

## Review of the Diploma thesis *Enemies, Rivals or Friends – Chinese Economic Diplomacy in Visegrád countries since 2012* by Di Zhao.

In her thesis, the authoress applies Wendt's structuralist approach to the relations between China and the Visegrad countries. Di Zhao explores the relations between China and the Visegrad countries from the point of view of significantly bigger and more powerful China. The authoress concludes that the interest of current Chinese leadership in Visegrad countries has its roots in Confucianism. Di Zhao asks, what shapes Chinese interest in the region and how such policies are carried.

The aims of the paper are vaguely defined: "As nonmaterial aspects also help shape state interest and tendencies in the international system, this thesis will discuss Chinese economic, cultural and political elements in shaping China's new economic diplomacy in Visegrád countries on the one hand. On the other hand, this thesis will clarify the Visegrád economic and political elements in shaping China's new economic diplomacy in Visegrád countries." In other words, the authoress tried to cover everything, what inevitably leads to some confusion. However, the thesis with this aim would need closer look at the Chinese foreign economic policy, explanations of the motives standing behind current assertiveness of Chinese leadership towards the world politics.

Structure of the paper is somewhat unclear. The thesis explains the theory of constructivism, but its linking to the case of China-V4 countries remains only outlined. It would be better not to spend so much space with explaining realism and liberalism and concentrate purely on the constructivist approach applied to this case. Similarly, the characteristics of Chinese economy and its development would need better placing within the context of the argument. Although the argumentation that the emergence of Chinese economic expansion abroad is linked to the change in the economic structure of the country itself is felt, it should be stated more clearly. Furthermore, the authoress firstly elaborates the terms OBOR and 16+1 only on the page 26, which seems way too late for proper understanding of the policies within Chinese foreign economic policy.

The methodology could be clarified more precisely: "This thesis will be applied with a qualitative analysis method and data will be collected through a case study of China's relations with Visegrád countries." Such explanation does not give exact impression of the approach she adopted to her research question. As a result, the perspective of China's interests and motivations is not always followed. This only adds to the confusing impression I received from the whole thesis.

The literature review that should explain the place of the thesis in current research lacks in-depth analysis of these works. The authoress provides a concise list of names selected based on uncertain criteria. Regretfully, the works dealing with Chinese foreign policy and foreign economic policy are missing from the review. They would and could contribute to understanding of the approach adopted when elaborating the question of Chinese economic and investment policies in the Visegrad countries.

To the extent I may judge it, the language side of the thesis is far from perfect. Some of the sentences, such as "on the other hand, the theoretical foundation of this study is Alexander Wendt's Constructivism in International Relations theory" lacks internal logic. Similarly, "therefore, the normalized usage of international institutions is not efficient and rational when regulating states' behaviors in the international system" (page 11) is simply hard to understand.

In general, the explanation of Chinese motivation in cooperation with the Visegrad countries does not sound particularly convincing. Although the authoress claims that only non-material reasons may explain such cooperation, clear message is missing. As a result, the thesis does not answer the question whether the interest in Visegrad countries is commensurate to the interest in other parts of the world/Europe, or whether this interest is something unique. Even if we get some hints, a clear and argued statement is missing.

Despite generally critical tone of this review, the thesis is an interesting contribution to understanding of Chinese foreign policy in the current years. Nevertheless, it suffers from unclear structure that makes the argument weak. Bearing in mind all strengths and weaknesses, the overall grade is “good - D”.

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