

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Title of the thesis:	Economic regionalism on the example of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
Author of the thesis:	A. Ponomarenko
Referee (incl. titles):	Mgr. Martin Riegl, Ph.D.

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>	14
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	14
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	12
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	12
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	15
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)	67
The proposed grade (1-2-3-4)	2

You can even use a decimal point (e.g. giving the grade of 2.5 for 60 points).

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

1) Theoretical background:

Submitted thesis is focused on economic regionalism with a particular focus on the case study of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Author has an ambition to answer following questions: 1) *How do globalization and regional integration impact the world policy?* 2) *What are the main interests and need for this organization has the countries-initiators of its creation: Russia and China?* 3) *What benefits from such association have the member-countries, belonging to CA region?* It must be noted that especially the first one is rather broad has not been answered sufficiently. Besides above mentioned research questions, A.Ponomarenko states three hypotheses: 1) *Despite the existing problems and disagreements in the organization, its development and successful functioning are of great importance both for participants, and for all international community in general.* 2) *The potential of SCO is defined, first of all, by participation in it of such countries as Russia and China. Both of these states are interested in stable political and economic development of the Eurasian region, and ensuring its safety.* 3) *Economic cooperation and activity of SCO countries will be more successful under condition of development of transport communications in the region.*

Theoretically the thesis is framed within the theories of liberalism and neofunctionalism which are explicitly mentioned by the author herself. On contrary realistic approach is ignored, which logically limits explanatory ability of the thesis, as the geopolitical aspect of sino-russian cooperation and competition in the region is an important part of the problem. It must be noted that regional cooperation and motives of particular countries geographically stuck in the region and of external players can be explained by the realistic theory within various cluster of regionalism related theories. Deeper literature review would enable author to understand different motives for regional cooperation btw small countries and regional powers. On the other side the author has worked with less known works of Russian and Chinese authors.

As author has not worked with some significant sources like L.Fawcett or Keating, conceptualization of the most important terms like region, regionalism or regionalization shows significant deficiencies.

2) Contribution:

Overall the submitted thesis reached the goal set down in the introduction, the added value of the thesis is its empirical part offering huge sum of information, however it would be more than beneficial to structure information provided in the thesis, e.g. to make summarizing tables of mutual trade volume btw CA countries and external players. Thus, a deeper analytical overview of economic as well as economic ties is missing. The influence of China and Russia could be also proved by analyzing the position of Russian and Chinese language. This is exactly the sphere, where Beijing and Moscow compete for influence and project their soft-power. The thesis provides rather a compilation of available information rather than a deep analysis of trends. The author inclines to general statements which are not based on reliable data. ...*"At the same time, it is obviously important to note that the public opinion in Central Asia doesn't promote orientation to China yet, perceiving this country as remote, mysterious, unfamiliar."*

More critical approach towards the researched topic would be proper. The author tends to adopt official positions and declaration of Russian and Chinese elites, scholars respectively. *E.g. The Russian-Chinese tandem in East Eurasia in the form of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), is an uncommon example of constructive interaction and realization in 34 practice of the latest models of interstate and intercivilization dialogue including in line with integrative tendencies (Wang J., 2014). (p. 34). "...In this situation the role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization which is an example of constructive cooperation and realization in practice of new models of interstate and intercivilization cooperation is especially significant."* (36)

By ignoring the realistic tradition of international relations, the author fails to understand important side motives of Moscow and Beijing, which can't be explained by theories of functionalism or neo-functionalism. For example the long lasting observer status of India and Pakistan. In both countries, full membership was blocked by China and Russia, respectively because of geopolitical reasons. The second aspect is Beijing's attempt to gain an upper hand in the region through its economic supremacy and OBOR project which goes hand in hand. This will enable China to integrate CA economies with China and secure vital Chinese interests on one side, and diminish Russian influence in the region on the other side.

3) Methods:

The author explicitly explain methods used in the thesis, however these are too vague on one side and too broad on the other: *"Methodological base of the research is the complex of general-logical and generalscientific methods of deduction and induction, the analysis and synthesis; research methods of the modern humanitarian disciplines."*...*Methods of monitoring and the content analysis of mass media have been used when studying interests of member countries of SCO and actors out of the region, concerning participation in association and an assessment of prospects of its development.* Having said that, I do consider the definition of region as the weak part of the thesis.

4) Literature: The selection of literature is sufficient for the task at hand, however some most important works are missing, for example - Keating 1997, L. Fawcett, Cohen, J.Nye (1968) – International Regionalism, W.W. Rostow (1990) – The Coming Age of Regionalism, R.Rosecrance (1991) – Regionalism and the Post-Cold War Era.

5) Manuscript form: Although the structure of the thesis does not always allow the reader fluent reading, the reviewed thesis meets formal criteria required by Faculty of Social Sciences and the overall quality of written English is satisfying. Some misspellings could have been saved by more careful proof reading. Overall formal impression of the work is good.

DATE OF EVALUATION: August, 25th 2016

Referee Signature

The referee should give comments to the following requirements:

1) THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: Can you recognize that the thesis was guided by some **theoretical fundamentals** relevant for this thesis topic? Were some important theoretical concepts omitted? Was the theory used in the thesis consistently incorporated with the topic and hypotheses tested?

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

2) CONTRIBUTION: Evaluate if the author presents **original ideas** on the topic and aims at demonstrating **critical thinking** and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and relevant empirical material. Is there a distinct **value added** of the thesis (relative to knowledge of a university-educated person interested in given topic)? Did the author explain **why** the observed phenomena occurred? Were the policy implications well founded?

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

3) METHODS: Are the **hypotheses** for this study clearly stated, allowing their further verification and testing? Are the theoretical explanations, empirical material and **analytical tools** used in the thesis relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the aspiration level of the study? Is the thesis **topic comprehensively analyzed** and does the thesis not make trivial or irrelevant detours off the main body stated in the thesis proposal? More than 10 points signal an exceptional work, **which requires your explanation "why" it is so**).

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

4) LITERATURE REVIEW: The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and **command of recent literature**. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way and disposes with a representative bibliography. (Remark: references to Wikipedia, websites and newspaper articles are a sign of **poor research**). If they dominate you cannot give more than 8 points. References to books published by prestigious publishers and articles in renowned journals give much better impression.

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

5) MANUSCRIPT FORM: The thesis is **clear and well structured**. The author uses appropriate language and style, including academic **format** for quotations, graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables, is easily readable and **stimulates thinking**.

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Czech grading	US grading
81 – 100	1	= excellent	= A
61 – 80	2	= good	= B
51 – 60	3	= satisfactory	= C
41 – 50	3	= satisfactory	= D
0 – 40	4	= fail	= not recommended for defence