

**UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE**  
**Fakulta sociálních věd**  
**Institut mezinárodních studií**

**PROTOKOL O HODNOCENÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE**  
**(Posudek vedoucího)**

Práci předložil(a) student(ka): Eva Húsková

Název práce: Trump vs. Babiš: Comparative case study of populist leadership, communication, and party politics in the post-Gutenberg era

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Vedoucí (u externích vedoucích uveďte též adresu a funkci v rámci instituce):  
Jan Hornát

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

Eva Húsková has selected a very topical subject for her MA thesis. Populism and populist leadership are currently being widely discussed both in academic circles and within the general public. A deeper understanding of the political and social phenomenon will enable us to better comprehend the underlying trigger mechanisms of populist politics and also the grievances of its supporters.

In comparing the populist styles of US President Donald Trump and Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš, Eva sets out a very ambitious endeavor – in her own words she “has the ambition to tackle the obstacles related to finding the most suitable definition of populism while assessing the relationship between populism and personalization of politics” and wishes to address “the question of the right unifying definition of populism” (p. 15). Second, by comparing the “ideology, discourse, and political style of these two candidates”, the thesis “offers an insight into the populist leadership of Donald Trump and Andrej Babiš.” (p. 16). Finally, the thesis “explores the relationship between two concepts – populism and personalized politics, which together form the concept of populist leadership” and “offers a brief insight into political marketing standards in the United States that are starting to appear in the Central European region as well.” (p. 17).

The thesis proceeds first with an elaborate theoretical introduction, giving the reader a comprehensive (sometimes even too complex) overview of the academic debates surrounding the “correct” definition of populism and populist politics. What follows then are empirical chapters focusing on the “comparative content analysis” of political programs and documents of both actors; the critical discourse analysis of Babiš’s and Trump’s political communication and the lastly the “comparative analysis” of their “political style, communication and marketing strategies”. The conclusion offers the reader a summary table of main findings.

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

Eva has made a laudable effort to embed her thesis in a sound and relevant theoretical debate, the structure of the paper is logical and the use of primary and secondary sources is well balanced. However, despite the effort she has placed in this work, some criticism needs to be mentioned. As a general problem with her thesis I see the over-complexity of her argumentation and of her research design. Simply put, she aimed to include too many ideas, too many definitions, concepts and theories into her framework that it in conclusion falls apart and has very little points that hold it together. As is already manifest in the described aims of the thesis above, the research goals are formulated, yet they are quite ambiguous and perhaps too ambitious (e.g. finding the right definition of populism).

Doubtless, Eva has demonstrated her commitment and deep personal interest in the topic – but perhaps it is the fact that she has read too much and explored too many questions on the sidelines, that have hindered her from submitting a more cohesive work. When writing a scholarly piece, it is crucial to let the input of information “sink in”, “digest”, “take a step back” and then start writing. Eva’s paper seems as if she wished to demonstrate all the deep knowledge that she holds of the topic in the 100+ pages, but the result leaves us similarly confused about the definitions of populism, populist leadership and politics as in the beginning of the paper.

I have a similar concern regarding the methodology – not much is said about what “comparative content analysis” means and what are the tools used for this method. The same goes for critical discourse analysis used in chapter 3 (which is in its application a bit misplaced). Also, it is not clear what is the methodological

difference between a “critical discourse analysis of political communication” (chapter 3) and “comparative analysis of political communication” (chapter 4). In this sense, the three empirical chapters “blend together” for the reader and he/she loses track of the argumentation.

Of course, good and solid academic interests were behind the articulation of the research subject, but the execution – the operationalization of the research design – lags behind the aspirations and the student’s potential.

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

The language of the thesis is generally clear and readable; the citations are standardized (I would personally prefer web links to be in black, not blue or orange). In general, the submitted thesis contains the necessary formal requirements.

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

As mentioned above: though an ambitious thesis written by a prospective student, the implementation lags behind the potential. The reasons for this are mainly connected to an overly complex formulation of the research framework, ambiguously defined research questions and also the insufficient methodological clarity. At the same time, it is unclear what the real conclusion – main finding – of the paper is. Is it the argument that personalized politics should be part of the definition of populism..? Is it that Babiš and Trump hold many similarities in their political style? Was it a typology of the two leaders based on existing definitions of populism as the table on p. 93 suggests? Or is it that “the definition of populism as an ideology seems to be insufficient to analyze new populist leaders in the post-Gutenberg era”? (p. 95). We also miss a clear rationale of why these two leaders were chosen as case studies – the fact that they have been often compared to each other in the media does not really pose a sufficient justification for focusing the entire thesis particularly on them. The thesis did a great job in reviewing the existing literature, but mostly only confirmed preconceived conclusions.

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

1. Could you once again pinpoint the main finding of your thesis?
2. What do you think is the future of populism in the US with the election of Joe Biden?
3. Do we witness “personalized politics” also in “traditional” parties? And how do we make the distinction that politics is “personalized”?

6. DOPORUČENÍ / NEDOPORUČENÍ K OBHAJOBĚ A NAVRHOVANÁ ZNÁMKA (A-F):

I recommend the grade C.

Datum: 27.1.2021

Podpis: Jan Hornát v.r.

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Pozn.: Hodnocení píše 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.