

Assessment Form for the M Sc Thesis in Political Science [version 2015]

Assessed by

Supervisor: Thomas R. Eimer

Secondary assessor: Angela Wigger

Date: June 20, 2017

A copy of the Ephorus report is handed in together with this form

An electronic copy of the thesis is handed in together with this form

Please send this form, the Ephorus report, and an electronic copy of the thesis, to Wilhelmina Theunissen at the department administration. No hard copy of the thesis is required unless you want one for yourself.

Please notify Ingrid Smitjes, at student administration, of the results via email; remember to mention the student's name and student number, title of the thesis, date of assessment and course code: MAN-MTHPOL.

Student: Sophie van Dam

Student number:s4385454

Title of the thesis: Pipeline blues. Explaining the German support of Nord Stream II

Mark (rounded to halves): 6.5

	Criteria	- = insufficient + = sufficient ++ = very good +++ = exceptional	Comments
General/ process	The student has adequately communicated with the supervisor on progress & obstacles, has met the deadlines, and has responded	++	Throughout the supervision process, the student showed a high degree of motivation. Many meetings displayed her capacities for an in-depth reflection beyond the genuine topic of the thesis.

	professionally to the supervisor's critique and suggestions		
	The length of the thesis is appropriate (max. 35,000 words excluding bibliography); standard academic and style criteria are met (title page, contents, notes, quotations, references to literature and bibliography are in accordance with the house style of <i>Acta Politica</i>)	++	AW: Grammar mistakes (“if and would is no good”) Inconsistent use of words: percent and %; inconsistent use of punctuations (‘/’) or missing punctuation. Spelling mistakes/missing words, wrong spelling of names, e.g. Merkl, The text referencing is not according to professional standards. Missing references with numbers. The reader just has to believe the author. The title of the figures should be above the figure.
	The thesis is written in eloquent and correct English, and is clearly structured.	++	The thesis is concisely written and makes it easy for the reader to grasp the argument.
	The research and writing were conducted sufficiently independent.	+	There were several phases in which the student needed a considerable amount of support.
	<i>(Reserved for remarks on merits of the thesis not covered by standard criteria)</i>		
Theory/design	The student has designed a research project centring on a clearly defined <i>scientific</i> problem in political theory and/or empirical political science. (For this, the student needs to (1) convincingly demonstrate the existence of an inconsistency (within a theory, between theories, between a theory (or theories) and empirical reality) asking for a resolution, or a deficiency (e.g. within a theory); and (2) convincingly argue why a resolution is needed)	+ / ++	The research question is clearly defined and contextualized within a broader debate. AW: Against the backdrop of the empirically well-sustained puzzle, the theoretical research question comes as a surprise. One would expect the main research question to target the behaviour of Germany. The need for gas as the main reason for the German support of the pipeline project, plus the fact that also the European allies are in need of gas, seems obvious as almost all countries in Europe need to import natural gas to meet their energy demand. It would have been great to read a bit more about some counter-munition by the author against the obvious argumentation. The introduction starts out well and nicely introduces the setting.

			<p>However, the sections after the research question are no longer succinct. Much of the material presented here could be used for the empirical analysis, laying out the explanandum in greater detail.</p> <p>The literature review does not contain any literature to bolster the observations about the state of the art.</p>
	<p>The thesis</p> <p>a. specifies the scientific and societal relevance of the research question, and</p> <p>c. justifies the choice of the (theoretical) approach, applied method(s), sources and/or data.</p>	<p>+</p>	<p>a. / b.: Both the theoretical and societal relevance of the thesis could have been spelled out in more detail.</p> <p>c. The methods of inquiry are adequately described, a more thorough reflection of the chosen approach is missing.</p> <p>AW: The synthesis between neoclassic realism and neomercantilism is well defended.</p> <p>The answer to the research question seems to appear rather upfront, when the author writes: "By advancing the Nord Stream 2 project, Germany can assert control over important energy assets while at the same time supporting its main energy firms."</p> <p>While the introduction started off rather well, the theory section in stark contrast, is poorly worked out. The theorie section is first of all, underreferenced; second, it lacks sophistication and third, it is not discussed at abstract theoretical level.</p> <p>A lot of authors pass review, but it is unclear however what the author takes from these authors. Moreover, a lot of empirical considerations blur the theoretical core of the theory, while the expectations are very simplistic.</p> <p>Theoretical concepts do not stand out as such, and empirical sources are used in the theory outline (e.g. Krumm, Medvedev & Schröder).</p>

			The author clearly has difficulties to stick to an abstract theoretical discussion. Because the theory section is loaded with empirical material, the theoretical and conceptual gist is very marginal. The reader hence has difficulties to grasp the theoretical core and the theoretical puzzle. It is unclear how historical legacy and bounded rationality is linked to social constructivism.
Application/ research	The thesis adequately represents and discusses the investigated theory or theories. It locates the theory into the evolution of (a) research programme(s) or scientific debate(s), engages with the state-of-the-art of academic contributions to the chosen theme, and identifies the strengths and weaknesses of earlier attempts to resolve the research problem.	+	The student adequately summarizes the main assumptions of used theoretical perspectives in order to develop possible answers to the research question. A more in-depth reflection is missing. AW: see above.
	The thesis: a. builds a logically and scientifically valid case for an original, clear and precise answer to the research question b. and does so through consistent application of the chosen method(s) or approach	+ / ++	The empirical analysis is based on a more than sufficient amount of research. The interpretation of the data, however, remains a little bit shallow. The case study could have been justified more scientifically, particularly against the backdrop of the theoretically framed RQ. Hypotheses: it would have helped the reader to see the hypotheses deducted in the theory section, right after the discussion of the causal mechanisms, which now remain hidden in the text and/or undiscussed. The hypotheses can be accepted. The operationalisation is sufficiently clear.
Reflection	The thesis identifies the research's major findings, the strengths and limits of the chosen theory or method, and the scientific and societal implications, indicating new avenues for future research	+ / ++	The key findings of the analysis are convincingly summarized and connected to the research question. The student discusses some academic and societal implications of her results, but the reflection remains rather vague.

			<p>AW: the material presented is very interesting; however, it is unclear what is being analysed when. There is no link to theory and none of the hardly existing abstract concepts are included in the analysis. The empirical material seems to be presented in an evolutionary and unguided fashion. It would have helped if the author had 'ordered' the information in an analytical and hence theoretically informed manner. The soft confirmation of the hypotheses requires quite some mental acrobatics by the reader, who in the meantime has forgotten the exact content of the explanatory factors.</p> <p>The testing of the hypotheses for the different phases makes the analysis a bit of a cumbersome read.</p>
Communication	<p>The student adequately defends the research conducted for the Master thesis orally and engages professionally in an academic debate with the examiners.</p> <p>Note for the assessors: the quality of the oral defence may affect the final mark by no more than 0.5 points.</p>	+	<p>The student is able to present her empirical findings and to defend her theoretical interpretation. The level of abstraction does not go beyond the written version of the thesis.</p>

Nijmegen, June 20, 2017

(Thomas R. Eimer)

(Angela Wigger)