Posudek na diplomovou práci

Autor/ka práce: Filip Mocák

Název práce: The impact of a new scramble for Africa between the EU and China – a comparative case study of foreign direct investment in Senegal and Zambia

Obor/Rok: MV 2021

Autor posudku (oponent): Jan Mazač

Kritéria	Definice	Max. bodů	Získané body
Hlavní kritéria			
	Výzkumná otázka, formulace problému	**10**	7
	Teoretický konceptuální rámec	**30**	25
	Metodologie, analýza argumentace	**40**	18
Celkem		**80**	50
Vedlejší kritéria			
	Zdroje	**10**	10
	Styl	**5**	5
	Formální kritéria	**5**	5
Celkem		**20**	20
CELKEM		**100**	70

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Slovní hodnocení:

Hlavní kritéria:

The thesis aims to shed light on how European and Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) in Sub-Saharan Africa affects democracy, business freedom, and state stability. The author underpins his research by neocolonialism and orientalism, and conducts two case studies - Senegal and Zambia from 2010 to 2018. Overall, I find the topic relevant and the master's thesis itself promising. The thesis and its parts correspond with formal requirements. However, it contains some deficiencies, especially in its empirical part and how the author interprets outcomes. Hence, I apply a sizable penalty.

The objective of the thesis is to find out how EU and Chinese FDI affect the socioeconomic and political situation. In particular, whether there is a correlation between FDI and (i) the level of democracy assessed through the democracy index, (ii) the level of economic freedom represented by the index of economic freedom, and (iii) the risk of conflict measured by the fragile states index. However, here comes the first confusion. In the chapter devoted to research design (page 17), the author suggests the aim is to analyse the correlation between variables. However, in the methodological part (page 15), the author claims he aims for causal inference and intends (as RQ on page 18 suggests) to find out how FDI affects these three indices and what impact FDI has on these indices. Besides, the author describes his research as qualitative and states that he does not employ statistics (page 12). However, in chapter 5 (page 37-38), the author interprets the outcomes, referring to the correlation, a statistical method that measures the strength of the linear relationship between two variables.

As regards the author's theoretical selection (neocolonialism and orientalism), both are clearly circumscribed. I would also like to appreciate their thoroughgoing and exhausting delimitation. However, I lack conceptualisation of used indices (the democracy index, the index of economic freedom, and the risk of conflict index). By omitting it, it is unclear what these indices measure, what they cover (i.e., what factors/components they are composed of), and, finally, what their scale is. Besides, I wondered what it means for Zambia/Senegal to be categorised as a flawed/hybrid democracy (page 33/36). Conceptualisation of these definitions would make the whole thesis more comprehensible to the reader.

Regarding the method used, I have to point out the ambiguity in the methodological chapter. As already mentioned at the beginning, the author claims his research is qualitative, and he does not employ statistics (page 12). However, as the thesis proceeds, the author looks for correlation. Another vagueness is the misuse of terms causality and correlation. On page 15, the author claims the purpose of the study is causal inference. However, in the rest of the thesis, the author works (unfortunately poorly) with correlation. It is worth mentioning that correlation does not imply causation—correlation test for a linear relationship of two variables. However, finding two variables moving together does not mean that one variable causes the other. Correlation does not show whether X causes Y or vice versa.

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In the final discussion, I have to disagree with the author's interpretation of outcomes (page 37-38). In general, he does not calculate any correlation coefficient (e.g., Pearson's correlation coefficient). He only bases his interpretation on shallow observation of changes in values of few data points. This is a wrong approach since the correlation is a strict statistical tool that measures the degree (strength) of linearly related variables. Therefore, the interpretation of correlation analysis must be based on calculating a correlation coefficient that examines the strength and direction of that relationship. It is also necessary to determine whether the correlation between variables is statistically significant (p-value). Unfortunately, neither of these was done. If the author had correctly done so (e.g., by calculating Pearson correlation coefficient), his interpretation of outcomes would have been quite different. Since the author tests six hypotheses for each case (therefore 12 hypotheses), for better clarity, I provide the table with the results of Pearson's correlation coefficient. Obviously, the author wrongly confirmed H2 and H4 for Zambia, and H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5 for Senegal. Only H1 and H3 are correctly confirmed as valid (strong and statistically significant correlation).

Pearson's Correlations

	expected relationship	autors' interpretation	variable	variable	Pearson's r		p
H1	pos	confirmed	EU_FDI_Zambia	Zambia_Democracy	0.674	*	0.047
H1	pos	confirmed	EU_FDI_Senegal	Senegal_Democracy	0.020		0.958
H2	neg, stagnation	confirmed	China_FDI_Zambia	Zambia_Democracy	-0.068		0.863
H2	neg, stagnation	confirmed	China_FDI_Senegal	Senegal_Democracy	0.242		0.530
H3	pos	confirmed	EU_FDI_Zambia	Zambia_Economic_Free	0.914	***	5.626e -4
H3	pos	confirmed	EU_FDI_Senegal	Senegal_Economic_Free	-0.582		0.100
H4	neg, stagnation	confirmed	China_FDI_Zambia	Zambia_Economic_Free	-0.351		0.354
H4	neg, stagnation	confirmed	China_FDI_Senegal	Senegal_Economic_Free	-0.157		0.687
H5	pos	not confirmed	EU_FDI_Zambia	Zambia_Fragile_State	-0.449		0.225
H5	pos	confirmed	EU_FDI_Senegal	Senegal_Fragile_State	-0.323		0.396
H6	neg, stagnation	not confirmed	China_FDI_Zambia	Zambia_Fragile_State	0.594		0.092
H6	neg, stagnation	not confirmed	China_FDI_Senegal	Senegal_Fragile_State	0.025		0.948

$* \ p < .05, ** \ p < .01, *** \ p < .001$

To wrap up, doing correlation analysis based on the limited size of the dataset does not make much sense since most results are not statistically significant. The author should instead stick to the qualitative inference as he suggests on page 12.

Vedlejší kritéria:

The thesis is well-formatted and structured and corresponds with the requirements. The writing style and grammar are satisfactory.

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Celkové hodnocení:

Overall, despite some issues, I find the topic relevant and the master's thesis itself promising. The thesis and its parts correspond with the requirements. However, as described above, the thesis contains some substantial deficiencies, mainly those related to the misinterpretation of the outcomes.

Výsledná známka: D

Podpis:

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