

Review of Bachelor Thesis

Student: Gabriel Olegario

Supervisor: Sylvie Bláhová

Title of the Thesis: EU–Belarus border crisis (In)definitions: A case study of Poland

In his bachelor thesis, Gabriel Olegario addresses the issue of the EU–Belarus border crisis. Specifically, Gabriel focuses on the Polish approach to the crisis. The author asks what impact the securitization discourse has had on violations of international norms and human rights by Poland. Gabriel responds that Poland has clearly violated specific articles guaranteeing basic human rights during the crisis. The author concludes that although the country might have been exposed to a hybrid threat, it should not be considered as a hybrid warfare, and this does not give Poland the right to violate the basic human rights of refugees.

Gabriel has chosen a very topical issue for his bachelor thesis, an issue that underlies the current geopolitical conflict between Russia (and Belarus) and the EU. Leaving aside the moral assessment of Belarusian (Russian) activities on the EU's eastern border, Gabriel argues that the stance of Poland – and the EU – using the narrative of hybrid warfare is both illegitimate and illegal, as it violates several international human rights conventions. I evaluate Gabriel's thesis positively as he has addressed a very important problem and has been able to present a clear argument. When it comes to the theoretical part of the thesis, it is well-structured, and the author has comprehensively explained the main concepts he has been dealing with. In this section, the author has also declared the acceptance of the Copenhagen School approach that connects the process of securitization with speech acts, and which the author has applied in his case study. I believe that the approach has been well-chosen and that the author has managed to correctly describe the nature of the hybrid-warfare discourse in Poland (although I think that he could have used more speech acts to substantiate his argument) and how this has helped to justify violations of international law. The interesting conclusion of the thesis is that it is actually not only a problem of Poland, but the entire EU that has not only supported Poland in its position, but has also, especially after the experience with the 2015 migration crisis, adopted the securitization of migration.

To summarize, I believe that Gabriel has presented a very well-argued thesis and has provided us with some solid conclusions. Against this background, I would like Gabriel to address several issues during the defense. First, it follows from the thesis that Poland has been proceeding in accordance with the EU's general position on migration. Does this mean that there has no longer been a contradiction in attitudes to migration between Western and formerly communist countries? Does it also mean that the stricter approach of post-communist countries has proved more successful in the EU? My second question

concerns the author's argument that by refusing to take care of migrants at the EU-Belarus border (p. 9), the EU has in effect accepted the Belarusian (Russian) rules of the game. However – against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine and the conflict with Russia – how should the EU respond to the hybrid discourse that Russia has initiated? Finally, according to the author, what should the EU's migration policy ideally look like?

My proposed final mark of the bachelor thesis of Gabriel Olegario is A.

In Brno on July 20

Sylvie Bláhová