BACHELOR'S THESIS EXAMINER REPORT
PPE – Bachelor's in Politics, Philosophy and Economics
Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Thesis title:	Trade relations between USA and China during Trump's presidency
Student's name:	Alexandr Skuratov
Referee's name:	Jakub Tesar, Ph.D.

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Contribution and argument (quality of research and analysis, originality)	**50**	33
	Research question (definition of objectives, plausibility of hypotheses)	**15**	10
	Theoretical framework (methods relevant to the research question)	**15**	6
Total		*80*	49
Minor Criteria			
	Sources, literature	**10**	7
	Presentation (language, style, cohesion)	**5**	3
	Manuscript form (structure, logical coherence, layout, tables, figures)	**5**	3
Total		*20*	13
TOTAL		*100*	62

Plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score:

The plagiarism check has not revealed substantial overlap with existing sources.

Reviewer's commentary according to the above criteria:

The thesis aims to research the **trade relationship between the USA and China in the last 15 years**, i.e., under the administrations of Obama, Trump, and Biden. The main focus is on the presidency of Donald Trump, trying to assess to what extent his actions disrupted the overall trade pattern when compared to the other two. The author reviews the mentioned presidencies and is attentive to other contexts (especially the economic crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic) that influenced countries' economic and trade relations during that time.

The thesis comes with a **clear research question** (What was the impact of Trump's presidency on trade relations with China (p.16)) and tries to answer it by comparing the trade patterns under the three presidencies. Even though the question is clear, the **guiding hypotheses** (that Trump had "a great impact" and that "other events like economic crisis, or Covid" influenced it as well (ibid)) **are rather simplistic or obvious**. Moreover, the thesis **misses a clear method** to clarify what events/policies are to be discussed and why (e.g., Obamacare is relevant, but the Guantanamo prison is not).

The vague method results in a relatively shallow analysis when the author **focuses mainly on a single indicator** (trade balance) and its dimensions. The conclusions of the work (like "It is possible to say that Biden did not do anything outstanding to improve the trade relations with China; the growth was present because of the trade recovery after the pandemic" (p.36)) therefore **do not follow from the performed analysis**. How could the author distinguish whether it is the effect of US policies or the economic recovery? Many readers may also miss the broader economic context, e.g., the period of high inflation, which impacted the global economic and trade relations after the pandemic.

The text is **structured logically** and brings many relevant descriptive insights. It would benefit from engaging more with the academic literature on the topic. The author uses an appropriate number of sources, but mainly as a reference for the discussed events; he does not draw on the insight provided by those studies. The thesis is minimal when discussing the Chinese part of the equation (one page of the thesis, based mostly on one article). Another issue is the incomplete bibliographic entries (e.g., outlet is often missing).

Some facts of the thesis should be better checked: 1) The author claims that we saw an "overall retreat from Asia under Obama" (p.12) but later talks about his "Pivot to Asia" policy which means the opposite instead; 2) the author claims that in the mid-20th century the "US was closed and dealing with its problems with minimum external interaction" which is hardly true considering the involvement of US in the WW2 and following international politics; 3) author claim that "pandemic […] could not be predicted by any chance" (p.29) even though the number of academic studies mentioned high risk of airborne respiratory disease beforehand; 4) also Covid did not emerge "at the beginning of 2020", but in December 2019 (which is why it is known as Covid-19)

The thesis is written in clear language and **well-structured to report the research topic**. The text **would nevertheless benefit from plotting the discussed indicators** instead of listing them in the text.

Some of the statements (like "I found Trump's presidency controversial" (p.11) and the position of Obama's administration towards China "was not the best but could have been much worse" (p.19)) are personal observations and do not belong to the thesis. The text is not free of some **language issues** ("external factors [such] as Covid-19" (p.6), "in a […] globalized world […] countries are independent in their decisions" (probably dependent, p.8), "million$ USD" (p.9), "need to solve an enormous ??" (p.12)), but the overall argument is straightforward.

Overall, the author understands the topic well and provides a relevant description of the issue. The quality of the thesis could be heightened with a clear method of work, which would allow us to look beyond observing the changes in a single indicator.

Proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F): D

Suggested questions for the defence are:
- To what extent is the trade relationship between the two countries impacted by the decision of the governing elites (e.g., the president), and to what extent do other factors drive it?
- What other factors (not mentioned in the thesis) could have substantially influenced the trade balance between the studied countries?

I recommend the thesis for final defence.

_____
Referee Signature