

MASTER'S EXAMINER REPORT

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

Thesis title:	France's new strategy in the Francophone countries of Sub-Saharan Africa as a reaction to the growing anti-French sentiment
Name of Student:	Mathieu Mouton
Referee (incl. titles):	Bohumil Doboš
Report Due Date:	22.8.2024

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

1) Contribution and argument: The thesis picks up a very topical issue, aiming to highlight the shortcomings of the French approach to the Sub-Saharan Africa in the light of the Russian involvement that directly counters the Western interests in general. The author is well aware of numerous issues related to the French and Russian involvement on the continent, yet the text holds some shortcomings that limit the possible contribution of the text.

To begin with the framing of the research, the second research question begins with “Can...” – this is problematic because it cannot be falsified. The same goes for hypothesis 3. There is a disconnect between chapter 3 (analysis of Russian role) and chapter 4 (proposed French policies). The two parts are not connected in any major way including in the conclusion which makes the argument problematic even more as the text reads like two separate papers rather than a single text. Chapter 4 aims to be prescriptive – to develop recommendation for the amended French African policy – yet there is a lot of analytical parts involved – which makes the text sometimes confusing (e.g. the ending of section 4.2.). Despite that, it involves a lot of relevant and interesting policy prescriptions. It would be good to divide the analytical parts and the policy recommendations more clearly. What is very problematic is that the research questions and hypotheses are not explicitly answered.

Some minor issues - P. 49 – the text claims that the thesis have so far analyzed actors responsible for anti-French sentiments yet that is not true – it just briefly highlighted the issue of French policies and then covered Russia as the sole actor suing and promoting these narratives but not the only one that could have been mentioned. P. 51 – unclear why Boko Haram and Nigeria are relevant for the study.

2) Theoretical and methodological framework: The methodology aims to use a comparative study of CAR, Chad and Madagascar to highlight the necessary changes to the French foreign policy in the region in the context of the Russian interference campaign. The case selection is interesting as it includes three francophone countries with varying success of Russian interference that are usually not studied together. However, it is unclear how the author deals with the differences in Russian approaches to the three selected countries – most similar design is not met in this respect and would require some more explanation. Also, the connection between the analysis of the Russian activities and French reaction is unclear. There is no explicit theoretical framework used.

3) Sources and literature: The text underuses academic sources. It is highly dependent on newspaper articles and think-tank reports – there is a lot of academic sources that could have been used. Citations are done correctly.

4) Manuscript form and structure: There is no noteworthy issue with manuscript form. The structure is fine.

5) Quality of presentation: There are some minor language issues. Some formulations are imprecise (e.g., p. 28, ¼ of world's victims is very unclear). Overall, the text is well legible and there are no problems with understanding the text.

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Contribution (research quality, analysis, and conclusions) (max. 40 points)</i>	20
<i>Theoretical and methodological framework (max. 25 points)</i>	15
<i>Sources and literature (max. 10 points)</i>	5
<i>Manuscript form and structure (max. 15 points)</i>	15
<i>Quality of presentation (grammar, style, coherence) (max. 10 points)</i>	7
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)	62
The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)	D

Suggested questions for the defence are:

I recommend the thesis for final defence.

Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	A	= outstanding (high honor)
81 – 90	B	= superior (honor)
71 – 80	C	= good
61 – 70	D	= satisfactory
51 – 60	E	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	F	= failing. The thesis is not recommended for defence.