DCU Scoil an Dlí agus Rialtais
Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
Baile Átha Cliath 9 Éire

DCU School of Law and Government
Dublin City University
Dublin 9
Ireland

T + 353 1 700 6472
E maura.conway@dcu.ie
W dcu.ie/law_and_ government

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To Prof. Hynek and Promotion Committee,

This letter is with regard to my assessment of Dr. Vit Stritecky's scholarly achievements in the context of his potential elevation from Assistant Professor/Lecturer (Doctor - Dr.) to the higher academic rank of Associate Professor/Senior Lecture (Docent - Doc.). in the Department of Security Studies in the Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University, Prague.

I should make clear at the outset that my comments below are uniformly positive and I am strongly supportive of Dr. Stritecky's promotion based on his academic CV and the book length text, titled *The Technology of Revision and Virtual Maps*, shared with me for external review purposes.

My review is divided into five discrete sections focused on Dr. Stritecky's academic career development, Masters' program development, research and publication record, his *habilitation* thesis, and my overall summing-up.

1. Academic Career Development

Dr. Stritecky has all the necessary formal academic credentials for promotion, along with the required teaching, administrative, and research experience. As regards teaching, this includes not just undergraduate and extensive MA teaching experience, but also supervision of doctoral students to completion and of PhD external examining. In addition to his administrative roles in a variety of MA programmes discussed below, he has also acted as Deputy Head of Charles' Department of Security Studies.

'Real world,' particularly policy, impact is an increasing concern of academic institutions and Dr. Stritecky has enviable experience in this area too, with two stints in the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, first as a Research fellow in the Institute of International Relations (IIR) (2005 – 2013) and then as an External Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (2012 – 2019). Dr. Stritecky has also held a number of visiting posts, including at the world-renowned Stockholm Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

2. Masters' Program Development

Dr. Stritecky has been instrumental in the development of not one, but three successful MA programmes. He has been the Convenor, since 2012, of the Faculty's MA in International Security Studies; was the Co-Director between 2015 and 2017 of the

Security and Intelligence, Double-Degree MA Programme, with the University of Glasgow and *Ostbayerische Technische Hochschule Regensburg*; and has been Co-Director, since 2016, of the Erasmus Mundus Joint MA in Security, Intelligence and Strategic Studies (IMSISS), with the University of Glasgow and my own institution, Dublin City University.

IMSISS is particularly worth commenting upon as it is widely viewed as one of the premier graduate-level security degrees in Europe (and beyond). It has won €7.37 million of EU funding over two rounds: €3 million for the period 2016 – 2021 and a further €4.37 million for the period 2020 – 2025. This 24-month degree has to-date attracted students from 60 countries and provided 108 fully funded scholarships and 135 work placements across 28 countries (including at the United Nations HQ, New York). A distinguishing characteristic of the degree is the very high number of graduates that have obtained jobs in the security field. IMSISS's world-leading status is due in no small part to Dr. Stritecky's input and commitment.

3. Research and Publication Record

Dr. Stritecky has an impressive research and publication record. He is the author, co-author, or co-editor of six books, 15 journal articles, and 19 book chapters. Importantly, three of the books, 12 of the journal articles, and 10 of the book chapters have appeared in English, the *lingua franca* of global academia. Worth noting too are the diversity of publications in which Dr. Stritecky's articles have appeared, including not just high-profile journals in the field of International Relations and Security Studies (e.g. *European Security* (h5-index 21), *International Politics* (h5-index 18)), but also highly-ranked Computing publications, such as *ACM Computing Surveys* (h5-index 90), and interdisciplinary outlets, such as *Futures* (h5-index 40).

In addition to his scholarly publications, Dr. Stritecky has—together with colleagues—also contributed numerous expert reports and policy briefs, including commissioned reports for the European Parliament and the Czech Ministry for Foreign Affairs. And has had funded research underway, almost uninterrupted, since 2006.

4. *Habilitation* Thesis: *The Technology of Revision and Virtual Maps*

Dr. Stritecky has, in recent years, developed a clear programme of cutting-edge research that involves systematic theoretically informed investigation of several interrelated contemporary elements, including machine learning, artificial intelligence (AI), propaganda, and the Internet.

The synergy inherent to such a research programme has clearly allowed Dr. Stritecky to a.) gain insights and specialised expertise that would not have been possible were his research conducted on a variety of less related topics, b.) build on his own prior research, as well as that of his PhD students and other researchers, and c.) make an innovative contribution to the discipline of International Relations and Security Studies, which is built upon further in his *habilitation* thesis.

Dr. Stritecky's *The Technology of Revision and Virtual Maps* provides a very welcome integration of what might be termed 'high theory' with detailed empirics, in fact what might be described—from a social science, as opposed to say a computing, perspective—as 'big data.' This is not (yet?) commonplace in International Relations and Security Studies. In particular, work combining research and analysis on machine learning, AI, propaganda, and the Net is overwhelmingly policy-oriented and almost theory-free. The latter is not something that the present work could be accused of, integrating empirical research from contemporary Terrorism Studies, Disinformation Studies, and Computing, with insights from Schumpeter, R.B.J. Walker, Waltz, and Virilio, among others. Also worth commenting on here is the author distinguishing in the text between AI and machine learning (Ch.2), a division that is too often either unknown to or overlooked by social scientists.

In addition, while the treatment and/or use of machine learning and AI in International Relations and Security is, as pointed out in the text (p.47), still somewhat niche, it will doubtless continue to gain greater importance in tandem with its growing prominence in the conduct of international affairs, including security, more generally. Receiving much greater attention in recent years has been the spread and impact of extremist and terrorist online content (Ch.4), on the one hand, and broader categories of propaganda and disinformation (Ch.5), on the other, however. Dr. Stritecky's innovation is to combine treatment of all of these to say something new and interesting about the variety of "alternative realities conceived in the virtual space" (p.99) and their impacts, especially in respect to revisionist online "world building" (pp.'s 82 -83, etc.).

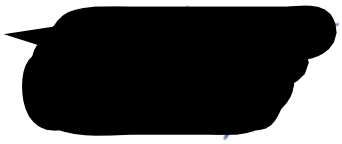
Interdisciplinarity is increasingly championed within the academy, but truly inter-disciplinary work is still not commonplace even in IR, which is routinely pointed to as inherently interdisciplinary. This is due, at least in part, to the high degree of difficulty entailed in the successful completion of interdisciplinary research, which has the added drawback of oftentimes being difficult to get published, with journals in one discipline pointing authors to publication venues in another discipline and vice versa. Dr. Stritecky has successfully manoeuvred these difficulties however, having—as already mentioned—successfully published in high-ranking IR/Security Studies and Computing journals, in addition to interdisciplinary venues, and portions of the present text also appearing to be forthcoming in journal article form. I see no reason why the current inventive interdisciplinary text cannot therefore also find a prestigious publisher, ideally a university press.

Finally, for this sub-section, I would like to formally confirm that the submitted *habilitation* thesis is original and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, does not, in an ethically unacceptable manner, draw from the works of other authors or older works of the applicant, and lists all sources in the usual way and can be recommended towards Dr. Stritecky's overall application to be transferred to the rank of Docent (Doc.).

5. Overall Assessment

To sum up, I understand the criteria for appointment to the rank of Associate Professor/Senior Lecture (Docent – Doc.). in Charles University and believe that Dr. Stritecky's impressive accomplishments to-date fulfil these criteria. His contribution to MA-level programme development and teaching is particularly impressive, with the

successfulness of and funding attaching to IMSISS being particularly noteworthy. Dr. Stritecky's publication record, both in terms of his scholarly and policy outputs, is strong and growing. His habilitation thesis treats increasingly 'hot' topics, is innovative in its ideas and execution, and fills a scholarly gap. It would certainly therefore appear to me to be appropriate for the Faculty and the University to promote Dr. Stritecky, whom I recommend unreservedly for same.



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Prof. Maura Conway

Paddy Moriarty Professor of Government and International Studies

School of Law and Government
Dublin City University

E: maura.conway@dcu.ie
T: +353 (0)1 700 6472
M: +353 (0)87 295 1284