

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

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

Title of the thesis:	BRICS Organization: Comparison of the Countries' Economies and Geopolitical Influence. Potential Development
Author of the thesis:	Anna VORONKOVA
Referee (incl. titles):	Doc. Ing. Vladimír Benáček, CSc.

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

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20)</i>	16
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	11
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	8
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	15
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	10
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)	60
The proposed grade (1-2-3-4)	2.5

You can even use the decimal point

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

The topic of this master thesis is definitely challenging for any researcher and of high relevance for the development of the world economy. The questions and hypotheses raised by the author are clear, opening a wide prism of analytical and theoretical approaches. Unfortunately, the author does not include the list of References at the end of the thesis (the literature is quoted in footnotes, often in an incomplete form and /non-standard style), which makes the final assessment of her resources quite difficult. The total number of 203 footnotes on 80 pages of the thesis indicates that that her work was highly resource-intensive. In reality the thesis relied perhaps even too excessively on the references and on the data from outside. A good master thesis should build more from the own resources of the author.

1) Theoretical background:

The author relates her analysis to some very important theories of economic development (“Flying Geese Paradigm” being in the forefront) that were proposed by such authors as Akamatsu (1962) and further supported by the contributions from Maddison (2007), Lin (2011), Kojima (2011), Gerschenkron (1962) or Kuznets (1971). Maybe, the criticism of Akamatsu by Kasahara (2004) could be helpful in further analysis. Also the interface (or coherence) between the theoretical background and the analytical parts could be more articulate (“operational”). Nevertheless, I still consider this part of the thesis as the most competitive.

2) Contribution:

In contrast to the previous, this aspect of the thesis is less convincing. The ideas (or conclusions) derived from the analysis do not seem to me very original. The author was too much guided by statements taken from other authors and external texts (usually of lower scientific background and often picked from various policy-oriented websites). So the conversion of theoretical underpinnings to the implementation of analyses was not very innovative and it often ended in the comparison of rough data provided in tables published elsewhere. In the sections where the data was collected and processed by the author (e.g. on the pp. 55-70), the quality of presentation decreased.

Even though the phenomenon of BRICS is offering wide space for criticism of various fancy speculations (e.g. predictions about the world in 2050; or why Turkey, Mexico, Indonesia, Iran or

Philippines ... are not included once the S. Africa is; or what is the role of politics in forming the concept of BRICS, etc. ...) - the author did not indulge in going in that direction, even though she collected sufficient material for proposing some interesting critical conclusions.

Missing topic: maybe the analysis of high inequality in the income distribution in all BRICS countries could be included in the thesis.

3) Methods:

The work with data is the weakest part of this thesis. Ms Voronkova collected sufficient empirical material and could proceed with the analysis of trends and/or more formal comparative calculations, unfortunately up to p. 54 she relied mostly on the tables and data from other studies, sticking also to their conclusions. Chapters that offered a wide space for own analysis were too short: for example, the FDI analysis has mere 2 ½ pages, the trade analysis mere 2 pages and forex reserves practically 1 page. Among these the sections 4.6, 4.7 and especially the Conclusion were pointing to a potential of author's good analysis.

4) Literature:

The literature used in the thesis was sufficiently extensive, based perhaps on a selection of many relevant authors but the lack of the final list of References that would offer the reader to assess the literature globally must be taken as a serious liability of this thesis.

5) Manuscript form:

The thesis suffers of unequal standards where clearly written and well made-up sections blend with sections with typos (e.g. recourse vs resource, wether vs whether, economical vs economic), controversial sentences (e.g. about the present relevance of Bretton-Woods on pp. 15 and 94; recession in Russia beginning in December 2014) and technically imperfect tables (such as no. 12 through no. 17) .

Proposed questions for discussion at the defence:

- a) Can the "Fair Trade" as a marketing strategy really function as "an invaluable strategy for progress" in BRICS? (p. 31).
- b) What are the differences in the transfer, acquisition or development of technologies among the BRICS countries?
- c) How the high inequality in the income distribution in BRICS can impair their development?

DATE OF EVALUATION: 22 January 2015

Vladimír Benáček

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