

Review of the Ph.D. Thesis

Author: Jeremy Garlick

Title: *UNDERSTANDING CHINA'S FUTURE: A CRITICAL EXPLORATION OF FUTURE-ORIENTATED APPROACHES TO ANALYSING SOCIO-POLITICAL PHENOMENA*

Reviewer: Dr. Lucia Husenicova

The submitted thesis can be generally asses as an ambitious project with the aim to define proper methodological tools to use for a future predictions in social science, more particular in IR, and in the case of rising China.

Building on an extant bibliography author starts with rather profound evaluation of existing theoretical approaches and methodology that are commonly used in the prediction of future development in the IR. What can be seen as an added value is the fact that he is critically assessing the existing tools and focuses on their faults and shortcomings in order to identify and support his selection of methodology. In this regard, every research is subjective as every author has a multiple options to choose from and Mr. Garlick has clearly stated and explained his final selection of scenario construction. He has offered a reasonable argumentation for his final choice. Even if the scenario construction is known methodology it is often not perfect one, as author himself suggests, the scenario construction does not provide for certainties, it only offers a set of options of how the IR can develop. At the same time author focuses on the weaknesses and possible biases when using this methodology. Regarding his selection I have to mention that it does reflect the current debate that has been published in the Foreign Policy, among the deans of political and IR schools in the US, in which they have discussed the complementarity between research and political practice, that is rather low in the U.S. Based on this debate the further development of scenario construction method could serve as a tool to bridge the existing gap between research and practice, not only in the U.S. but also in Europe and in Central Europe especially.

In addition it is obvious that the author has dedicated significant amount of time to study of the scenario construction and he is well aware of the weaknesses and possible faults of the outcomes.

In the chapters on China and its development and main features of current society the author very rationally and without any ideological bias evaluates determinants of its development. The part analyzing current trends in Chinese society, economy and politics is very valuable. The author has managed to write a vivid analysis of rather complex picture in limited space and without losing the explanatory and analytical approach to these issues. In addition the analysis of forming IR concepts in China with the additional evaluation of Chinese historical position within the region and conduct of its foreign policy is highly rationale and offers a clear picture on China and the way the country and its politicians perceive its role.

Regarding the final four scenarios author is formulating, I would like to stress that he is well aware of all the nuances that can be identified in all of them. That only proves his competencies in the

area of research in social science not only theoretical but also practical. He offers very well written reasoning for the selection of specific experts and their visions of the future of China. Overall in the chapter he clearly argues the reasons for exclusion of some and inclusion of other experts. Also the scenarios finally developed are well argued and explained.

The conclusion and critical analysis of author's own research and methods is a valuable asset and proof of useful self-reflection. It shows authors awareness of possible faults, weaknesses and biases and emphasizes specific subjectivism that is, however part of every individual research.

To summarize, the author has proved his understanding and competences in the analysis and selection of proper methodological tools in order to conduct an objective and unbiased research on Chinese future. Furthermore the author has shown his deep knowledge in the methodology as such and further application to a selected issue. In addition the author managed to analyze and understand the Chinese development, to identify most significant features of its development avoiding any ideological bias that is often a problem of many scholars in the West. The scenarios author is presenting in the final part of the thesis are very well explained, and rationally, and realistically assessed.

Overall the thesis is an excellent work which includes broad analysis of methodology available in social science, especially IR with the emphasis on critical analysis. Naturally a selective approach of author leads to identification of most useful tool for final analysis. Concerning the specific study on China, author has managed to provide for a deep, not descriptive historical and contextual analysis of the development of China and its future possible development. The thesis is a complex example of a well addressed and elaborated research using proper methodology and analysis of specific case.

I do not have specific recommendations for the author, as I do agree with his reasoning for the selection of methodology as well as analysis he has provided in the case of China. In my personal experience students and candidates often slip into one of the two extremes on perception of Chinese future that is mainly caused by the reductive selection of sources. The author managed to avoid this trap and provided for balanced critical analysis of contemporary China and offered several possibilities of where it can go. The thesis could serve as a source for policy recommendation to politicians around the world on how to approach and deal with China.

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Dr. Lucia Husenicova