

## **BACHELOR THESIS EVALUATION: THESIS OPPONENT**

**Thesis topic:** The Iron Way: The Influence of Prussian Military Reforms on the German Nation-Building Process

**Author:** Samuel Strecha

**Advisor:** Lucas Sprouse

**Opponent:** James Thomson

**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	7
2. Sources of domestic and foreign literature, familiarity with relevant literature	15	14
3. Formatting and style	15	13
4. Scope and proportionality of content	5	5
5. Systematic approach	15	14
6. Evaluation of achieved results	40	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>90</b>

**Final evaluation:** A (90-100 points), B (80-89 points), C (70-79 points), D (60-69 points), E (50-59 points), Fx(<49 points)

### **Evaluation, comments, recommendations:**

This is a strong piece of work, which was mostly well written and interesting. The subject matter seemed a little broad at times for the scope of a bachelor thesis.

The primary sources were relatively few, but the secondary works were well-chosen.

In terms of theoretical context, Tilly's arguments felt like a slightly awkward fit for this subject – but I could, perhaps be convinced of their relevance. Lindner's arguments were a useful perspective, although I felt the word 'humiliating' was somewhat overused in the text.

I was surprised that the ideas in Clausewitz's 'On War' (1832) were not considered as an influence on the reformers.

Overall, the paper presents a comprehensive overview of the subject and demonstrates the author's solid command of the material.

Some of the references need to be corrected or placed in context. For instance:

> The '(p.35)' in-text citation of Tilly on page 3 does not correspond to the References section, which says his paper comprised "pp.169–186".

> what is a 'needle gun'? (p. 23) – not every reader will know;

> who is 'Friedrich Wilhelm'? (introduced without explanation on p. 1) – it is implied that he was Prussia's leader, but this should be explicit and the dates of his rule added;

> why 'Friedrich der Große'? – your sources, inc. Clark, refer to him as 'Frederick the Great' (by analogy, we would not write 'Иван Грозный' in an English text).

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

**1.**

Why did you choose Tilly as a basis for theoretical discussion? Do you agree, in the case of Prussia, with his analogy equating war making and state making with "organized crime"?

**2.**

Bismarck was obviously the leading personality of German unification, but do you think he played a central role in Prussia's later military reforms – or did he treat the military as just one tool (albeit an important one) among many?

**3.**

In the introduction you suggest that "[Prussian] military reforms ... creat[ed] a German national spirit". How did reforms in one area of governance (the military) in one place (Prussia) generate a 'national spirit' across the dozens of other German kingdoms, duchies and principalities?

In Bratislava, on: **6 May 2024**

Signature of evaluator: 