

Otakar Ludvík

B.A. Thesis Evaluation

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Postoj administrativ B. Clintona a G.W. Bushe k problému palestinské státnosti

Otakar Ludvík has written his B.A. dissertation on the positions of the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations concerning Palestinian statehood. The topic certainly is a legitimate one and it is a pity that we do not have experts on the Middle East at our institute. When reading this work, I was immediately taken aback by the number of typographical and spelling errors, but I'll revisit this point again later.

The dissertation is divided into an introduction, five main chapters, and a conclusion. I am impressed by the number of sources, especially online sources. It is good that B.A. students learn to consult parliamentary websites, in this case the website of the Israeli Knesset. I wonder, however, if it is wise to write a B.A. thesis comparing the policies of two administrations. I wish the title of the work would be more imaginative, but that is neither here nor there.

In the rather brief introduction, the author states that the dissertation will be devoted to issue of Palestinian statehood during the Clinton and George W. Bush presidencies respectively. Besides being cursory, the introduction does not really give the reader a clue as to the position of the author and it is a shame that the author has not divided the introduction into sections, one of which would evaluate the literature. Indeed, he discusses some works, but the introduction remains murky. For example, why should the writer take the liberty of assuming that everyone knows who Ehud Olmert (more specifically, E. Olmert) is? Nowadays it is more common to write names in full. Also, I regret all the

unnecessary typographical errors. All of this does not really encourage the reader to continue reading.

Chapter 1 examines the Oslo Agreement. Here, the author divides the chapter into sections. This deserves praise. However, the way in which the chapter is written is not so laudable. Why are the memoirs of Bill Clinton cited five times? Surely, there are better sources to support assertions in a B.A. thesis.

Chapter 2 analyzes the significance of the Wye River Memorandum. The chapter begins with a rather tedious narrative about how the peace process was on the wane. Rabin's death coupled with lack of American engagement allegedly slowed the peace process down. Shimon Peres is blamed by the author for insufficiently utilizing the murder of Yitzhak Rabin to his advantage and this allegedly led to Netanyahu's victory in the Israeli election of 1996. This statement demonstrates outright ignorance of Israeli politics. Anyone who knows anything about Israelis and Israeli political culture knows that Shimon Peres failed to be elected many times in the past because of a common perception that Peres is too weak. By claiming that Peres should have used Rabin's death to his political advantage, the writer is underestimating the intelligence of the Israeli electorate, which tends to be very informed, active, and issue-driven. Shimon Peres was defeated by Bibi Netanyahu because Netanyahu was seen as the stronger of the two candidates and Netanyahu's pledge to defend Israel come what may resonated with the majority of Israeli voters in a close election. Perhaps Rabin (had he lived) would have enjoyed more support and even won the election. This is because Rabin's record differed greatly to that of Shimon Peres. I find the rest of the chapter satisfactory.

Chapter 3 discusses the failure of the Camp David Summit of 2000 to achieve a final solution of the Palestinian statehood matter. To his credit, the author does state the important facts, but his interpretation of what the United States should have done is somewhat off the mark. Indeed, the United States is Israel's greatest ally, but it is a mistake to think that the United States can dictate Israeli policy. Israel is a democracy whose politicians are accountable to the electorate. When security of the country is at stake, Israelis themselves assess if a given policy enhances or endangers their security. The idea that the U.S. could have forced Ehud Barak's hand is naïve in my opinion.

Chapter 4 deals with the George W. Bush administration's approach to the Palestinian issue. All I have to say here is that the crux of the matter is interpretation. It is obvious that the writer has a pro-Palestinian bias. The facts about the so-called "Roadmap" are satisfactory.

Chapter 5 describes the Annapolis Conference. Here the author is correct when he states that the conference "was a big theater with low goals." As this evaluation is already getting rather long, I simply would like to state that more could be said about the floundering (domestically) of Palestinian institutions and the growing power of Hamas.

The conclusion (which is not even a page in length) basically praises Clinton for greater engagement and decries Bush's more relaxed approach. I have nothing further to add.

Overall, this B.A. dissertation is disappointing. It is obvious to the reader that the work was written at the last minute, is based on peculiar argumentation, and relies on too few (and very selective) sources. I daresay that the treatise is the worst of the seven I

have read this year. Out of fairness, I suggest a mark somewhere between **very good and good** depending on the outcome of the oral defense.

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