

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE
Fakulta sociálních věd
Institut mezinárodních studií

PROTOKOL O HODNOCENÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE
(Posudek oponenta)

Práci předložil(a) student(ka): Nataša Heleta

Název práce: War on Terrorism Through the Prism of the US: The Case Study of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Oponoval (u externích oponentů uveďte též adresu a funkci v rámci instituce):

Jan Hornát

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

While a look at the title of the thesis suggests that the text will deal with a US perspective on terrorism in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the true aim of the paper – as presented by the author – is “to examine the source of terrorist motivation and their realization in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It examines the relationships between Islamic radicalism, extremism, and terrorism through the observation of the phenomenon of Islamic radicalism as a potential basis for the development of terrorism in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina.” (p. 3) This broader aim is further narrowed down into two research questions: “1. Is Bosnia and Herzegovina validly perceived as a terrorist threat because of the existence of the Salafī Movement?” and “2. Is the Salafist Movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in its entirety, inclined to violent extremism?”

The first two parts of the thesis observe terrorism from a theoretical perspective and probe the psychosocial motivations of individuals to commit terrorist acts or join terrorist groups. The third chapter discusses the notion of collective responsibility and collective guilt attributed to certain minority groups, notably the Muslim community in the US after the 9/11 attacks. The notion of collective responsibility is an important concept for the paper as such, which later treats the position of the Salafists in BiH and their perceived position as the main terrorist threat in the country and a breeding ground for Jihadi fighters. The fourth chapter presents the Obama and Bush administrations’ approach to Al-Qaeda, but as such the chapters seems quite out of context and detached from the preceding and succeeding chapters.

Chapters 5 to 11 then present a case study of terrorism in BiH and mainly focus on the interaction of the Bosnian Islamic Community and the Salafist movement. In this sense the case study aims to “reject generalizations [about the Salafī community]” and attempts to demonstrate how media and other depictions “provide an analysis of the Salafī Movement, in order to conclude if every Salafī is inherently prone to violent extremism and thus in mental and physical readiness for terrorist actions in Bosnia and Herzegovina.” (p. 45)

Chapters 12, 13 and 14 examine primary documents (State Security Reports) of the BiH government that deal with terrorism and explicitly focus on the Salafī movement.

Only chapters 15 and 16 (all together just 5 pages) focus on the US official position toward terrorism in BiH – this is quite obviously an inadequate analysis for a paper titled “War on Terrorism Through the Prism of the US: The Case Study of Bosnia and Herzegovina”.

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

As per the author, “The reason for the selection of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a case study is partially subjective, due to my personal history and the ability to observe the fusion between reality versus stereotypes regarding the security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.” This “personal history” is implicitly visible throughout the text as Nataša demonstrates her devotion to the subject.

I commend the author’s inclusion of theoretical perspectives on terrorism, but the theoretical discussions presented in the beginning of the paper could have been also reiterated and used throughout the text. In this sense, the theoretical introduction seems too disconnected from the rest of the text. The case study methodology, based also on interviews, is a relevant method, but it should be made clearer what the case study should bring as added academic value. Is it a case study of terrorism in BiH? Or is it a case study of Salafism and its relations

with indigenous Islam? Is the case study supposed to demonstrate a specific case in the US War on terrorism (as the title would suggest, but the empirics of the paper do not meet this aim)?

If I were to judge the contents of the paper solely on the basis of what the title tells me, I would consider the structure of the paper as mostly off topic and irrelevant. But if we look away from the title and imagine that the author simply “forgot” to change the title to correspond to the real text, the structure of the paper is fairly logical. Only the three chapters devoted to the US are not as well logically connected to the paper and thus stand out as incoherent parts of the thesis. It almost seems as if Nataša only added the chapters dealing with the US to fulfill the criteria of a diploma thesis written within the North American studies specialization.

While the theoretical part on terrorism is elaborated quite well, I would opt to include more than 2 or 3 authors and cited works. Most of this part is based on the work of McCauley (2011) and Wilkins (2003) – I am sure that there are more authors and diverse views on the issue and also works that are more up to date. Citing from one source on three consecutive pages (pp. 7-9; 13-17) is not suitable for an MA thesis.

The thesis contains an appendix with two transcripts of interviews, but the reader is not informed whether these were conducted by the author and how instrumental they were for writing the thesis itself. Only one of the interviews is cited in the thesis (p. 70).

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

The author should have consulted the language of the paper with a native English speaker – the style is often difficult to understand and contains grammatical mistakes. The formatting of the paper is not unified (some paragraphs have a space in between, other do not). Some claims throughout the paper would deserve to be referenced (such as p. 27 – “The National Security Agency collection center was swamped with emails and calls, averaging 1.7 billion per day” – what type of emails? And is the number accurate?). The paper tends to spell Salafism in three forms: Salafism, Selafism and Selefism – this should be unified. Also, Al Qaeda is sometimes spelled as Al Qaida (p. 27). Longer citations should be clearly separated from the text (such as by different formatting) – this concerns for example, citations on p. 6 or 64 (where it is not clear even where the citation starts). Chapter 3.2. (p. 24-26) is the exact same text as on pages (19-21) (!) – this shows that Nataša was not very careful in rereading the final version of her paper before submitting.

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

The strength of the paper lies in the fact that it shows the personal devotion of the author for the subject, it builds on Bosnian sources and employs an analysis of primary resources. However, weaknesses of the paper are many. First, there is an almost complete discrepancy between what the title of the paper advocates and what it actually discusses. The US perspective is sidelined and presented on only about 10 % of the total volume of the paper. One last careful reading of the paper by the author before handing it in would perhaps have helped in getting rid of imprudent mistakes in formatting, grammar, style and repetitions in the text. The paper also fully lacks any literature review or a discussion of texts published on the matter so far.

I commend the author’s attempt to fight generalizations, but the argumentation could have included more BiH mainstream sources, which could demonstrate how the Salafi movement is caricatured (if it is) and how this feeds into the allegedly unfair stereotypes.

It is difficult to determine whether the paper has fulfilled the goals it has set out for itself. The conclusion is very short and ends only with an answer to the aforementioned research questions: “1. The perception of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a terrorist threat because of the existence of the Salafi Movement is not justified.” and “2. The Salafi Movement, although counting members who are prone to violent extremism according to their own principles or activities, does not generally reflect attitudes or activities that promote violent extremism.” (p. 89) Nataša unfortunately does not review the arguments that led her to this conclusion and the reader is left with a sense of an incomplete explanation of the paper’s findings. Moreover, the concluding answer does not pertain to what the title of the paper suggests.

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

1. Why did the content of the paper stray so far away from the original title of the paper?
2. With regards to potential terrorist sleeper cells in BiH, what is the current probability that the country will join the EU?

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

Despite the above-mentioned reservations, I recommend the grade **D**.

Datum: 16.8.2019

Podpis: Jan Hornát v.r.

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.