

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE
Fakulta sociálních věd
Institut mezinárodních studií

PROTOKOL O HODNOCENÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE
(Posudek vedoucího)

Práci předložil(a) student(ka): Bc. Dominik Hodboď

Název práce: U.S. Polarization in Congress: The role of Congressional Member Organizations in the House of Representatives

Vedoucí práce (u externích vedoucích uveďte též adresu a funkci v rámci instituce):
PhDr. Jan Hornát, Ph.D.

1. OBSAH A CÍL PRÁCE (stručná informace o práci, formulace cíle):

Dominik Hodboď's thesis deals with the topic of polarization of US politics – namely, he looks at how polarization is manifested in the US Congress through the role and position of Congressional Member Organizations (CMOs or caucuses). The topic was chosen as the author claims that „CMOs have not gained a significant amount of scholarly attention, especially in current times and in connection to polarization“ (p. 2). In this sense, the author assumes that if the caucuses turn out to be „strong consistent voting blocs which are also strongly ideologically based, they likely have a considerable impact on the current polarization levels within the House of Representatives.“ (p. 2).

In order to demonstrate the above-mentioned thesis, Dominik proceeds with measuring the ideological positions of each relevant CMO of the 115th Congress and – in the second, empirical, part of the paper – examines the significance of the studied CMOs within their parties. He demonstrates the second analysis by examining the caucus members' voting (thus ideological) alignment with the caucus leaders. This approach reveals the coherence of the caucuses. In order to control for the outcome, Dominik contrasts the coherence of the CMOs with aligning the members' voting with party leaders.

One of the major contributions of the thesis is the observation (and empirical verification) that „the more radical forces are significantly stronger and highly more coherent than the moderate groups.“ (p. 54). Therefore, we can arrive at the conclusion that these forces, which find themselves on the more extreme ends of the left-right political spectrum, are going to have more power to sway their parties in the desired direction than the moderates – and thus, the „effect the CMOs have in today's U.S. politics is rather *polarizing* than vice versa“ (p. 54). At the same time, Dominik acknowledges that “hardline conservatives are pulling the Republicans to the right more strongly than the liberals are pulling the Democrats to the left.” (p. 52).

2. VĚCNÉ ZPRACOVÁNÍ (náročnost, tvůrčí přístup, argumentace, logická struktura, teoretické a metodologické ukotvení, práce s prameny a literaturou, vhodnost příloh apod.):

The thesis is one of the most original student papers I have read so far. The author has employed a complex methodology that encompassed a dataset of over 500 000 individual votes of members of the HoR. This comprehensive dataset (acquired through the NOMINATE project) permitted Dominik to effectively place every HoR member on a left-right scale and cluster the members according to their caucus membership. Before explaining and applying his method, the author provides the reader with a very elaborate and thorough literature review, while situating his research question into the existing debates. The choice of CMOs for analysis is substantively justified. Dominik also demonstrates that he is aware of the limitations of his methodology and of the results the study may bring (see pp. 32-33).

The author provides a coherent framework for his analysis, which presents logical arguments and proceeds in a consistent manner. The dataset is so complex and large that it could not be attached to the paper physically, but is uploaded into the SIS system as an annex. The sources used for the paper are adequate and relevant.

3. FORMÁLNÍ A JAZYKOVÉ ZPRACOVÁNÍ (jazykový projev, správnost citace a odkazů na literaturu, grafická úprava, formální náležitosti práce apod.):

The paper is written in nearly flawless English with only a few typos (e.g. p. 3 „Congress“; p. 12 „This hypothesis is appealing and may be turn out to be consequential...“) and grammatical mistakes (e.g. the author uses the term „schools of thoughts“, where the correct form should be „schools of thought“). The paper meets all the standard requirements of an MA thesis – footnotes and citations are consistent, the text is fluent and well-structured.

4. STRUČNÝ KOMENTÁŘ HODNOTITELE (celkový dojem z diplomové práce, silné a slabé stránky, originalita myšlenek, naplnění cíle apod.):

As mentioned, this MA thesis is a unique attempt that not only meets the standards of graduate papers, but also the standards of a full-fledged academic paper. I would therefore recommend the author to attempt to publish it in the Politologická revue / Czech Political Science Review or some other academic journal, as I believe it merits to be read by other academics.

The author has demonstrated his deep interest in the topic and the thorough research that accompanied the writing of the thesis. I would mostly emphasize the paper's methodological approach and the literature review. Also, the author's questions relating to possible future research (p. 55) are very insightful and relevant.

5. OTÁZKY A PŘIPOMÍNKY DOPORUČENÉ K BLIŽŠÍMU VYSVĚTLENÍ PŘI OBHAJOBĚ (jedna až tři):

1. The paper analyzes the causes of polarization – what about the consequences (both political and social)?
2. There is much talk about polarization, but what are the mechanisms for “depolarization” – i.e. how can the gap between the parties become smaller? What would need to happen?

6. DOPORUČENÍ / NEDOPORUČENÍ K OBHAJOBĚ A NAVRHOVANÁ ZNÁMKA
(výborně, velmi dobře, dobře, nevyhověl):

I recommend the grade **A**.

Datum:

Podpis:

Pozn.: Hodnocení pište k jednotlivým bodům, pokud nepíšete v textovém editoru, použijte při nedostatku místa zadní stranu nebo příložený list. V hodnocení práce se pokuste oddělit ty její nedostatky, které jsou, podle vašeho mínění, obhajobou neodstranitelné (např. chybí kritické zhodnocení pramenů a literatury), od těch věcí, které student může dobrou obhajobou napravit; poměr těchto dvou položek berte prosím v úvahu při stanovení konečné známky.