Evaluation of bc. thesis written by Fliuza Tazieva:
„The Impact of the rise of the BRICS on international relations: The case of Brazil“

The thesis is dealing with important contemporary topic of international relations trying to analyse a possible alternative power center – toward the Western dominated international order – consisting of five so called emerging markets: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa. The leading idea is that strong economic growth among these five nations can be secured with deeper economic cooperation with each other. Second, as a consequence of the economic power the BRICS will become potentially powerfull geopolitical entity (a) that will help to create more fair multi-polar world order, (b) will create additional/second layer (pillar) of the international system independent from the first pillar, (c) and will bring more stability to the whole international system. The idea of BRIC emerging markets come with Goldman Sachs in 2001. Only in 2009 it materialized in the first summit of the BRICS contries in Russia.

It is also written in a good language and form. However, I must mention few critical point, that I consider to be important.

1. Sources and literature are not put in an alphabetic order. This is extremelly complicating reading and evaluating the thesis.
2. There is a problem that student uses a big amount of official documents produced by the BRICS countries themselves about the BRICS cooperation and its importance. It would not be a problem in itself, but these documents are used completelly uncritically (for example the whole sub-chapter in pages 32-36 is using only oficial documents, the same imbalance is true for other chapters). As a result, the thesis is full of extremelly controversial „official“ claims that the student takes for granted without any attempt to put arguments or evidence for them or against them. I will put only few examples, that can sound like particularities, however it is typical for the whole thesis. For example, (a) student is saying that BRICS countries are avoiding „destabilizing confrontations“, but we see growing tensions between China and all its neigbours in terms of competition for oil resources in the South China sea etc., we also see growing confrontations between Russia and its neighbours, Turkey, and the West (war in Ukraine, military provocations with European states). For example, (b) student is saying (page 32) that South Africa (and BRICS as a consequence) is having „legitimacy to speak in the name of the emerging world“. But students does not prove it at all that the emerging world really have consensus on this claim. We know that Egypt or Nigeria is opposing the permanent membership of South Africa in the Security Council of the UN. The same is true for Mexico and Argentine opossing the permanent membership for Brazil. Not to mention what really regular people from Indonesia to Marocco think about the legitimacy of SA to speak in their name. For example, (c) the student is uncritically saying (page 38) that BRICS countries main aim is a reform of the global governance. Can really countries that have got huge problems to reform their own national governance like Russia, South Africa, Brazil or India (see Transparency International Indexes for corruption of BRICS countries, see World Bank indexes for capacity of states and its institutions to govern on their territories) to aspire to reform global governance? Can really countries with the largest internal social inequalities in the world (Brazil, India) create more equal world? Can really non-democratic and authoritarian regimes aspire to create more accountable, transparent and democratic world system? If so, why? For example, (d) student is taking for granted claim of the „Joint statement by 7th summit 2015“ about a key role that
BRICS countries are playing in dealing with the climate change. Really is that true? Based on which evidence? For example, (e) the student is claiming (page 56) that BRICS is important for the member states as a platform to „exchange ideas about how to address common internal difficulties“. Again, is there any strong evidence or example? And if so, the ideas could not be exchanged in bi-lateral way and the existence of BRICS is really needed as a platform for the exchange?

3. There are probably more differences among so called BRICS countries than these countries have in common (relations with the West, type of political regime, type of economy, level of living standards, culture, historical experience). As a consequence, the thesis did not show, that these countries do really share strong common interests in the international relations (all of the countries are part of semi-periphery in Wallerstein model, but the thesis does not elaborate on this point much; also all the countries share the pattern of modernization that could be called „catch-up modernization“ or „defensive modernization“ but again, the thesis does not elaborate on the argument).

4. I almost completelly miss theoretical background (international relations, historical sociology). It would be useful to analyse BRICS countries from different theoretical perspectives. And then compare these various perspectives and critically discuss them in terms of what do they help us to understand about BRICS countries.

5. Student also did not state which methodology it uses to deal with the subject matter and did not state what is the character of the thesis (empirical? theoretical?).

6. I miss at least an attempt to critically define what BRICS is from the perspective of the international relations (is it international organization? is it informal club for discussions?)

7. The internal economic cooperation among the BRICS countries is very limited, however the main argument for the importance of the BRICS is claiming the fact of strong economic ties and cooperation (see page 22 „intra BRICS trade is only 8 %“ of the total international trade of the BRICS countris and most of the trade is with the West; also page 28-29 „as trade among the four countris exluding China is still very low“ and China receives mainly natural resources from its partners in exchange for export sof finished products). Also, student is saying „the contemporary crisis of the BRICS is the derivative of the crisis of the West“ (page 19). So in fact BRICS is not any second pillar of the world economic system that would be independent from the first pillar and as a consequence help to create more stable and sustainable economic development (that is claimed by the thesis). I really miss critical comment on the facts relavent for the economic dimension of the BRICS cooperation. Because, if there is no strong economic cooperation, the BRICS association does not have any solid bases for its existence and political influence.

8. The only two examples (case study) of the political influence of the BRICS cooperation is a reform of quota shift inside the IMF and the establishment of so called New Development Bank. However, in the first example, there is really no evidence or an attempt to evaluate the relative role played by BRICS and played by other actors. Put it in other words, the thesis did not uncover or show the link between BRICS and the promotion of the reform. In the second case, I really miss more critical analyses of the New Development Bank. What is its power, role, influence? How important is it in relation to other actors?

Generally, the thesis is strongly biased with ideology of BRICS and with rhetorics of its member countries. It is not based on facts and on critical analyses of these facts inspired by various theoretical approaches of international relations. Instead, it is based on future predictions (done by famous Goldman Sachs reports or by BRICS countries themselves) about how important the BRICS will become in the future global economy, and as a consequence important in the future international politics. But as we know from previous
future predictions (see Bandung conference in 1950s and the optimism connected to the post-colonial world or see the case of Japan and the comming of so called „Japan century“ that has been predicted in 1980s). To put it in other words, the thesis is mixing the optimistic future predictions with contemporary facts and as a result is uncritically overestimating the role of the BRICS played today.

I propose mark 3 only if the oral defence is excellent and tries to critically address at least some of the many weaknesses of the thesis.

Mgr. Karel Černý, Ph.D.
Prague, 25th May 2016