REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

GPS – Geopolitical Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Title of the thesis:	The Belt Tightens: China's Learning Curve on Employing Soft Power in Sri Lanka
Author of the thesis:	**William Tizard**
Referee *(incl. titles)***:**	**Martin Riegl**

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
Theoretical background (max. 20)	14
Contribution (max. 20)	15
Methods (max. 20)	12
Literature (max. 20)	15
Manuscript form (max. 20)	15
TOTAL POINTS *(max. 100)*	**71**
The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)	**C**

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

1) Theoretical background:
Framing the research within the J.S.Nye´s concept of soft-power is interesting, but it also raises questions whether this theory helps the author to achieve declared goals. Chinese foreign investments are directly linked to its geopolitical strategy and debt-trap diplomacy/policy which is more and more obvious not only in Sri Lanka but also in Maldives, some island state in the Pacific Ocean or sub-Saharan Africa and the application of soft-power might be a bit misleading in the context. China´s approach must be understood through its attempt to achieve a dominant position enabling it force other state to comply with her national interests.

2) Contribution:
The authors is definitely very knowledgeable and present huge amounts of interesting facts and finding.

3) Methods:
Mr. Tizard has decided to methodologically based his research analysis of Chinese influence over case study of Sri Lanka, in order to achieve declared goal he further applied a direct observation and questioning, which is undoubtedly interesting but also a difficult approach. Unfortunately the author could not avoid some limitations and pitfalls of the chosen methodology.

4) Literature:
The author has gathered significant amount of resources. However, additional literature review would be beneficial as some major works (theoretical) in the field of geopolitics/geoconomics are missing.

5) Manuscript form:
The thesis meets all formal criteria required by the Faculty of Social Sciences, I would just recommend to use the formal layout for the front page. It allows fluent reading and no significant

shortcomings occur throughout the paper. I would also recommend to put all maps, diagrams, and other images in the appendixes.

DATE OF EVALUATION:

_____

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
91 – 100	**A**	= excellent
81 - 90	**B**	= good
71 – 80	**C**	= satisfactory
61 - 70	**D**	= satisfactory
51 - 60	**E**	
0	**F**	= fail (not recommended for defence)