

**UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE**  
**Fakulta sociálních věd**  
**Institut mezinárodních studií**

**PROTOKOL O HODNOCENÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE**  
**(Posudek vedoucího)**

Práci předložil(a) student(ka): Zachary Lavengood

Název práce: The United States, China, and the Emerging Balance of Power in the Arctic

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Vedoucí práce (u externích oponentů uveďte též adresu a funkci v rámci instituce):

Jan Hornát

1. OBSAH A CÍL PRÁCE (stručná informace o práci, formulace cíle):

There is little doubt today that the Arctic region attracts not only the eyes of journalists and academics as a potential hotspot of global affairs, politicians and entire states are also increasing their focus on a region which has been geopolitically dormant at least since the end of the Cold War. The strategic and practical focus of political and military forces on the Arctic creates overlapping and contrasting interests that raise pressures which can spill over into other spheres of diplomacy and competition among states interested in gaining assets in the Arctic region. This power dynamic has caught the attention of Zachary Lavengood, who chose to devote his diploma thesis to studying the increasingly complex conundrum of Arctic governance and power projections.

The thesis itself is centered on US-Chinese relations/competition/balancing in the Arctic region. As per the author, „As Arctic actors jostle for a piece of the thawing bounty, the likelihood of conflict increases as disputes rise over access rights, sovereignty, environmental responsibility, and militarization. This brings attention to a growing balance of power in the Arctic region taking place in a complexity of state and non-state actors, two of whom, the United States and The People’s Republic of China, are the focus of this paper.“ (p. 10). While lacking an explicit research question, the reader is left with an implicit assumption that the paper will analyze the balancing *policies* of China and the United States and that it will attempt to build a balancing model/scheme of the bilateral relations in the Arctic.

In order to provide insight into this research agenda, Zachary proceeds as follows. In the first instance, he focuses generally on describing the „sources of competition in the Arctic“, which are: the emerging possibilities of opening shipping lanes through the Arctic and the increasing access to untapped natural resources. The succeeding chapter then looks at the arctic policies of the „Two of the most important actors in the emerging Arctic“ (p. 28) – the US and China. Building on both primary and secondary literature, Zachary provides an overview and analysis of the two states’ respective strategic goals in the Arctic. He then moves on to indicate an emergence of power blocs that has direct effects on the balance of power in the region – that is, US in the context of NATO and Sino-Russian „partnership of convenience“. This is followed by the main analytical part of the paper, where Zachary connects the components of a balance of power mechanism in the Arctic, firstly laying out the theoretical framework, which builds mainly on A.F.K. Organski, and then moving to explaining the „Sino-Russian partnership of convenience“; the US „reluctance as an Arctic leader“; the role of the Arctic Council; China’s Arctic „rental and ambitions“ and the impact of climate change on power dynamics in the region.

The thesis’ conclusion is summarized as follows: „The still developing balance of power, though stable for the time being, has the potential to develop into a flash point as the Arctic becomes more accessible with climate change. Great powers such as the United States and China, along with their respective allies, will be pushed into competition and disputes over resource and navigation rights in a theater previously thought of as a geopolitical backwater.“ (p. 80).

2. VĚCNÉ ZPRACOVÁNÍ (náročnost, tvůrčí přístup, argumentace, logická struktura, teoretické a metodologické ukotvení, práce s prameny a literaturou, vhodnost příloh apod.):

The choice of subject is topical as it fits into the growing amount of academic work on political issues in the Arctic region. However, the text could do a better job in explaining how it enhances our current state of knowledge about the geopolitics of the region. The balance of power is a relevant theoretical framework through which to analyze the situation and the author has demonstrated his orientation in this theoretical field. Nonetheless, while explaining why realism is the IR perspective the author wishes to employ, he should have

mentioned why liberal internationalism or constructivism are not adequate approaches for observing dynamics in the Arctic.

The argumentation throughout the paper is logical and consistent, although I have some personal doubts about, for example, China's potential in wooing Greenland or the prospects of Sino-Russian cooperation in the Arctic as I believe Zachary places too much weight on these (still) speculative developments. Yet, all his claims are supported by practical empirical data.

The paper could also better justify to the reader, why the author chose to analyze the Sino-American interactions in the Arctic rather than the US-Russian ones, which are arguably going to be even more consequential. The appendices should have been referenced in the text, so that the reader would better understand why they are there and what type of information they carry (despite the fact that they are all quite explicit in terms of the information they offer). The author does a good job in working with primary documents and the secondary literature is vast and sufficient, yet could have included more indigenous Chinese (or Russian) scholarship on the issue, which is also available in English language.

3. FORMÁLNÍ A JAZYKOVÉ ZPRACOVÁNÍ (jazykový projev, správnost citace a odkazů na literaturu, grafická úprava, formální náležitosti práce apod.):

The paper meets the formalities of a diploma thesis, however it is missing a „Summary“. I would personally opt for numbering chapters and sub-chapters and organizing the bibliography into „primary sources“ and „secondary sources“. The paper does include some typos: „...this final chapter will looks for...“ (p. 12); „...a security perspective as well as the on flash points around...“ (p. 13) etc. For some reason, the author uses a different reference style in the introduction and the rest of the text.

4. STRUČNÝ KOMENTÁŘ HODNOTITELE (celkový dojem z diplomové práce, silné a slabé stránky, originalita myšlenek, naplnění cíle apod.):

I commend the author for a solid choice of topic and a relevant choice of theoretical approach. The empirical data present in the paper is strong and demonstrates the author's deep interest and knowledge of the topic. Zachary has done a good job in probing the interactions of two (currently mostly trade) rivals and the potential implications of their encounters in the Arctic region. However in the paper I miss a more nuanced research question and a clearer statement of how this particular thesis expands our empirical or theoretical knowledge of the subject at hand (see above).

5. OTÁZKY A PŘIPOMÍNKY DOPORUČENÉ K BLIŽŠÍMU VYSVĚTLENÍ PŘI OBHAJOBĚ (jedna až tři):

1. Do you see a shift in focus on the Arctic between the Obama and Trump administrations? Donald Trump seems to be a bit more worried about the New Silk Road, does this concern also the Polar Silk Road?
2. How stable is the Sino-Russian partnership in the Arctic – what factors can hinder/rupture the cooperation and what effects would this have on the balance of power in the region?
3. Is the US somehow using Japan in its balancing strategy in the Arctic?

6. DOPORUČENÍ / NEDOPORUČENÍ K OBHAJOBĚ A NAVRHOVANÁ ZNÁMKA (výborně, velmi dobře, dobře, nevyhověle):

I recommend the grade **B**.

Datum: 10 June 2019

Podpis: Jan Hornát v.r.