REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

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

Title of the thesis:	China and Southeast Asia: Trade integration and rivalry
Author of the thesis:	**Ekaterina Sukhova**
Referee *(incl. titles)***:**	**Mgr. Martin Riegl, PhD.**

Remark: It is a standard at the FSV UK that the Referee's Report is at least 400 words. In case you will assess the thesis as "non-defendable", please explain the concrete reasons for that in detail.

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

1) Theoretical background:

The introduction does not explain the goal of the thesis, research questions nor theoretical framework, but immediately skips to hypotheses. Moreover I do miss explanation of the logic of the structure of the thesis, basic literature research or conceptualization of some basic terms like FTA, RTA, new regionalism etc. Moreover I would expect from author to explain the definition of the region which is further used in the thesis. Having said that, the introductions fails to introduce the reader into the topic, for example a review of the literature on the research subject would be a good starting point for the whole thesis.

2) Contribution:

The author has undoubtedly chosen a relevant and topic phenomenon. Mrs. Sukhova defined 4 hypotheses she attempts to test later in her paper. 1) Deeper cooperation can be achieved by increasing the RTA's network, 2) Deeper cooperation cannot be achieved by increasing the RTA's network, 3) Current trade patterns within the SEA region correspond with the logic of gravity models very well, there no major artificial (and statistically significant) deviations, 4) Current trade patterns within the SEA deviate from the logic of gravity model, with some artificial (and statistically significant) deviations present. However the problem is missing geographic framework (definition of the region) for her research. I do not find any ground for description and analysis of bilateral economic relations with Pakistan (South Asia or the Middle East), South Korea and Japan (East Asia), Sri Lanka (South Asia) etc. Also some statements like: „One Belt, One Road is not classified as FTA, but the purposes of the initiative are very similar to one", in fact nothing could be further from the truth. The very logic of OBOR is based on the logic of classical geopolitics or rivalry between land and sea powers aiming at strenghtening Chinese position/perception/image in her geographic proximity and diminishing her vulnerability following from dependency on maritime trade.

3) Methods:
Method has not been clearly defined, however quantitative approach fits to the research topic. Although all hypotheses are clearly stated, the paper would deserve much deeper analysis and anchoring within the theories of regionalism, e.g. the concept of hegemony or bandwagoning would be relevant.

4) Literature:
Author has collected a sufficient amount of literature, but additional literature review would be more than beneficial as many crucial literature (e.g. Fawcett is missing).

5) Manuscript form:

The most serious problem is inadequate scope of the thesis which does not meet a minimum standard (it has 78 106 characters only). Secondly I would recommend additional proofreading, e.g. the names of authors should stick to a unified format. Also layout might have been adjusted. Overall feeling is that the thesis has been finished in a hurry.

Box for the thesis supervisor only. Please characterize the progress in the working out of thesis (e.g. steady and gradual versus discontinuous and abrupt) and the level(intensity) of communication/cooperation with the author:
…

Sugested questions for the defence are:
„... ...“

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

CATEGORY	POINTS
Theoretical background (max. 20)	5
Contribution (max. 20)	8
Methods (max. 20)	5
Literature (max. 20)	15
Manuscript form (max. 20)	5
TOTAL POINTS *(max. 100)*	**38**
The proposed grade (1-2-3-4)	**4**

You can use the decimal point (e.g. giving the grade of 2.4 for 61 points).

DATE OF EVALUATION: 2.6.2017

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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? Has the author demonstrated a genuine* **understanding** *of the theories addressed?*

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 12 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**. *(Remarks: 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. Any sort of* **plagiarism** *disqualifies the thesis from admission to defence.)*

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 the academic* **format for quotations**, *graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables, is easily readable and* **stimulates thinking.** *The text is free from typos and easy to comprehend.*

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 at a margin of failure	= D a marginal passing grade
0 – 40	4	= failing is recommended	= non-defendable