

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

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

Title of the thesis:	China in Africa: The Dragon in the Lion's Den
Author of the thesis:	David Fairchild
Referee (incl. titles):	Martin Riegl

Remark: It is a standard at the FSV UK that the Referee's Report is at least 400 words long. In case you will assess the thesis as "non-defendable", please explain the concrete reasons for that in detail.

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

1) Theoretical background:

The submitted thesis is structured into eight chapters (including introduction and conclusion). The theoretical framework is presented in the Chapter 2, where author also offers a conceptualization of key terms such as BRI and neo-imperialism, discusses literature and frames his topic within a definition of China's geopolitical aims (primarily defined by the concepts of Blue Water Navy and Energy Security) and African developments goals. Particularly the concept of the Belt Road Initiative is essential for David's research because it represents a crucial item in Beijing's foreign policy toolbox for power projection. Author also touches the theory of imperialism and neo-imperialism, which is applied in the paper and findings discussed in the chapter 7.

2) Contribution:

A presented paper offers an informative analysis of potential Beijing's motivation to provide foreign development aid to selected three case studies which are defined as maritime, democratic „regional powers“ – namely Kenya, Nigeria, and Republic of South Africa. It defines several research goals. One of them is to analyze whether there is a connection between China's national interests (development of blue water navy and energy security) and economic investment in sub-Saharan Africa. David investigates whether conventional understanding of China's investment practices (including loans) as predatory (debt-trap diplomacy) is grounded. Another goal is to analyze whether China's economic activities in above mentioned countries will contribute to their socio-economic development. The last goal is to assess whether China's behavior can be justly described as a neo-imperial practice. Altogether the paper has five (although author explicitly mentions only three) research goals (p. 3,5, 6) which is simply to many to keep the thesis concise and provide a comprehensive in-depth analysis. Additionally four research questions are defined which is again a bit too extensive and limits the potential for truly in-depth research.

3) Methods:

Methodology is a described in the charter 1.4 which only repeats the wording of four research questions. It does not mean there is no methodology, it's just not described where it should be.

4) Literature:

Author has gathered sufficient amount of sources, however given the defined goals, an analysis of primasy sources (strategic documents) would be beneficial in order to test validity of research findings presented in the conclusion. I would also recommend to discuss works of R.D.Kaplan or G.Friedman who can provide interesting insights into China's geopolitical objectives.

5) Manuscript form:

The thesis meets all formal criteria, the layout, grammar, and language (author is a native speaker) are above standard. The thesis is clearly structured.

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

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20 points)</i>	18
<i>Contribution (max. 20 points)</i>	14
<i>Methods (max. 20 points)</i>	15
<i>Literature (max. 20 points)</i>	15
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20 points)</i>	18
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)	80
The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)	B-C

DATE OF EVALUATION: June 18, 2020

Referee Signature