

CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE
Faculty of Social Sciences
Institute of International Studies

PROTOCOL ON DIPLOMA THESIS ASSESSMENT
(Reviewer)

Name of the student: Alexandre Laurent Adelinet

Title: Navigating Ambiguities: Unravelling Russia's Hedging Strategy in the South China Sea.

Reviewer: Karel Svoboda

1. TOPIC AND OBJECTIVE (short information on the thesis, research objective): The thesis deals with the topic of Russia's hedging against Chinese dominance in the South China Sea through deepening links to Vietnam. It builds a three-level, five-criteria analytical framework for establishing whether this hedging is taking place and to what extent. It concludes that Russia's strategy towards Vietnam corresponds with the definition of strategic hedging as defined in the theoretical and methodological framework.

2. CONTENT (complexity, original approach, argument, structure, theoretical and methodological backing, work with sources, appropriateness of annexes etc.): The author developed a theoretical and methodological framework based on three levels and five criteria of strategic hedging. This corresponds well with the research question, "How do Russia's endeavors with Vietnam in the South China Sea constitute 'strategic hedging' towards China?". The thesis is coherent, with all the parts fitting into an overall mission and conclusion. Some further sources on Russia's general foreign policy strategies, geopolitics etc. would be also helpful (Tsygankov).

3. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE (quality of language, citation style, graphics, formal aspects etc.):

I don't feel competent commenting on the quality of language/grammar. Nevertheless, the thesis is written in understandable language with no typos and a style corresponding to the demands of a diploma thesis. All the necessary aspects of the thesis are present. Therefore, I have no remarks on the formal side of the thesis. Stylistically, there is always something that can be improved (Backing its claims through similar historical claims, Vietnam also lays claim to the Paracel and Spratly islands based on previous possession during colonial French Indochina.) However, in general, the thesis is written in very readable way.

4. STATEMENT ON THE ORIGINALITY OF THE THESIS

The thesis was checked by the Turnitin anti-plagiarism software and it revealed 31% similarity with other sources. However, this number may be caused by a relatively high number of quotations, because no source shows a similarity higher than two percent.

5. SHORT COMMENTS BY THE REVIEWER (overall impression, strengths and weaknesses, originality of ideas, achievement of the research objective etc.):

My general impression is positive, and my remarks go towards broadening this exciting research. I really enjoyed reading it. Nevertheless, I have also some remarks.

The thesis deals with a specific and relatively narrow topic of Russia's attitude towards the diplomatic row between China and other countries of the region (Vietnam, Philippines, etc.). A case study of

the policies toward one problem seen through the lens of well-specified and defined methodological framework is unquestionably justified. What I was missing, though, was setting Russia's policy to a broader perspective. For instance, Russia's support to China's rejection of the Haag Court ruling should be seen also from the perspective of rejection of 'unipolar world' institutions. Russia has its own issues with Haag (MH17 downing). Rejecting the ruling, Russia did not support China, but rather fought another battle with Haag.

My second point goes to the analysis of the policy itself or, more precisely, to the title of the thesis. The author concentrates on Russia's relations with Vietnam, while other countries in the region are left aside. It should also be reflected in the title of the thesis. Concentration on Vietnam only is logical due to the size limitations of the thesis. However, at least a broader discussion of other players and their role in Russia's hedging strategies against China would reveal Vietnam's role.

6. COOPERATION WITH THE SUPERVISOR (communication with the supervisor, ability to reflect comments, shift from the original intention, etc.) N/A

7. QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS THAT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED DURING THE DEFENCE:

1. The thesis did not deal with general Russian foreign policy strategies, which is my main remark. How would you comment the logic of Russia's policy towards the region, based on strategic documents?
2. Can such an approach (strategic hedging) be traced in relations to other countries?

8. (NON-)RECOMMENDATION AND SUGGESTED GRADE:

YES – B (on A-F scale) but open to improving the grade based on the defense.

Date:

Signature: