

SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR'S REFERENCE

Program:	Master in Management (MiM)
Student:	Mariia Nikulina
Title of thesis:	Market and non-market strategies for partner risks mitigation: the case of Russian oil and gas companies expansion towards China

Justification of the topic choice. Accuracy in defining the aim and objectives of the thesis. Justification of the topic choice; accuracy in defining the aim and tasks of the thesis; originality of the topic and the extent to which it was covered; alignment of the thesis' topic, aim and objectives.

The topic choice is driven by the shifts in international strategies of Russian oil and gas MNEs under the sanctions. The rising role of Asia in internationalization strategies of Russian oil and gas MNEs implies the need to identify and mitigate the associated risks. In particular, the thesis addresses the ways to tackle the risks emanating from the reorientation of oil and gas MNEs towards China.

Structure and logic of the text flow. Logic of research; full scope of the thesis; alignment of thesis' structural parts, i.e. theoretical and empirical parts.

The structural parts of the thesis are well aligned. The thesis has a classical structure and includes the theoretical and empirical parts. The theoretical part presents extensive literature on geopolitical risks in context of business studies, as well as literature on non-market strategies as a tool to navigate the MNEs' external environment risks. The theoretical framework is well aligned with the research objectives.

Quality of analytical approach and quality of offered solution to the research objectives. Adequacy of objectives coverage; ability to formulate and convey the research problem; ability to offer options for its solution; application of the latest trends in relevant research are for the set objectives.

Mariia has shown independent researcher capabilities and good analytical skills. The topic is extremely complex and challenging, which requires high level of analytical capabilities on behalf of the student in order to elaborate the theoretical framework and build the dataset. Overall, the thesis proposes a novel and relevant approach to address the challenges related to reorientation towards Asian markets in a turbulent geopolitical context. The research project and the framework proposed present academic interest.

Quality of data gathering and description. Quality of selecting research tools and methods; data validity adequacy; adequacy of used data for chosen research tools and methods; completeness and relevance of the list of references.

The data analysis is well presented and is in line with the qualitative analysis methodological guidelines. The student has shown the ability to implement qualitative research projects and proceed with qualitative empirical studies. Access to data was a significant limitation of the study, which is mainly explained by the sensitivity of the topic. Nevertheless, the thesis makes an important contribution to elaborate the understanding of partner risks in context of oil and gas MNEs' reorientation towards China.

Scientific aspect of the thesis. Independent scientific thinking in solving the set problem/objectives; the extent to which the student contributed to selecting and justifying the research model (conceptual and/or quantitative), developing methodology/approach to set objectives.

Exploring the risks and risk mitigation strategies in the context of geopolitical turbulence is a topical issue, both from the theoretical and practical standpoint. Mariia has shown strong interest and personal implication into the research topic. She has demonstrated responsibility and organization in developing the empirical dataset strategy and data interpretation.

Practical/applied nature of research. Extent to which the theoretical background is related to the international or Russian managerial practice; development of applied recommendations; justification and interpretation of the empirical/applied results.

The thesis topic is mainly context-driven and addresses a highly topical issue for several Russian companies in process of reorienting their international strategies. Although, the conclusions could have been formulated more sharply.

Quality of thesis layout. Layout fulfils the requirements of the Regulations for master thesis preparation and defence, correct layout of tables, figures, references.

The layout of the master thesis paper is in line with the academic standards.

Originality of the text. All sources of match identified by the Safe Assign system follow the allowed cases, the paper does not contain any elements of plagiarism.

The master thesis text is original.

The Master thesis of Mariia Nikulina meets the requirements for master thesis of Master in Management program thus the author of the thesis can be awarded the required degree.

Date 10.06.2023

Scientific Advisor: PhD, Asc. prof. Olga L. Garanina

