

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):	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>	15
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	14
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	11
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	13
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	12
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)	66
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: The aim of the thesis "is to indicate the main reasons for BRICS countries to unify into this international organization and to suggest the potential development of BRICS group". Mrs. Voronkova applies Flying gees theory in order to reach the above mentioned goal, moreover she also utilizes Fawcett's approach to regionalism. Having in mind works of J.S.Nye who elaborated on the transfer of power from West to East, choice of the topic must be considered not only challenging but also important in terms of geoeconomics and geopolitics. The thesis itself is framed within the appropriate theoretical framework and also the structure of the thesis is logical and consistent.

2) Contribution: The strongest part of the thesis is its informative value. The author has provided not only a detailed view of historical development of cooperation between BRICS countries (with a particular focus on summits of head of states), but also extensive comparative data concerning economics (GDP, FDI, foreign exchange reserves, intra-BRICS trade), mutual trade among all BRICS countries: Brasil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, which makes the thesis attractive to reader. However, the thesis fails in its second part which should have been a projection of rising economic power (especially China's) into military and politics (geopolitics in other words) and to utilize rising economic power to extend its political influence behind its own geographic and political borders. It would be beneficial to tackle on Chinese maritime strategy in the Indian Ocean or South China sea. Although Mrs.Voronkova mentions unresolved territorial conflicts between India and China (over Kashmir and other territories), these geopolitical tensions between China and Russia, China and India should have been elaborated in details. To sum up this part of my review I must state that the thesis title is more auspicious than the findings of the thesis do offer.

3) Methods: Mrs. Voronkova explicitly applies the method of systematic analysis, furthermore she utilizes descriptive approach along with the empirical-analytical method.

4) Literature: Mrs. Voronkova has demonstrated her familiarity with relevant literature (including theories), online sources etc and ability to analyze (not always critically) all kind of resources.

However monographs, articles and online resources should be clearly separated in the list of sources. She quotes relevant and recent literature which shows that the author has a profound knowledge of the literature concerning the topic. I believe that additional literature review should also be contemplated (especially geo-politicians who are dealing with the impact of power shift from West to East), adding more authors would be beneficial for the paper.

5) Manuscript form: The thesis itself has a clearly defined and logical structure which is divided into eight chapters (including introduction and conclusion). Mrs. Voronkova uses appropriate language, however misspellings or grammar errors occur too often in the submitted paper, but still the thesis fulfills formal requirements and standards of academic paper at Master level. Another shortcoming in the manuscript form is the list of bibliography, the thesis should end with a complete bibliography and list of abbreviations should follow the alphabetic order). Also tables and charts might have been in a better graphical quality. The author makes clear what her objectives are and sticks to a defined structure.

DATE OF EVALUATION: 23.1. 2015

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