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UNIVERSITET

IRES
Institutet för Rysslands- och
Eurasienstudier

Postadress:
Box 514
SE-751 20 Uppsala

Besöksadress:
Gamla Torget 3

Telefon:
018-471 00 00

Telefax/Fax:
018-10 63 97

Hemsidan:
www.ires.uu.se

E-post:
ires@ires.uu.se

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Eurasian Studies

Postal address:
Box 514
SE-751 20 Uppsala
Sweden

Visiting address:
Gamla Torget 3

Telephone:
+46 18 471 00 00

Telefax:
+46 18 10 63 97

Website:
www.ires.uu.se

E-mail:
ires@ires.uu.se

Organisationsnr:
202100-2932

REPORT

By a Member of the Dissertation Committee of the
Dissertation of
VOVENDA Yulia Vladimirovna on the theme:
“Particularities of Information Security Policy in
Executive State Government Bodies (By the
Example of the North Western Federal District,
Submitted in conformity with requirements for the
Candidate degree in political sciences
Specialisation 23.00.02 – Political Institutions,
Processes and Technologies

Having read the doctoral dissertation of Yulia Vovenda in the English-language version, pages 192-362, I am now ready to offer a series of observations and draw conclusions concerning the academic quality of the said work. The stated subject of the research is “the modalities of implementation and results of the application of management technologies for the provision of information security in the executive state government bodies of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation in the North Western Federal District” (page 201). This is then used to identify priority management mechanisms in order to achieve information security.

The thesis consists of an Introduction, two chapters with three sections each, a Conclusion and list of references. A total of six objectives of the thesis are enumerated on page 202,

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which include, considering a theoretical and methodological background to information security (in the academic sphere), considering Russian state information security mechanisms and describing the specifics of Russian state information policy (on the federal level), analysing the problems and security mechanisms, and providing practitioners' with solutions (at the regional level). Therefore this thesis spans academia, policy maker and practitioner worlds and perspectives. I also congratulate Yulia Vovenda on a very impressive number of publications in a relatively short space of time during her work on the thesis!

The source material used as the basis for the thesis was drawn from a very rich and wide range of printed matter in both the English and Russian languages. Given that there are 31 pages in the reference list at the very back of the work is testimony to the amount of time and effort made by Vovenda in making a very impressive and comprehensive collection of the available material on the topic of her thesis. Material is drawn from different academic fields that include, law, information technology, politics, security, policy making and implementation. The result is a thesis that is very rich in information and analysis for policy makers and practitioners in the field of information security.

There are a number of issues with the thesis, which also need to be specified. These should be understood and taken in the spirit of constructive criticism for the candidate to consider, and are intended as identifying some weaknesses or some further facets that could be dwelled upon. One of the issues encountered is that of the academic aspects of the thesis, which seem to play secondary consideration to the policy maker and practitioner aspects. For example, there is a lack of references in the subsection on "Methodological framework of the research"



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(pp. 202-203). This should be expected, in order to make the intellectual exercise more readily verifiable and replicable.

This is symptomatic of the fact that there are many interesting and highly relevant policy and practitioner problems that are skilfully engaged in throughout the course of the work. However, there are few purely academic questions or problems (such as a research question or hypothesis) that are obvious and clear to the reader. This is needed to form a central basis and value to the thesis that could challenge or critique current academic knowledge or to add to existing theoretical knowledge or to build new academic theory and understanding of the topic. As such, it should concretely contribute to academic theoretical/conceptual understandings and knowledge that provides further understanding and explanation of information security related disciplines. Thereby it could potentially contribute to the larger academic picture of academic understanding and practice.

Theoretical relevance is mentioned (page 206), however the following question should be addressed. How does your thesis contribute to theoretical development? What is missing from the thesis is a strategic theoretical tool that would unify the different aspects (politics, policy, technology and law) that are left somewhat 'floating' in the current iteration and provide an additional means of gaining a coherent and comprehensive result from a massive amount of empirical data and practice. In this instance, for example, "constructivism" could be highly useful and beneficial in order to get much more theoretical insights and value from those empirics. After all, both 'security' and 'information' are cognitive human constructs.



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So the Copenhagen School would have been a good place to start, which could be used to make much more sense of those individual aspects. This would support the statement on page 204 where “the problem of the information security provision requires the improvement of legal, organisational, technical mechanisms ...” At its very core, it begins as a cognitive issue.

In the very last paragraph on page 211 concerning the desire of other states to gain access to another country’s information I secrets, historical lessons are valuable. The basic motivation of wanting to possess another country’s information is drive by the fact that by possessing their knowledge it can bestow strategic advantage to that state. An salient example from even before the internet was when Britain was able to finish cracking the Nazi Enigma codes early in World War Two.

In summary, the thesis covers a highly topical and relevant issue of the 21st century, which is relatively under theorized at this stage. Although the work suffers from a weak theoretical framework, it possesses very strong practitioner and policy maker dimensions. This work certainly contributes to a much deeper understanding of the policy maker and practitioner dimensions associated with information security in the Russian Federation, and the North Western Federal District in particular. These strengths compensate, to a certain extent, the identified weaknesses.



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The dissertation meets the basic requirements established by Order No. 6821/1 of 1 September 2016, "On the Procedure for Awarding Academic Degrees at Saint Petersburg State University," candidate Yulia Vladimirovna Vovenda deserves the award of the scientific degree Candidate of Political Science in the speciality 23.00.02 - Political Institutions, Processes and Technologies. Clause 11 of the aforementioned Order by the author of the thesis is not broken.

09.01.2020

Member of the Dissertation Council

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University, Sweden, Associate Professor Greg Simons



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