

Name of the student:	Alvaro Fernández Cruz
Title of the thesis:	From the EU's Geopolitical Awakening to Strategic Culture Building: A Window Into the HR/VP's Discourse (2019-2024)
Reviewer:	Dr hab. Magdalena Góra, prof. UJ

### 1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

(relevance of the research question, research objective, literature review):

The topic of the thesis is relevant and tackles the changes in EU's foreign policy under Borrell's leadership. Alvaro employed critical geopolitics and strategic culture approach and discursive method to demonstrate how the geopolitical tropes are present and in which contexts in High Representative's discourse. Alvaro proves in his thesis a very good orientation in EU foreign policy and its institutional design and the nuanced knowledge of various directions of the EU external relations. Additionally, the research questions are very interesting and relevant and novel tackling the role of HR and his use of geopolitical tropes in building an EU strategic culture in response to the changing and more hostile international relations. Alvaro correctly selected theoretical background of critical geopolitics and constructivist strategic culture and applied it accordingly. In addition, Alvaro provided advanced secondary analysis of literature on the position of HR in the EU political system and on EU foreign policy. The student also used very well-designed methodological approach using the QDA software to systematically analyse four books authored by J. Borrell.

### 2. ANALYSIS

(methodology, argument, theoretical backing, appropriate work with sources):

The thesis is based on various data in order to answer the research question. Alvaro provided in depth analysis of literature of the HR and his position in the EU system. The theoretical chapter is well structured and appropriate indicators were selected based on thorough review of previous research. He developed an adequate theoretical frame using two crucial approaches – critical geopolitics and constructivist strategic culture. The combination of the two provides useful and original contribution to analysing the evolution of the position and the role of HR. In the next step Alvaro selected the broad but consistent empirical material consisting of four books written by Joseph Borrell while in the office and comprised of his previous blog posts. Such empirics allowed to capture the evolution of HR views resulting from such international events as full-scale Russian invasion on Ukraine in 2022. In the next step the student developed a deductive-inductive coding scheme that was meticulously applied using MAXQDA software. In employing such approach, the student proved maturity in conducting research and high theoretical awareness. Chapters presenting empirical research are well structured and clearly written shedding new light on overall dynamics of discursive frames used by HR.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

(persuasiveness, link between data and conclusions, achievement of research objectives):

The conclusions are correctly written linking the results with theoretical background of the thesis. There are attempts by the student to advance discussion on the understanding of the role of HR in EU foreign policy which I found refreshing and proved student's maturity in pursuing research.

### 4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

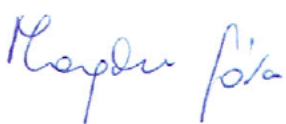
(appropriate language, adherence to academic standards, citation style, layout):

The language of the thesis is correct and very elegant. The visual elements are very advanced and informative. The layout of the thesis is proper and clear. Citations, use of sources and bibliography is correctly applied.

### 5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

(strong and weak point of the dissertation, other issues)

I highly assess Alvaro's knowledge of the EU foreign policy, global affairs and institutional setting of the UE. The thesis strength is coming from developed theoretical reflection and from original and very recent empirical data. The methodology was correctly chosen with novel and original data and in-depth qualitative and quantitative analysis. Alvaro was also able to engage with shortcomings of selected methodology, its execution and obtained data proving maturity in empirical research.

<b>Grade (A-F):</b>	A
Date:	
	Signature:
18/07/2024	Magdalena Góra

classification scheme

Percentile	Prague		Krakow		Leiden		Barcelona	
	91-100 %	8,5%	5	6,7%	8,5-10	5,3%	9-10	5,5 %
B (81-90)	81-90 %	16,3%	4,5	11,7%	7,5-8,4	16,4%	8-8,9	11,0 %
C (71-80)	71-80 %	16,3%	4	20%	6,5-7,4	36,2%	7-7,9	18,4 %
D (61-70)	61-70 %	24%	3,5	28,3%			6-6,9	35,2 %
E (51-60)	51-60 %	34,9%	3	33,4 %	6-6,4	42,1 %	5-5,9	30,1 %

**Assessment criteria:**

Excellent (A): 'Outstanding performance with only minor errors';

Very good (B): 'Above the average standard but with some errors';

Good (C): 'Generally sound work but with a number of notable errors';

Satisfactory (D): 'Fair but with significant shortcomings';

Sufficient (E): 'Performance meets the minimum criteria';

Fail: 'Some/considerable more work required before the credit can be awarded'.