

BACHELOR'S THESIS SUPERVISOR REPORT

BA in Politics, Philosophy and Economics

Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Title of the thesis: Bosnian National Identity in Discourse: Competing Narratives in Contemporary Bosnian Politics

Student's name: Vuk Jefić

Reviewer's name: František Šístek, M.A., Ph.D.

Major Evaluation Criteria (80 points)

Contribution and argument (max 50)	48
<i>Quality of research and analysis, originality</i>	
Research question (max 15)	15
<i>Definition of objectives, plausibility of hypotheses</i>	
Theoretical framework (max 15)	14
<i>Methods relevant to the research question</i>	

Minor Evaluation Criteria (20 points)

Sources, literature (max 10)	8
<i>Quantity and quality of sources and references</i>	
Presentation (max 5)	5
<i>Language, style, cohesion</i>	
Manuscript form (max 5)	4
<i>Structure, logical coherence, layout, tables, figures</i>	

Plagiarism-check (Turnitin) match score: 20

For values above 15%, the reviewer must include an assessment of the thesis' originality in their review.

Total Score

94/100

Proposed grade

A (91-100)

Reviewer's commentary

Minimum 1,800 characters including spaces for passing grades

Minimum 2,500 characters including spaces for failing grades

In his bachelor thesis, Vuk Jefić analyzed the public discourse of the three main political leaders of contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina, Milorad Dodik, Bakir Izetbegović and Dragan Čović, related to the national (state) identity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Dodik, Izetbegović and Čović, as leaders of the three

most powerful ethnic-based political parties, can be considered as key representatives of the three main nationalist discourses within Bosnia and Herzegovina (Serb, Bosniak and Croat, respectively). In order to analyze and compare the main elements of their public discourse, Jević conducted primary research based on the selection of their public speeches, interviews and official statements, mostly in the South Slavic languages (Croat, Bosniak and Serb, or Serbo-Croatian). Methodologically, his work was inspired by Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) and grounded in concepts of national identity developed by contemporary scholars of nationalism, Siniša Malešević and Rogers Brubaker. The methodology and theory is discussed in greater detail in the first part of the work, before the analysis of the discourse of the three political leaders and conclusions. The work is well-structured and clearly written, in excellent English. For the purpose of the thesis, Jević also adequately translated revealing excerpts from the discourse of the three leaders.

The author chose at first glance a relatively modest but well-defined goal. Literature on the break-up of Yugoslavia at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, different aspects of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992-1995, the establishment of the post-war political system based on the Dayton Peace Accords from 1995 and the first post-war years is today very extensive. A number of student essays, theses and even scholarly books and articles frequently dwell too much on these relatively well-known facts and sometimes literally waste too much space on repetitive summaries of historical and political events. V. Jević instead focused primarily on the most recent period of the last several years and analyzed the latest primary material which has not been overused in academic literature. For the sake of better orientation, however, he should have stressed the time-frame of his research a little more clearly. Similarly, a historian would welcome more detailed information and a brief discussion of the political career of the three politicians whose discourse is analyzed in the thesis (when exactly did B. Izetbegović, D. Čović and M. Dodik hold certain key positions of power, when were they born, when did they enter politics etc). Nevertheless, these are relatively minor objections.

On the other hand, Jević shows very well that the three key players on the political scene of Bosnia and Herzegovina construct their narratives, targeting their own, ethnically defined electorate (Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats) in a similar way and using similar discursive strategies. However, contrary to the popular critical discourse widespread in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as among some long-term observers and journalists, he does not claim that “they are all the same” (equally “bad” etc.). Apart from showing the similarities, his work also tackles the differences apparent in their public discourse and style of presentation. Dodik and Čović largely construct the narratives of ethnic identity and define the alleged collective political goals and wishes of their respective nations at the expense of the national unity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while Izetbegović in his approach attempts to merge the idea of this unity with the national goals of the Bosniaks. From another point of view, Dodik and Izetbegović appear as more radical/aggressive and Čović as more moderate in their style, chosen argumentation and vocabulary. Jević further observes that the three leaders assume different discursive strategies when they are targeting primarily their own constituencies at home and when they address foreign audiences. The author concludes, among other things, that while the predominant trope of their discourses seems to evolve around the dichotomy of centralization versus secession, they also share a common goal and strategy which ensures the continuation of the current state of affairs in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole, as it ensures their continuous hold on power.

References (final bibliography) are essentially divided correctly but should be better elaborated according to common standards. In the first section of the bibliography, we find secondary sources – different scholarly analyses of particular aspects of the researched topics. The second part, entitled “Webpage sources”, in fact lists the primary sources, in this case really largely from the internet as the author did not use printed versions of the newspapers (mostly unavailable in Prague and often not easily accessible in Bosnia and Herzegovina itself).

Plagiarism (Turnitin) control: 20%. At closer inspection, the highlighted parts of the thesis consist of predictable and unavoidable material such as titles of cited works and established terms, as well as citations which are always acknowledged. Since this is a work based on discourse analysis, including examples of analyzed discourse in the form of citations, the above mentioned percentage of 20% does not represent a case of plagiarism.

Questions for the defense

- 1) In your work, you mostly use the shortened term Bosnia for the entire country of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Have you encountered any specific, regionalistic mentions/conceptualizations of the historical provinces (Herzegovina, Bosnia) in the discourses you have analyzed?
- 2) Your work represents a case study focusing primarily on the discourses in contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina itself. However, the influence of the neighboring countries of Croatia and Serbia on their “ethnic kin” in the divided country, and the links between the political regimes in Belgrade and Zagreb with the main political forces of the Serbs and Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina have represented a significant factor for decades. Do the current Croat and Serb nationalist discourses on Bosnian national identity in Croatia and Serbia, respectively, differ from those of the main ethnically-based parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina?

I DO recommend the thesis for final defence.

Reviewer's Signature