MASTER'S THESIS EXAMINER REPORT

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

Thesis title:	Comparison of the trade of China with the EU and the US
Student's name:	Lin Shi
Referee's name:	Vilém Semerák, Ph.D.

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Contribution and argument (quality of research and analysis, originality)	**50**	10
	Research question (definition of objectives, plausibility of hypotheses)	**15**	3
	Theoretical framework (methods relevant to the research question)	**15**	3
Total		**80**	16
Minor Criteria			
	Sources, literature	**10**	1
	Presentation (language, style, cohesion)	**5**	3
	Manuscript form (structure, logical coherence, layout, tables, figures)	**5**	2
Total		**20**	6
TOTAL		***100***	22

Plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score:
Turnitin score is relatively low (17%), on the other hand, the author's work with literature and citations is entirely unsatisfactory (perhaps with a minor exception of chapter 2).

Reviewer's commentary according to the above criteria:

General evaluation:
The text uploaded by the student into the SIS is incomplete – not only there is no title page (therefore, the reader must assume that the title of the thesis is the same as the one mentioned in the SIS, i.e. "Comparison of the trade of China with the EU and the US"), but the list of references is missing too. The whole text is also relatively short, descriptive and very general. With the exception of chapter 2 the student almost never supports key claims by references.
Most importantly, there does not appear to be any sufficiently specific research question or hypothesis that the author attempts to test. The thesis is simply a general shallow text which outlines (some features of) trade between the EU and the PRC, and the USA and the PRC respectively.
There is no clear methodology either. On the one hand, the author seems to promise that data about trade will be analyzed in detail (p. 13-14, the contents of chapter 2), later it seems that the author rather wants to discuss policy-related issues or perhaps even

geopolitics (a brief reference to Thucydides' trap), but no real analysis of any type is in fact attempted in the paper. Instead, a reader is offered a very superficial, incomplete, and often imprecise description of the development of aggregate trade flows. The author mostly resorts to adopting a newspaper level of treatment of the topic and relies on official phrases, including traditional statements such as that "China has always adhered to the path of peaceful development".

The result is a very soft text without a clear focus, which does not really provide a sufficiently detailed, analytical and impartial insight into mutual trade relations.

Detailed comments:

Methodology:
No actual research or analytical methods are used by the author. On p. 13-14 the author promises that "*This paper will use the revealed comparative advantage index to calculate and analyze the imports and exports between China and Europe and America. In this way, we can clearly see the dominant industries and trade trends among them.*" However, not even this very simple method has, in fact, been used in the paper.

Literature:
The author's use of literature and references is inadequate:
- The list of references is missing altogether. It is, therefore very difficult to check whether the author cites the conclusions and facts correctly.
- "Fortunately", the aforementioned issue is only troubling the reader in chapter 2. Other sections of the text include very few, if any, references to other texts. This includes very strong claims on the alleged benefits of e.g. "One Belt, One Road" for the EU.
- As far as chapter 2 is concerned, the author dedicated space to very old and only indirectly relevant very general contributions (A. Smith, D. Ricardo), while the coverage of literature analyzing actual trade with China is partial and indiscriminate (it seems that the author does not differentiate between rigorous analytical texts, and descriptive and diplomatic sources).

Omissions:
It seems to me that quite a few important facts, sources, and areas are missing in the submitted text. Which of these should be considered severe omissions would depend on the actual focus (and intended methodology) of the text, which is not quite clear to me. Therefore, I categorized the possible omissions as follows:

I. If the thesis was to provide economic analysis or at least a detailed discussion of **mutual trade from an economic perspective**, then the following aspects are missing:
   - Detailed discussion of global value chains and of, e.g. OECD ICIO-based indicators of relative positions in the global value chains. If the author did not want to depend on OECD data, then the GVC-website of the Beijing-based UIBE might have provided a plethora of similar details and indicators, too.
   - Detailed analysis of the pattern of trade flow, based e.g. on RCA analysis (promised but not delivered by the author), or any other simple methodology accessible to the IEPS students.

II. If the thesis was a discussion or **comparative analysis of approaches to the formation of trade policy and resulting trade policy**, then the following aspects are missing:
- Explanation of how trade policy is formed in the three centres.
- Detailed comparison of applied trade policy instruments. While the author superficially touches the issue of anti-dumping, the existence of other problems and, for instance, the existence of detailed reports on problems faced by foreign companies in China published by the European Chamber of Commerce in Beijing is not mentioned at all. Discussion of the literature on the possible advantages provided to Chinese companies by keeping selected parts of the Chinese domestic market less accessible to foreign competition is not covered either.
- Similarly, it is not even mentioned that the EU has been applying arms embargo on China since 1989 (introduced as a response to the Tiananmen massacre).
- The controversial "Phase One" trade agreement signed between the US and China during Trump's presidency is not mentioned at all either (even though easy-to-find data tracking the effects of the agreement exist).
- While the author duly mentions "One Belt, One Road", there is no mention of researchers that attempted to predict or evaluate the actual effects of the BRI.
- Possibly even discussion on the role of non-governmental influences - e.g. protests against companies that would be relying on slave labour in Xinjiang province or companies that have similar partners in their supply chains.

III. If the thesis was to be focused on **geopolitical dimensions of mutual trade**, then I badly miss:
- A detailed discussion on dependencies, including references to at least simple papers (Merics) describing direct dependencies or discussion of Chinese attempts to use its control over access e.g. to rare earth metals.
- It would have also been relevant to mention the competition in third markets (Latin America, Africa, Central Asia)

Last but not least, the text mostly avoids mentioning problems and threats coming from the side of the PRC:
- There is no mention of threats by Chinese governments against selected European countries (for instance, against Sweden in 2019) or of the Chinese government's personal sanctions against selected members of the European Parliament...
- And there is even no mention of the "punishment" imposed on Lithuania in spite of this issue being very relevant for mutual trade relations between especially EU new member states and China. This "event" was even subject to WTO proceedings.

Less important errors and issues, language:
- Relatively few real typos appear in the text; however, some sentences appear to have been translated from the student's mother tongue relatively hastily. Consequently, some sentences might be more challenging to understand, or their structure appears awkward: e.g. "The bilateral relationship between China and the EU has been hampered by political cooperation." (p. 40)
- Figure 1 – source is not provided.
- Table 1 & Figure 3 show the same data (this happens again with other texts and figures in the text). Unless the author simply wanted the text to be longer, it might have been logical to move e.g. the table to some appendix.

- Figure 2 - the numbers in the figure are not explained (one is a percentage share, but the other is probably the value of trade in US$).
- It is not always clear whether services are included in at least some of the data on trade presented by the author.

Conclusion:

The thesis does not meet the minimum criteria required for theses defendable at the FSV. I, therefore, do not recommend the thesis for the final defence.

I am fully aware of the fact that it may not be safe for an author from China to attempt to analyze mutual relations between the USA and China, and the EU and China impartially, but on the other hand, the author knew about such constraints in advance and might have opted either for a different approach (e.g. a more technical economic analysis) or for a different topic altogether.

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

Digitally signed (January 24th, 2024):
Vilém Semerák

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Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	**A**	= outstanding (high honor)
81 – 90	**B**	= superior (honor)
71 – 80	**C**	= good
61 – 70	**D**	= satisfactory
51 – 60	**E**	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	**F**	= failing. The thesis is not recommended for defence.