thesis' style is rather engaging.

Overall evaluation:

The thesis is an interesting attempt to conduct a discourse / rhetoric analysis of a leader of revolutionary power in the (still?) liberal global order by mobilising the conceptual toolbox of Carl Schmitt. The discussion of this toolbox is competent and the interpretive analysis sound, yet the thesis would have benefited from more engagement between the two elements while clearly explaining how one serves to improve the other; and by a more structured and disciplined normative analysis in the closing sections.



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Suggested grade: A / B

Signature: