

CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE
Faculty of Social Sciences
Institute of International Studies

PROTOCOL ON DIPLOMA THESIS ASSESSMENT
(Supervisor)

Name of the student: Léna Chilaud

Title: The EU as a Global Actor: French Outermost Regions as Geopolitical Assets

Supervisor: Tomáš Weiss

1. TOPIC AND OBJECTIVE (short information on the thesis, research objective):

Léna Chilaud analyses the EU's and France's approach to outermost regions. She argues that the position of these regions in the EU discourse has changed over the past years because their geopolitical value has become more prominent. She also shows how the EU (and France) has started using these regions for its geopolitical interests. The research objective is defined clearly.

2. CONTENT (complexity, original approach, argument, structure, theoretical and methodological backing, work with sources, appropriateness of annexes etc.):

This is a very interesting reading about a topic that is not widely known, and the reader can learn a lot from it. It is also well connected to the existing literature on geopolitical turn of EU foreign policy. The main idea of studying to what extent the general EU's claim of doing more geopolitics translates into a different discourse on the outermost regions and, yet a different approach to them makes sense. The thesis builds on impressive number of primary sources and compiles a lot of information on both the discourse and the practice.

While this makes a very interesting reading, which conveys the message of a growing strategic importance of these regions quite well, the analysis could be a more pronounced and nuanced in places. For example, the thesis argues that all three regions are now approached more "geopolitically" than in the past. But there is a clear difference between the three. In case of the Caribbean islands, geopolitics seems to be more an afterthought than a plan (and the author admits that there are some limitations in this case). French Guiana, in turn, is clearly important as a European space hub, but the thesis does not show that Kourou has grown in importance because of the geopolitical reasons. It simply became more important because there is more space traffic and there was more demand for satellite launches. The only case where the strategic value has clearly risen and has been approached as such, are Réunion and Mayotte. It would be interesting for the author to discuss the differences between the individual regions a bit more.

Methodologically, the thesis is sound, even if the method could have been described in a bit more detail, including the sources and how exactly the analysis of the changing discourse has been conducted.

3. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE (quality of language, citation style, graphics, formal aspects etc.):

The language of the thesis is appropriate, citation style is without major problems. The text reads as if the author did not have any time left for editing. Some pieces of information and claims appear several times throughout the text. In the part on limitations (p. 94), the third limitation is listed twice with slightly adjusted working, for example.

4. STATEMENT ON THE ORIGINALITY OF THE THESIS

The thesis was checked by the Turnitin anti-plagiarism software and is an original piece of work with all quotes correctly cited.

5. SHORT COMMENTS BY THE REVIEWER (overall impression, strengths and weaknesses, originality of ideas, achievement of the research objective etc.):

The overall impression from the thesis is very good. The topic is very original and interesting. It links to relevant debates and covers an important and topical issue. The main weakness is the sheer amount of information in which the reader slowly drowns. More guidance and active highlighting of important points would help the reader distinguish the key arguments and most important pieces information better. The thesis achieves its research objectives.

6. COOPERATION WITH THE SUPERVISOR (communication with the supervisor, ability to reflect comments, shift from the original intention, etc.)

Léna Chilaud consulted her research actively and reflected my comments. I was not able to comment on the final text of the thesis as it was finished rather late, but I had the chance to comment on the structure of the thesis and its main objectives, as well as on most chapters.

7. QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS THAT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED DURING THE DEFENCE:

1. When covering the EU's approach, you often end up presenting a French activity. To what extent is this a result of the fact that all the studied regions are French and to what extent do you see it as France increasing its geopolitical clout, rather than the EU?
2. Have you noticed a decline in the European/French interest in the outermost regions in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine when most European attention has returned to the European continent? Or, has the war rather increased the effort to make use of the regions in EU's and France's foreign policy?

8. (NON-)RECOMMENDATION AND SUGGESTED GRADE:

I recommend the thesis for defence and suggest the grade **B**.

Date: 10 September 2024

Signature: