

## REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

GPS – Geopolitical Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

<b>Title of the thesis:</b>	Geographical Factors vs. Geopolitical Agent in Geopolitical Analysis: Italy's Energy Reorientation from Russia to Africa after the Invasion of Ukraine
<b>Author of the thesis:</b>	Valerio Ferri
<b>Referee (incl. titles):</b>	Nuno Morgado, Ph.D.

**Remark:** It is a standard at the FSV UK that the Referee's Report is at least 500 words long. In case you will assess the thesis as "non-defendable", please explain the concrete reasons for that in detail.

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

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20)</i>	20
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	18
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	19
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	16
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	18
<b>TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)</b>	<b>A</b>

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

#### **1) Theoretical background:**

Valerio holds an excellent knowledge of the model of neoclassical geopolitics within the Geopolitics & IR debate – especially the differences and similarities with the neoclassical realist theory of international politics. He efficaciously applied the model in this work and, therefore, he is very comfortable in dealing with this methodological approach, its variables, concepts, and predictions.

#### **2) Contribution:**

The application of the theory was executed under the correct assessment that not all the variables have the same weight in all the cases. Valerio understood the necessity of a plastic control between the application of the theory at stake and the case in which the theory itself is applied.

In this way, beyond applying the theoretical model, he also tested its validity, concluding in the Italy's energy selected case, that the intervening variables had a significant complementary role to the main geographical independent variable – and, with this operation, at the same time, he ran the set of tests to his hypotheses.

However, I consider a flaw not having incorporated certain results on Italy's potential analysis in the thesis. I recommended Valerio to do that, as it would have strengthened his general arguments and it would also enlarge the thesis a bit more.

#### **3) Methods:**

The constellation of methods that Valerio used derive from the model of neoclassical geopolitics itself, and its steps for operationalization as a study. It reveals that Valerio did the theoretic-methodological readings with utmost attention. Not only the hypotheses react to the research question (as they are supposed to), but they are also solid within the neoclassical geopolitics' apparatus.

I assess the methodological structure of the thesis as "excellent", inscribed in the logic of cautious soft positivism.

A special note to the thick strategic approach to the studied problem, which was successfully accomplished as well. That allows the reader to get acquainted with the disputes in terms of energy and spheres of influence, as well as the radical international adjustments that a change in a government may have (i.e., Meloni's case).

#### **4) Literature:**

Once again, Valerio has a deep knowledge of the literature on the model of neoclassical geopolitics. Other sources were appropriate and carefully chosen, namely Italy's white book of defense, defense reports, and ministry's insights.

In spite of this, I would say it is maybe missing some more substantial literature about the geopolitical agents and Italy's energy context – which mass media is often unable (– on uninterested –) to provide the audience with.

#### **5) Manuscript form:**

The structure of the work is rational, compact, and coherent, from the analysis of the theoretical literature to the conclusions about the relevance of the variables. All of it achieved through a very well fulfilled application (and testing) of the theory.

The thesis has a very good presentation with all due formal requirements: footnotes, respective list of references. Valerio used appropriate language, his writing style is clear, easy to follow. He has a sharp strategic mind, able to draw critical assessment of data.

I finally evaluate this thesis as an excellent contribution to the cutting-edge field of neoclassical geopolitics.

**DATE OF EVALUATION:** 29.05.2023



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**Referee Signature**

**The referee should give comments to the following requirements:**

**1) THEORETICAL BACKGROUND:** Can you recognize that the thesis was guided by some **theoretical fundamentals** relevant for this thesis topic? Were some important theoretical concepts omitted? Was the theory used in the thesis consistently incorporated with the topic and hypotheses tested?

Strong                      Average                      Weak  
20                              10                              0                      points

**2) CONTRIBUTION:** Evaluate if the author presents **original ideas** on the topic and aims at demonstrating **critical thinking** and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and relevant empirical material. Is there a distinct **value added** of the thesis (relative to knowledge of a university-educated person interested in given topic)? Did the author explain **why** the observed phenomena occurred? Were the policy implications well founded?

Strong                      Average                      Weak  
20                              10                              0                      points

**3) METHODS:** Are the **hypotheses** for this study clearly stated, allowing their further verification and testing? Are the theoretical explanations, empirical material and **analytical tools** used in the thesis relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the aspiration level of the study? Is the thesis **topic comprehensively analyzed** and does the thesis not make trivial or irrelevant detours off the main body stated in the thesis proposal? More than 10 points signal an exceptional work, **which requires your explanation "why" it is so**.

Strong                      Average                      Weak  
20                              10                              0                      points

**4) LITERATURE REVIEW:** The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and **command of recent literature**. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way and disposes with a representative bibliography. (Remark: references to Wikipedia, websites and newspaper articles are a sign of **poor research**). If they dominate you cannot give more than 8 points. References to books published by prestigious publishers and articles in renowned journals give much better impression.

Strong                      Average                      Weak  
20                              10                              0                      points

**5) MANUSCRIPT FORM:** The thesis is **clear and well structured**. The author uses appropriate language and style, including academic **format** for quotations, graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables, is easily readable and **stimulates thinking**.

Strong                      Average                      Weak  
20                              10                              0                      points

**Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:**

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Czech grading
91 – 100	<b>A</b>	= excellent
81 - 90	<b>B</b>	= good
71 – 80	<b>C</b>	= satisfactory
61 - 70	<b>D</b>	= satisfactory
51 - 60	<b>E</b>	
0	<b>F</b>	= fail (not recommended for defence)