

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Title of the thesis:	European Strategic Autonomy – chances and challenges for Europe.
Author of the thesis:	Victor Cemus
Referee (incl. titles):	Martin Riegl

Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the 5 numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).

1) Theoretical background:

The researched topic of European Strategic Autonomy is analyzed from the realist (structural, defensive or offensive) theoretical angle. Important concepts of K. Waltz's balance of power or S. M. Walt's balance of threat are discussed. The author of the paper defines three relevant research questions: „1. What does the broad concept of ESA encompass and what perspectives on European Strategic Autonomy do exist?, 2. Which level of ambition for pursuing ESA is realistic?, 3. Which subfields of ESA need to be narrowed down to advance the concept?“. Also such notions (European sovereignty, European Strategic Autonomy, level of ambitions) and strategic documents (ESS, EGS, EI2 etc.) such as appropriate level of ambitions are briefly elaborated, here I would recommend author not to refer to EGS as a paper. To answer these questions, Victor has based his analysis on comparative case studies of France, Germany and the Czech Republic.

2) Contribution:

I do appreciate author's courage to choose such a dynamic and difficult topic for in-depth analysis. While the historical description of how the concept has been evolving (since early 1990's French White Paper on Defence to EGS), or gathering numerous academic views on the topic presents an added value, there are some weak points. I do appreciate author's understanding of three-fold dimension of the concept, his conclusions seem to be rather vague, and in a fact do not answer the research questions. To fully understand the current debate and national positions, author would have to go back early phases of European integration and also deeply analyze the geopolitical context which shaped an overall-debate on European defence and security cooperation, e.g. in 1990s (for example see J. Paquin 2010). I can also barely agree with some conclusions. E.g. „*the strategic shift in Czech foreign policy that has been observed over the past five years which represents a withdrawal from the exclusive dependence on the Atlantic defence solution in favor of a (partial) transfer towards the European security and defence policy (p. 59).*“ To my knowledge all strategic documents reiterate the emphasis of the principle of collective defense. I can't also agree with author's evaluation of Czech Republic's policy as a passive „*wait-and-see policy or survival policy...modest contributions in NATO and PESCO (p. 60).*“ How does it correspond with the long-term and substantive engagement in Afghanistan, the current command of the EUTM M (and second largest contribution), active role in many ongoing EU initiatives, etc.?

3) Methods:

The paper is based on analysis of documents, above mentioned case studies and semi-structured interviews of actors. As the debate is still ongoing, it would be rather beneficial to interview stakeholders and decision-makers in respective capitals, because the issue of European Strategic Autonomy is mostly about policy.

4) Literature:

The author has gathered a number of relevant resources, both theoretical and primary sources. I do commend his ability to critically analyze primary documents.

5) Manuscript form:

The overall form is sufficient, but there are some issues. E.g. barely legible infographic (pages 36 – 37), or chaotic list of sources, where documents, electronic sources, and monographs are mixed into one category, or missing link to EGS (in list of sources). This makes it very difficult for orientation.

Box for the thesis supervisor only. Please characterize the progress in the working out of thesis (e.g. steady and gradual versus discontinuous and abrupt) and the level (intensity) of communication/cooperation with the author:

...

Suggested questions for the defence are:

I recommend the thesis for final defence. I recommend the following grade:

SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED (for details, see below):

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20 points)</i>	18
<i>Contribution (max. 20 points)</i>	14
<i>Methods (max. 20 points)</i>	15
<i>Literature (max. 20 points)</i>	19
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20 points)</i>	15
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)	81
The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)	B

DATE OF EVALUATION: 28. 8. 2020

Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	A	= outstanding (high honour)
81 – 90	B	= superior (honour)
71 – 80	C	= good
61 – 70	D	= satisfactory
51 – 60	E	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	F	= failing is recommended