

BACHELOR'S THESIS REFEREE 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: Jakub Franěk

Major Evaluation Criteria (80 points)

Contribution and argument (max 50)	
<i>Quality of research and analysis, originality</i>	30
Research question (max 15)	
<i>Definition of objectives, plausibility of hypotheses</i>	12
Theoretical framework (max 15)	
<i>Methods relevant to the research question</i>	12

Minor Evaluation Criteria (20 points)

Sources, literature (max 10)	
<i>Quantity and quality of sources and references</i>	5
Presentation (max 5)	
<i>Language, style, cohesion</i>	3
Manuscript form (max 5)	
<i>Structure, logical coherence, layout, tables, figures</i>	2

Plagiarism-check (Turnitin) match score: 20% Despite the relatively high match-score the reviewer does not suspect plagiarism, since most of the matches are either duly referenced citations or fragments of sentences.

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

Total Score

62/100

Proposed grade

D (61-70)

Reviewer's commentary

Minimum 1,800 characters including spaces for passing grades

Minimum 2,500 characters including spaces for failing grades

The author has chosen a potentially interesting and relevant research topic for his BA thesis: an analysis of the construction of Bosnian national identity in the discourse of the country's political leaders. Nonetheless, the resulting text unfortunately suffers from numerous shortcomings and fails to be entirely persuasive.

The theoretical section of the thesis lacks a more robust discussion both of various theoretical approaches to nationalism and of various historical examples or types of nationalism; such a discussion could provide a framework for consideration of the role played by ethnicity and religion in constructing national identity, which appears to be of certain importance in the nationalist discourses in Bosnia. Moreover, the theoretical / methodological section of the thesis suffers from a lack of argumentative clarity as well as apparent inconsistencies. I have on mind especially the sections devoted to the discussion of Burbaker's and Malešović's approach to the study of nationalism on pp. 15–20 . It is not entirely clear why and in what way the constructivist approach of the discourse historical analysis (i.e. of the method adapted by the author of the reviewed thesis) leads to reification of national identity as something "solid and rigid". At the same time, Wodziak and Reisigl (i.e. the founders of DHA) are said to "undermine the foundation of their own theoretical framework by stressing its vulnerable nature" or of devaluing the "concept of national identity by defining it as something porous, unstable, everchanging, liquid...." (p. 16). The reader is left wondering whether Wodziak and Reisigl are criticised for wrongly assuming that national identity is something "solid and rigid" or, rather, for undermining its very existence by portraying it is "porous and unstable." Perhaps the author's main point is that they are thoroughly inconsistent. If this is the case, he should better explain why he insists on relying on their methodology.

Apart from suffering from a lack of conceptual clarity, the theoretical section is also only very loosely connected with the actual subject matter of the thesis – i.e. discursive construction(-s) of Bosnian national identity. On the other hand, the analytical section comes across as much more persuasive. The decision to limit the analysis to the discourse of the leaders of the three main political parties is obviously a limiting factor but given the limited scope of a BA thesis, it is acceptable. (Besides that, the author himself is aware of this limitation.) I really appreciate the author's decision to include a brief discussion of the country's complex federal structure and political system, although I wish he had included also a more thorough explanation of the voting system and political party system. The actual discourse analysis is largely well conducted and credible, although the author should have better explained the selection of the analysed texts.

Questions for the defense

On p. 20 you argue that we should not observe national identity "as something objective which is narratively constructed, but rather a narrative construct". Could you elaborate on the distinction between "something naratively constructed" and a "narrative construct"?

I DO recommend the thesis for final defence.

Reviewer's Signature