

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

PROTOCOL ON DIPLOMA THESIS ASSESSMENT
(Reviewer)

Name of the student: Yijin Wang

Title: How Chinese Media Covered the Cancellation of the Sister-city Relationship between Beijing and Prague: A Study Based on Sentiment Analysis and Keyword Extraction

Reviewer: Zachary Lavengood

1. TOPIC AND OBJECTIVE (short information on the thesis, research objective):

This MA dissertation focuses on how the cancellation of the sister city status between Prague and Beijing/new sister status with Taipei was depicted in Chinese media between July 2019 and February 2020. Using sentiment analysis as a methodology, Yijin Wang takes a qualitative, in-depth approach to examining how this deterioration of relations was viewed in state, semi-state, and 'independent' media in China.

2. CONTENT (complexity, original approach, argument, structure, theoretical and methodological backing, work with sources, appropriateness of annexes etc.):

This thesis offers a unique view on the 2019-2020 events from the Chinese perspective, creating a fuller picture surrounding these events from a public diplomacy perspective. The author's use of sentiment analysis was fitting for the task and the consistent adherence to a sound methodology is evident. Due to a steep learning curve (language requirements, familiarity with the Chinese internet environment, etc.) research such as that offered by this thesis is comparatively rare.

The author structures the results of their findings through three primary streams: institutional media (state), market-oriented media (semi-state), and online media ('independent' to the degree permissible in China). In each of these streams the author examines sentiment tendencies focusing primarily on how the media discusses the (then) Mayor of Prague, contrasts between perceptions of the City of Prague and the Czech Republic in the matter, and the Taiwan factor, in addition to additional insights offered for each stream of media. The author's nuance of understanding of both Western and Chinese perspectives on the issues is apparent and the neutral, objective tone given by the author in the text is refreshing. The author also clearly shows an understanding of the limitations of their study (to the degree which any MA thesis is) which is professionally conveyed to the reader.

Sources for the thesis are appropriate given the scope of research and the author throughout the work reminds the reader that these sources must be understood within the context of the contemporary media environment of China and appropriately explains the characteristics of such.

Overall the complexity of the research, its delivery, and its contributions to the wider field are appropriate or exceed the requirements of an MA thesis.

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

The work itself is clear and concise, with both China scholars and those from other fields able to find interesting insights throughout the text. No major errors either in language nor in structure (citations, etc.) were found. The graphics provided by the author were helpful additions to the text.

4. STATEMENT ON THE ORIGINALITY OF THE THESIS

The thesis was checked by the Turnitin/URKUND/Theses anti-plagiarism software and no indications of plagiarism were found (16% overall).

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

Overall the thesis was well grounded methodologically and its scope/research goals were appropriate for an MA thesis.

Its key strengths are: the objectivity and tone of the author, its use of Mandarin language sources, its use of sentiment analysis, its understanding of the contemporary realities of the Chinese media landscape and its relationship to state-level politics, and offering insights into the motivations behind the authors of commentary from online media.

Its weaknesses, though few in number, were: more context could have been added regarding how this event compared to others in China-X relations (perhaps with footnotes), a section on how relations between Prague/CZ and China developed after this period would have been a welcome addition.

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

-Why would institutional media have been the least negative regarding this affair?

-How does self-censorship by users on online media affect sentiment analysis? Can information gathered on platforms such as Weibo be considered genuine?

-Similarly, would legitimate detraction from the state-guided narratives on the issue have been able to pass censorship on online platforms to be read by others (and possibly included in analysis)?

7. (NON-)RECOMMENDATION AND SUGGESTED GRADE:

Grade recommended: A

Date: 22-8-2024

Signature: Zachary Lavengood