

## **REPORT**

**By Member of the Dissertation Committee on the Dissertation of**

**Anna V. BOYARKINA on the theme:**

**“The Evolution of the Ideological Foundations of China’s Foreign Policy”**

**Submitted in conformity with the requirements for the Academic Degree of**

**Doctor in Political Sciences**

**Specialisation 5.5.1 – History and Theory of Politics**

Having read the doctoral dissertation of Anna V. Boyarkina in the English-language version, I am ready to offer a series of observations and draw conclusions concerning the academic quality of the work. The thesis concerns the analysis of the theoretical and practical approaches and effects of the evolution of the ideological foundations of China’s foreign policy through five political administrations in the wake of the 1949 Civil War. The topic is at the intersection of several different academic disciplines, which includes among others international relations, philosophy, Chinese politics, national politics, regional politics, national and transnational policymaking, political/public opinion and diplomacy. This thesis is very highly informative, easy to follow, the text written in an easy to digest and yet engaging format that contains a remarkable level of detail on the subject at hand. A very rich set of data from academic, mass media and other sources in English, Chinese and Russian are used to illustrate the logic of the consistent and diverging elements of Chinese foreign policy post-1949. This is perhaps the longest thesis that I have read and evaluated to date. It is also one of the most extensively researched, well written, convincingly and compellingly argued works.

The thesis consists of an introduction, six chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography and two appendixes. The format and order of these various parts of the thesis is conducted in a clear, consistent and logical order. In the flow of the appearance of topics and subjects, knowledge and information are appearing in a progressive manner that is conducive for the reader in digesting the evaluations, observations and conclusions of the work appear in a gradual style. The articulated academic and practical relevance of the topic are clear as are the purpose and objectives of the thesis and its originality and the unique character of the resulting knowledge. There is an excellent

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philosophical and theoretical background to the political and ideological context of the change and consistency in Chinese foreign policy conceptualisation and practice through a comprehensive literature overview of academic thinking, statements by politicians, mass media coverage and reports over an extended time period. Chapter one decodes the words and deeds of Chinese foreign policy by contextualising in a detailed manner the historical Chinese influences, the influences of Marxism and foreign theory on the selected conceptual and philosophical approaches of the successive political administrations.

There is an evident, consistent and systematic approach to ordering and presenting the empirical data, which facilitates enables a comparability of the successive Chinese political administrations' ideological foundations in terms of understanding and tracking foreign policy change and consistency perspective for the reader, the origins and motivations of the administrations' choice are also present and clear. A vast array of literature has been accessed and integrated into the framework of the thesis, which has been carefully selected and applied. Consequently, the thesis work is very well researched, written and argued. Observations, interpretations, evaluations and conclusions are well justified and convincing concerning the political events, trends and processes. The definition of political, theoretical and philosophical concepts and practices has been thoughtfully approached, offering the reader a clear account of what is intended and implemented in the study. An effect of the work is its ability to decode and translate into something that is tangible and meaningful, the official Chinese rhetoric and the resulting operational practice.

There are numerous obvious and various noted strengths and many merits of this thesis, there are several academic and scientific points that should have been considered for inclusion in the work to further strengthen it in terms of its academic and scientific robustness. The various points to be organised into the following categories: typos and language errors; missing summary of weaknesses and limitations; missing future research track; missing summary about the unique contribution of this work to advancing existing state of the art knowledge and the topic and in terms of the implications and effects on the existing state of the theoretical constructs.

The addition of a small sub-section on the weaknesses and limitations of the thesis would have been helpful for the reader to navigate the logic of what was included and what was excluded



from the thesis, and why this was so. Another useful component that was absent from the thesis



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was a small section that would outline the future research agenda, which is a natural scientific outcome of such rich in knowledge thesis that tends to raise new questions and lines of scientific inquiry.

Typos, errors and unclear language detract somewhat from the work. For example, there is the use of “et al.” on several occasions when presumably “etc.”. A typo occurs on a few occasions that is the result of the translation – “G. Kissinger” – which is somewhat jumbled as the name would likely be Genry Kissinger and not the correct Henry Kissinger. In general, the number of typos and language errors is rather small, and they tend to be minor errors in nature. Furthermore, they seem to be related to the work of the person responsible for the translation of the thesis into English.

There is a necessity to expand the conclusion to situate your findings in the wider academic community, which is currently focused upon the empirical and policy related dimensions of the research findings and not the scientific significance of those findings. This should include analysis based on the theoretical interpretations of the key empirical findings and conclusions, which should be used to reveal the larger theoretical picture and your original contribution to developing the current state of the art literature and knowledge on the empirical topic of ideological evolution in foreign policy studies, but its wider theoretical meaning and significance to the field of academic science. This should be present in the conclusion of the thesis.

In summary, the thesis covers the field of academic study of the evolution of the ideological foundations of China’s Foreign Policy in the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries since the end of the Civil War in 1949, with an emphasis on policy consistency and change across five administrations. The strengths of the work far outweigh the few minor weaknesses uncovered in the thesis. This thesis work reveals and enables a deeper theoretical and empirical understanding of Chinese foreign policy, philosophical/ideological nature and its operational practice in terms of its conceptual and theoretical (domestic and foreign) origins in a contextualised historical and geopolitical setting, together with its sets of interpretations and representations.

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The dissertation meets the basic requirements established by Order No. 11181/1 of 19 November 2021, “On the Procedure for Awarding Academic Degrees at Saint Petersburg State University,” the candidate Anna Boyarkina deserves the award of the scientific degree of Doctor of Political Sciences in the speciality 5.5.1. – History and Theory of Politics. Clause 11 of the aforementioned Order by the author of the thesis is not broken.



4.11.2024

Member of the Dissertation Council

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Independent Researcher, Sweden, Associate Professor Greg Simons