

Name of the student:	Viktoriia Kravchyk
Title of the thesis:	Political Myth as a Foreign Policy Instrument: Case Study of Russian Myth of 'Great Patriotic War'
Reviewer:	Daniela Kolenovská, Charles University

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

(relevance of the research question, research objective, literature review):

Against the background of Russian aggression in Ukraine, the thesis analyzes the interplay between the Russian official construct of Soviet involvement in the Second World War and contemporary Russian foreign policy. Based on the quantitative research of V. Putin's public rhetoric, the author examines the functions of the selected phenomenon as a political myth. More precisely, the thesis focuses on its foreign policy engagement. The author's approach is based on the opinion that the so-called Great Patriotic War is used by V. Putin as a domestic political myth, and at the same time as the basis of the Russian strategic narrative in abroad. The text comments on the relevant theoretical literature on political myth and aims directly at gathering arguments to be able to answer the research question.

Unfortunately, the theoretical-methodological part of the text considers only political myths. Its large part is consumed by explaining the technical procedure of the frequency, temporal and co-occurrence analysis of Russian presidents' statements. Although I appreciate that the detailed quantitative data was added in appendices, the description of their preparation should not have overshadowed the presentation of other possible theoretical approaches to the topic. Especially the extensive research on (Russian) propaganda, historical politics or memory and symbolic politics should have been considered. At least a basic statement on the theses of significant authorities on these facets of the topic should be mentioned (among the Russian authors A. Miller to mention the least).

My second reservation to the introductory part of the thesis is related to this. The author rightly states that Putin's instrumentalization of the Great Patriotic War is a continuous process that aims at a specific form of self-interpretation of Russian society. It is the research of Russian historical politics that has shown that such a process takes place on diverse platforms and involves a whole spectrum of actors. It targets different audiences with different tools as well. However, the author works only with V. Putin. In my opinion, the Russian political regime during the entire observed period (if at all) cannot be understood as the regime of one dictator, the only content creator and the only voice of official Russia. Again, at least his fellows V. Surkov or V. Medinsky should have been considered as sources of relevant information in the literature review.

2. ANALYSIS

(methodology, argument, theoretical backing, appropriate work with sources):

In the defined limited research field, the intended quantitative computational analysis was carried out accordingly and correctly supplemented qualitatively. The author was able to present arguments revealing the development of Putin's interpretation of the Great Patriotic War.

The choice of the Russian-language Telegram account of the Latvian Embassy of the Russian Federation as the one point where the Russian domestic political myth conversion into the Russian external strategic narrative can be deduced was not quite clearly argued. It is not explained who or which institution creates the content of this Telegram account, which audience it is targeting and how successfully. Even if I concede that a Russian-language account on Russian social network can systematically promote the Russian superpower myth in Latvia, then the conclusions of such an analysis are necessarily regionally limited. For a more convincing answer to the research question, it would be of high relevance to conduct a comparative observation on how the myth is applied in countries further from the Russian borders; in Africa and Asia, where Russian geostrategic interest is heading after the invasion of Ukraine. It would allow the author to find out how the Russian strategic

narrative reacts to diverse foreign narratives - if, as the author notes, the Putin myth does not have to react to oppositional interpretations at home (I dare to disagree here with the author's statement that there are no competitive narratives in Russia. To such a statement, author could not collect corresponding data in the selected corpus; and of course, other opinion authorities in Russia exist during the period: International Memorial, Boris Akunin and the "foreign agent" institute in general).

3. CONCLUSIONS

(persuasiveness, link between data and conclusions, achievement of research objectives):

In terms of regionally valid conclusions, the thesis brings original answers to the research question and advances understanding of the Russian domestic myth penetration into Russian diplomacy in Latvia. However, to state unquestionably that the Russian domestic myth influences external evaluation of Russia, detailed data on the audience of the Telegram channel of the Russian Embassy in Latvia and/or the results of Latvian public opinion polls would have to be included in the work.

4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

(appropriate language, adherence to academic standards, citation style, layout):

The language, adherence to academic standards and citation style are satisfactory except for minor flaws.

5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

(strong and weak point of the dissertation, other issues)

The thesis tests and demonstrates the validity of computational analysis in social science research. The author put a lot of energy into the precise preparation of the data. However, the research question moves in a well-explored environment, which already brought the sought-after answers from other theoretical positions. Unfortunately, the author is not aware of this, because she defined a political myth as the only theoretical starting point. This limits both the research design and, despite all the interesting data obtained, the final rather partial findings.

Grade (A-F):	85% - B - very good
Date:	Signature:
30/6/25	