

Habilitation thesis reviewer's report

Author of habilitation thesis: PhDr. Tomáš Vlček, Ph.D.

Title: The Russian Federation's Nuclear Geopolitics and Business Strategy

1. Applicant's research focus

- Tomáš Vlček has been dealing with various issues of energetic studies for a long time, which is evident from the list of his publications. He concentrates on the region of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, with an emphasis on the nuclear sector and Rosatom. The present habilitation thesis is a summary of the results achieved so far and it can be regarded as a climax of the applicant's work. The present work is absolutely in accordance with the author's long-term research focus.

2. Format of the thesis

Tomáš Vlček's habilitation thesis has the form of a collection of previously published scholarly works with a commentary. In particular, there are the following texts: 1. VLČEK, Tomáš and Filip ČERNOCH. The Energy Sector and Energy Policy of the Czech Republic. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2013. 237 pp. (monograph); 2. JIRUŠEK, Martin, Tomáš VLČEK, Hedvika KOĐOUSKOVÁ, Roger W. ROBINSON, Anna LESHCHENKO, Filip ČERNOCH, Lukáš LEHOTSKÝ and Veronika ZAPLETALOVÁ. Energy Security in Central and Eastern Europe and the Operations of Russian State-Owned Energy Enterprises. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2015. 696 pp. (monograph); 3. VLČEK, Tomáš. Critical assessment of diversification of nuclear fuel for operating VVER reactors in the EU. Energy Strategy Reviews, Amsterdam: Elsevier Ltd., 2016, vol. 13-14, NOV 2016, pp. 77-85; 4. MININ, Nikita and Tomáš VLČEK. Determinants and considerations of Rosatom's eternal strategy. Energy Strategy Reviews, Amsterdam: Elsevier Ltd., 2017, vol. 2017, no. 17, pp. 37-44; 5. MININ, Nikita and Tomáš VLČEK. Post-Fukushima performance of the major global nuclear technology providers. Energy Strategy Reviews, Amsterdam: Elsevier Ltd., 2018, vol. 2018, no. 21, pp. 98-110 and 6. JIRUŠEK, Martin, Tomáš VLČEK and James HENDERSON. Russia's energy relations in Southeast Europe: an analysis of motives in Bulgaria and Greece. Post-Soviet Affairs, Abingdon: Taylor & Francis Group, 2017, vol. 33, no. 5, pp. 335-355.

As regards the format, the character of the works varies. The present thesis comprises texts that were published as parts of collective monographs with texts published in top-quality academic journals. This format of habilitation thesis has become more and more common. As the habilitation thesis comprises the Statements of Authorship, the collective nature of the included works does not prohibit including these texts. All texts have been peer-reviewed and the fact they have been published proves that the reviewers' comments have been properly incorporated. Upon my reading the work as a whole, I have not come across any evidence casting doubt upon the very good level of the texts serving as parts of the present habilitation thesis.

In my opinion, as regards this type of habilitation thesis, the opponent should comment on the academic quality of the text from the perspective of primary resources and the way of their assessment only if there are well-founded doubts about the quality of the peer-review of the papers that have been already published. I have no such a doubt in texts published in the publishing house MUNIPRESS, let alone regarding texts that found their place in journals indexed in internationally acknowledged databases, such as Scopus and WoS.

3. Evaluation of the content

The present habilitation thesis deals with the issue of nuclear sector in energetics, representing a crucial part of the agenda of security studies within the broader concept of this discipline. The texts mostly focus on technical aspects; nevertheless, the interdisciplinary overlap into international relations and political science is seminal. The unifying idea of the present work is analysing the business strategy of Rosatom in the regions of Central and South-Eastern Europe. As an analytical framework, the author uses standard concepts of strategic and market approach. The texts introduce original and new findings pertaining to the strategy of this corporation owned by the state. These findings are relevant for a more comprehensive analysis of the geopolitical status of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe in the world. The published findings are a valuable contribution to the debate on creating contemporary dependencies in the globalised world, which represents a substantial research agenda of political science, international relations and security studies. This issue is dealt with particularly in the last two papers included in Vlček's habilitation thesis.

Nevertheless, when taking into consideration the overall composition of the present texts, I must admit that in order to make Vlček's research complete, there is still some way to go. To be exact, the detailed analysis of the strategy adopted by companies owned by Russia, according to some academic interpretations, striving to re-establish dependencies in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, was proposed in the habilitation work only in this region.

Regarding the overall scope of Russian energetic companies, which undoubtedly have global ambitions, it is hence incomplete. Only such a complex comparative analysis that would include all countries of the Russian sphere of interest could bring an authoritative answer to the question to what extent Rosatom as well as other state-owned companies are a tool of Russian foreign policy and to what extent they are economic subjects pursuing legitimate maximization of their own profit.

4. Question(s)

Is it possible to regard Rosatom as an actor creating by its activities in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe conditions for increasing Russia's influence in the area?

How would you describe the motivation of the main Rosatom's competitors in nuclear sector in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe?

5. Conclusion

The present habilitation thesis entitled The Russian Federation's Nuclear Geopolitics and Business Strategy meets the criteria we expect from habilitation theses in the field and thus I recommend it for defence.

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