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REPORT

By Member of the Dissertation Committee on the Dissertation
of

YIN SIMENG on the theme:

“Public Diplomacy in Foreign Policy of the United States and
China”

Submitted in conformity with the requirements for the candidate
degree in political science

Specialisation 23.00.04 – Political Problems of International
Relations, Global and Regional Development

Having read the doctoral dissertation of Yin Simeng in the English-language version, pages 256-478, I am ready to offer a series of observations and draw conclusions concerning the academic quality of the work. The thesis concerns the evolution and development of public diplomacy in the United States and Russia from a historical and a theoretical perspective. Once this is established the candidate then maps out the application of US public diplomacy in China and Chinese public diplomacy in the United States. The topic is at the intersection of several different academic disciplines, which includes among others international relations, journalism, public diplomacy and place branding, cultural and identity studies. This thesis is very informative, easy to follow and the text written in an easy to digest format. A very rich set of literature and data from Chinese, Russian and English-language sources are used to illuminate the six conceptual areas that are identified on page 260 of the thesis, which is reflected in a rather extensive reference list at the end of the thesis. The stated purpose of the research (page 260) is “revealing the role, mechanism and public diplomacy projects in foreign policies of the USA and PRC.”



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This thesis in general is a remarkable feat of academic endeavour that is well considered and executed by Yin Simeng of this relatively under theorized discipline. The structure of the thesis is logical and maintains a good flow for the reader. Furthermore, the actual topic, method and approach are all very well described and justified in the very beginning of the thesis. The six conceptual areas to be investigated are all well founded and considered and contribute towards realising the stated research purpose of the thesis. In addition, the thesis makes use of a very remarkable data set, conceptual, theoretical and empirical in analysing the data and supporting any statements. The thesis displays a balanced and well-considered format and approach to realising the aims and goals that are stated.

In addition to the doctoral thesis, Yin Simeng has accumulated a rather respectable number of published scientific articles and active participation in a number of scientific events. In all, the thesis is composed of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion and attachments. The thesis goes very deeply in to the issues and goals raised in the course of the introduction, from a theoretical, conceptual and an empirical point of view. The documents, data and explanations, which are listed in the annex, provide significant added value to the theoretical and empirical understanding of the subject. Finally, the conclusion gives a good summary of the lessons and knowledge that is contained throughout the work. Although, it could be strengthened further by overtly stating a concrete and readily discernible research question and/or hypothesis and linking the observations findings back to the current state of the art academic research on the topic in order to test and develop more clearly, the current theoretical basis and give a clear added contribution of the findings of this thesis to the wider existing knowledge and understanding of public diplomacy in the bigger picture.



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There are some other minor points of weakness in the thesis that can be highlighted to allow the author to learn in the future career to help them improve what is a promising start in original research and academic writing. So these points should be taken in the spirit of an intended constructive criticism of an academic work of good standard. These remarks and comments do not appear in any specific order. There is some room for the improvement of the quality of the English language translation of the thesis text. For example, the word “discourse” has been substituted on a number of occasions (including on page 261 and 300) with the word “intercourse.” Discourse refers to interactions of a verbal nature, whereas intercourse involves interactions of a more ‘romantic’ nature. And on page 380 the word “sensible” appears when the word “sensitive” is more appropriate. There are various typos and other evident language errors. There is also the untranslated Russian text (two words) on page 267 as an additional example.

There is some imprecision in terminology given and the depth of critical analysis of some of the data and information presented. On page 291, the term and concept of the “international community” is used without a definition or explanation of what is meant. Presumably this refers to the current hegemonic global liberal order? On page 302, there appears to be a conflation of terms where public relations and public affairs are mixed up. These are not exactly the same form of public communication. Furthermore and on the same page, propaganda does not have to be a lie and is better if it is not, it is ideally a partial truth and an omission of inconvenient information that favours the agenda of the communicator. On page 306, the Committee for Public Information had a very large component of domestic propaganda in addition to the foreign one, which is detailed by George Creel (head of CPI) in his autobiography *How We Sold America*.



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Sometimes there is lack of a needed critical approach to information and facts in the thesis, such as the exact role of “Tech Camps” as these are critical elements used by the United State in subverting other countries governments, where such events were hosted in US embassies on the eve of the Arab Spring and in Euromaidan. Similar issues exist when describing some of the institutional assets of the US foreign policy, they are not about helping people, but rather about advancing the influence and power of the United States government in other countries. For example the role of the then CIA controlled Radio Free Europe during the 1956 Hungarian Uprising to increase the conflict. It should be noted also that measure of activity (how much is published and broadcast by various media outlets and NGOs) does not automatically translate in to measure of effect – to get people to do something. Al Hurra in the Middle East is regarded with great suspicion by the local Arab population and rightly so, consequently there is very negligible influence. It would also be of good assistance for the reader, if a section on the transforming global order was present, which would put the context of the US-China relationship in a more sharp and understood context.

In summary, the thesis covers a relatively understudied and undertheorized subject within the wider field of public diplomacy and how it evolves over time with global processes and trends. The strengths of the work far outweigh the weaknesses of it. This work contributes to a deeper conceptual and empirical understanding of the nature and practice of contemporary public diplomacy within the context of great power competition.



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The dissertation meets the basic requirements established by Order No. 6821/1 of 1 September 2016, "On the Procedure for Awarding Academic Degrees at Saint Petersburg State University," the candidate Yin Simeng deserves the award of the scientific degree of Candidate of Political Science in the speciality 23.00.04. – Political Problems of International Relations, Global and Regional Development. Clause 11 of the aforementioned Order by the author of the thesis is not broken.



08.04.2020

Member of the Dissertation Council

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University, Sweden, Associate Professor Greg Simons