

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

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

Title of the thesis:	The Trump administration's Foreign Policy toward China
Author of the thesis:	Xuena Ai
Referee (incl. titles):	Martin Riegl (opponent)

Remark: It is a standard at the FSV UK that the Referee's Report is at least 500 words long. In case you will assess the thesis as "non-defendable", please explain the concrete reasons for that in detail.

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

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20)</i>	6
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	8
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	9
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	14
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	15
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)	52
The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)	E

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

1) Theoretical background:

The theoretical part of the submitted thesis does not really provide a solid foundation for further research. The author argues to have her research framed within two bunches of geopolitical theories, namely Geopolitical strategic theory and National interest theory, however there are no such theories. What the author defines as her theoretical framework is rather a combination of definition of geopolitics, description of random US strategies, and realist and liberal understanding of national interests. Unfortunately this does not and can not provide an author with sufficient theoretical framework for her research.

2) Contribution:

Having mentioned lack of theoretical framework, the paper fails to present any substantial value added except of some description of Sino-US relations under the Trump's administration. More importantly, the findings presented in the conclusion are rather vague and subjective. I can barely agree with statement like: *"Moreover, the goals of the American China policy are not reasonable, and the resources and means the US uses to work towards its aims are insufficient."* (p. 50). Such a categorical and conclusive statement needs to be supported with empirical data and at least ignores the US's status of financial empire in terms of stock market capitalization, % of global financial transactions conducted through US banks in USD, USD's reserve currency status, need of China's industrial base to have an access to US (EU's markets) etc.

3) Methods:

The author's ambition is to provide a foreign policy of analysis based on analysis of documents, however a detailed description of her research design would be beneficial, but the wording of research questions refers to National Security Strategy only. To answer this type of question, an analysis of other attributes of power (military, security treaties etc.) would be needed.

4) Literature:

The author has gathered sufficient amount of sources, including theoretical works and primary documents, but discussing works of Mauldin, Kaplan, Friedman would be beneficial for such type of foreign policy analysis.

5) Manuscript form:

The thesis meets formal criteria for the master thesis, although there would be a room for improvement as some grammatical and stylistics imperfections occur throughout the paper.

DATE OF EVALUATION: 4.6.2020

Referee Signature