

BACHELOR THESIS EVALUATION: THESIS OPPONENT

Thesis topic: **Justify at any expense: How effective is Russian securitization of identity discourse? Case study of Russo-Ukrainian conflict**

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Opponent: Dagmar Kusá

Study program: Political Science, Liberal Arts

Evaluation contains objective and critical analysis of a bachelor thesis proposal. Evaluation should be considered by the following criteria:

Criteria for the evaluation of the final thesis	Max. points	Points given by evaluator
1. Methodological aspect (logical frame, process of inquiry, topic specification, how realistic are set goals and how adequate are proposed working methods)	10	8
2. Sources of domestic and foreign literature, familiarity with relevant literature	15	13
3. Formatting and style	15	15
4. Scope and proportionality of content	5	4
5. Systematic approach	15	14
6. Evaluation of achieved results	40	38
Total	100	92

Final evaluation: A (100-93 points), B (92-83 points), C (82-73 points), D (72-63 points), E (62-51 points), Fx (<50 points)

Evaluation, comments, recommendations:

92 – B I would consider grade A upon a successful clarification of the questions during thesis defense.

The author has submitted an ambitious and extensive (if a bit too extensive) study of the shaping of the Russian identity in the past few years, particularly during the annexation of Crimea and the treatment of Donbas in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, using these themes to drum up the support and unity of the domestic audience. At the same time, the thesis also explores a theoretical question of what themes make the securitization of identity successful.

Author presents a clear structure of the argument, where theory, methodology, and hypotheses complement each other and provide a solid backbone to the entire thesis. The third hypothesis is perhaps a bit circular—stating that securitization of identity discourse is successful because reasoning behind used securitizing arguments...

Thesis is very well written, the use of English language is almost flawless, which, having read hundreds of theses, I greatly appreciate. The thesis is unnecessarily lengthy—it would have been lengthy even for a Master's Thesis—and some descriptive parts and summaries could have been omitted or reduced. The theoretical section relies on classical literature of securitization studies, although missing the newer contributions to the field. Securitization theory works with the concept of identity politics, however the thesis does not offer a sufficient conceptualization of national identity, which is ultimately the dependent variable within this thesis (see question 1 below). Overall, sources used for the theoretical backbone of the thesis could have been richer. Methodology is well described and selection

of sources for analysis explained and a thorough coding frame is presented. Only the chain of causality is not entirely convincing (see question 2 below).

However, the thesis fulfils the criteria expected from bachelor thesis, is well and systematically researched and

Note on the margin: The author should be careful with reproduction of tables and figures from used literature—while textual quotations are of course fine to use, any graphical illustration (including tables and figures) require the permission of the copyright holder—it would be advisable to produce own tables, adapted to own purposes as was done in some cases.

Questions for the author (relevant to the content of the Thesis):

1. Although one of the key concepts used is identity, its definition is surprisingly lacking. We learn securitization of identity (p. 20) with a reference to a “collective mind” (which constructivist authors would argue against), or a statement that “National identity determines a person’s belonging to a nation as a political community” on p. 23 without reference to author(s), and continuing on p. 21, also without any reference, suggesting that that national identity is an outcome of state policies and communication—however, that is not a sufficient conceptualization of a national identity for the purposes of this work. If it were, state policies would be far more successful in practice to drum up nationalist sentiments than they are. State policies do not operate in a vacuum, they have to operate within the framework of existing narratives and sentiments that construct national identity. Nation and national identity are not defined in this thesis and bountiful literature on the subject is not consulted. Please tell us how you would fill in this gap, how does the identity politics operate within the framework of national identity from a constructivist point of view.
2. To what extent are we able to conclude that support of the public opinion for annexation of Crimea, for example, is an outcome specifically of securitization efforts of the Putin administration and not an outcome of other causes (especially since 46% of respondents stated they sometimes also read or watch other than Russian news and if public opinion was already positively inclined towards annexation at the beginning of the securitization process)? Likewise, with the failure of securitization—how can we be certain that lacking positive audience response is not due to other historical, cultural, political, economic... factors? The question is broader than the scope of this thesis—as it is applicable to any process of measurement of success or failure of securitization proposed within, as securitized discourse in only one among several variables influencing public opinion. We may be able to establish a relation—but can we establish causality?
3. There is a talk of Russia lending military or other aid to Belorussian dictator Lukashenka. Having studied the cases of Crimea and Donbas, can you see some of the same processes of securitized discourse taking place currently towards the Russian population? How does it compare to your two cases as far as you are able to evaluate?

In Bratislava, on: _August 13, 2020_(date)

Signature of evaluator: _____

