



## Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Silvie Meckova

Title: Faces of Truth: Analyzing Russian Hybrid Warfare Narratives in News Front

Programme/year: ISS, 2024

Author of Evaluation (second reader): Emil Aslan

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
<b>Major Criteria</b>			
	Research question, definition of objectives	<b>10</b>	8
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	<b>30</b>	28
	Methodology, analysis, argument	<b>40</b>	30
<i>Total</i>		<b>80</b>	66
<b>Minor Criteria</b>			
	Sources	<b>10</b>	10
	Style	<b>5</b>	5
	Formal requirements	<b>5</b>	5
<i>Total</i>		<b>20</b>	20
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>	86



## Evaluation

**Major criteria:** This is solid piece of research. The author seeks to carry out cross case study analysis of the narratives (Slovak, Serbian, English, Russian) used in the framework of the Russian hybrid warfare narratives focusing on the News Front platform. The author observes „both common and tailored narratives used to influence public opinion and destabilise target nations.“ In the author’s opinion, these themes are deployed with the aim of „destabilising target nations and undermining democratic institutions.“ According to the author’s summary of her findings, the study „reveals a sophisticated propaganda strategy that adapts to each audience’s historical, cultural, and political landscape, highlighting Russian disinformation efforts’ persistent and evolving nature.“ The thesis brings up an overarching finding in that Russian hybrid warfare’s propaganda machine emphasizes „the strategic role of tailored narratives in eroding trust in Western alliances and deepening societal divisions, demonstrating the Kremlin’s adeptness at leveraging media for geopolitical gains.“

I like the research design of the study, its engagement with the related concepts and literature, and, notwithstanding the fluidity of the phenomenon and related topics, the author’s explicit and straightforward language exemplified in her analysis and findings. This is a much needed way to address an increasingly maling phenomenon with global implications. While the analysis is mostly sound (even though I’d appreciate a theme-centred analysis instead of a country-centred analysis deployed by the author), I find the empirical analysis shallow at times. A more thorough empirical analysis, with a more robust collection of data, perhaps deloying less cases, but with a more profound analysis, would have served the author’s objective better.

**Minor criteria:** The structure of the thesis needs serious revisions to make sure the problem along with concepts are introduced first, followed by a chapter on research design. Literature review can’t come first, ahead of the problem statement. These structural nuances may appear to be of minor importance, yet they shape the logic of the thesis and should be taken seriously. The whole design of the thesis needs revision to bring it line with formal requirements. As mentioned in the previous section, a more thorough and optimally theme-based empirical analysis would have done the thesis justice in that the mechanisms/themes used by Russian propaganda machine in various empirical setting would have been fleshed out in a more explicit way.



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**Assessment of plagiarism: none detected.**

**Overall evaluation:** A very good piece of research: original, bold, explicit, with some weaknesses that could be addressed should the author contemplate publishing her work.

**Suggested grade: B**

**Signature:**

**Emil Aslan**