

Review report for defence

June 20th, 2019

Dissertation title: *Normalita výjimečnosti? (Z)vládnutí krize v reformě azylové a migrační politiky Evropské unie*

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Review report by – doc. Mats Braun, Ph.D. –

In my review from January 2019 I raised several substantial concerns regarding the dissertation. Most of these have been dealt with in a satisfying way by the author. In particular the author has restructured the theoretical part which now presents a more coherent framework. The dissertation is rich on the informative level and I am favourable of work being defended as a PhD dissertation.

Yet, the dissertation still suffers from some shortcomings which I would like to point out.

The first objection I mentioned in my previous review was referring to how the topic was introduced and framed in the introduction. The author has now completely re-written the introduction and solved many of the issues. The objective is now better explained and introduced. Yet, this does not solve the underlying issue of the broadness of the topic and the dissertation's lack of coherence. Clearly defined limitations are still missing in the dissertation. In particular, the research questions are still leading in different directions and the hierarchy between the research questions is not clear. Ideally, the research questions should all serve to approach the main objective. In this case, the first question is merely a reformulation of the research objective, whereas the second question formulates the objective in a different way. The third question sticks out since here the author departs from the selected theoretical framework based on critical discourse analysis. Or maybe I understand it wrongly. It is not clear to me what the third question actually is referring to – “*pravomoc konstruovat výjimečný stav*”? Are we here still talking about discursive constructions? If that is the case then it is highly problematic to view ownership of the discourse in such way. At least it contradicts the underlying understanding of discourse applied in the dissertation (Wodak's version of CDA).

I would suggest the author spends some time during the defence to reflect on this issue of role of actors versus structure within critical discourse analysis since this is an issue which is relevant to discuss in relation to several parts of the dissertation. If we for instance look at the conclusions regarding the first research question 171-177, this part says surprisingly little about the discourse. It seems to be more focused on describing measures taken, and priorities of actors involved in the process. What is then the added value of approaching this topic through discourse analysis compared to for instance some more traditional approaches to international bargaining? What is the difference between a discursive strategy and an actor's preference?

In my previous review I referred to some crucial choices not being justified to a satisfying degree. I still see the selection of the three countries for case studies as problematic since the research objective is referring to the general EU discourse. Why for instance not include a country from southern Europe being mostly affected by the so called migration crisis?

The author has done as much as he could to justify the interviews with the Czech representatives. However, this is still a problematic part. It is definitely not a problem that the author uses expert consultations to broaden his understanding of the topic. But if interviews only with officials from one member states are used to draw conclusions regarding the EU discourse at large, then this constitutes a huge validity problem. Thus, it would have been preferable if the author would have toned down the importance of the interviews rather than discussing them in more detail.

Having mentioned these shortcomings, I would also like to stress that the author has written a dissertation that is informative regarding the EU's treatment of the so called migration crisis. The author also provides an interesting analysis which provides several interesting insights into the topic.

I recommend the dissertation for defence.

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