

Assessment of Master Thesis – Academic Consultant



Study programme: **International Economic Relations**

Field of study: **International and Diplomatic Studies**

Academic year: **2018/2019**

Master Thesis Topic: **A preliminary assessment of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as an economic diplomacy strategy and its impact on national-EU political dynamism in Europe.**

Author's name: **Shet Yuan Soo**

Ac. Consultant's Name: **Jeremy Alan Garlick, M.A., Ph.D.**

Opponent: **Ing. PhDr. Radka Havlová, Ph.D.**

	Criterion	Mark (1–4)
1.	Overall objective achievement	1
2.	Logical structure	1
3.	Using of literature, citations	1
4.	Adequacy of methods used	2
5.	Depth of analysis	1
6.	Self-reliance of author	1
7.	Formal requirements: text, graphs, tables	1
8.	Language and stylistics	2

Comments and Questions:

The thesis is an analytically innovative attempt to assess China's economic diplomacy in Europe through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The work is particularly strong in the theoretical aspects, where it discusses (in Chapter 2) the differences between Chinese and European conceptions of economic diplomacy and economic statecraft, and the implications of these distinctions for the application of the BRI in Europe. The analysis includes sophisticated reasoning about the European reaction to the BRI and its impacts in Europe. This includes a detailed explanation of what the author perceives as a European misinterpretation of the BRI as a 'divide and conquer' strategy, whereas, she argues, it is motivated by domestic economic issues in China.

The thesis is therefore particularly strong in its analytical reasoning, theoretical background and logical structure. The use of citations is also impressive, with the author skillfully utilising sources in English and Chinese in support of the carefully-constructed argument.

However, the empirical part of the thesis is not as strong as the theoretical aspects. For instance, the main empirical evidence provided to support the conclusion that the BRI has not been successful in building European infrastructure is a table of general data (on page 21) of EU countries' total investments. Since this is not data about Chinese investments in Europe, it does not clearly support the hypothesis of ineffective application of the BRI.

It should also be mentioned that the language also at times suffers from some clumsiness of phrasing and expression which occasionally renders some points difficult to follow. This does not, however, detract from the clarity and quality of the overall argument.

Overall, the high quality, originality and interest of the analysis, allied with the excellent use of sources and the theoretical part relating to economic diplomacy, mean that the thesis is of a superior quality deserving of the maximum grade.

Questions for defence: (1) Can you explain the differences between the European and Chinese understandings of economic diplomacy and the implications of this for the BRI? (2) Can you justify your conclusion that the BRI is centrally motivated by domestic economic issues in China rather than Chinese foreign policy?

Conclusion: The Master Thesis is recommended for the defence.

Suggested Grade: **1**

Date: 10/12/2018

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