

KARLOVA UNIVERZITA V PRAZE
Fakulta sociálních věd
Institut politologických studií

Master's Thesis Assessment

AUTHOR: Francesco Corneo

TITLE OF THE THESIS: The Dialectics of Intervention: An Analysis of Discursive and Theoretical Accounts for Conflict Initiation

ASSESSED BY: Todd Nesbitt

ASSESSMENT TYPE: Advisor

1. ASSESSMENT OF THE THESIS CONTENT

ASSESSMENT CATEGORIES	MARK
Relevancy of the topic in relation to the current scientific knowledge	2
Originality of the thesis, contribution to the science subject field	2
Integrity and scale of sources and literature relevant to the subject study	2
Ability for critical appraisal of the sources	1
Standards of working with sources	1
Methodology and its relevancy to the subject study and thesis goals	2
Logic of the thesis structure	2
Ability to argue, cohesion and coherence of the argument	1
Terminology in the relevant field	1
Adhesion to the citation norm	1
Language, stylistic and formal standard of the thesis	2

COMMENTARY:

In his Master's thesis, Mr. Corneo chose to study language used in legitimization/rationalization processes concerning military conflicts which the United States of America was involved in 1991-2003. Specifically, the student aimed to produce an 'analysis of the evolution of domestic (American) legitimizing discourse (from 1991-2003).'

The paper is divided into five chapters including introduction and conclusions. It consists of a theoretical overview followed by case studies/application. The level of writing in English is above average, and although at times there is a tendency to 'over-cite' in the second chapter (this was discussed with the student during consultations), the 'extra' referencing is not overly intrusive.

The student worked independently on the thesis, with only sporadic consultations requested, most during the final few days before submission. In terms of theoretical discussion undertaken in the second chapter (pp. 15-23), the thesis clearly exhibits the ability of the student to work with sources, and to paraphrase and summarize political and legal philosophy. Starting with an overview/etymology of the concept of 'just war theory', Mrs. Corneo traces the background of the theory and related fields. A large part of the rest of the second chapter consists of quoting various public statements by political actors (George W. Bush, Colin Powell, Michael Laurie), and attempting to show how these statements fit in with theory.

The third chapter of the paper attempts to show how language used in various American conflicts reflects Graham, Keenan and Dowd's generic 'call to arms' speech features. Here Mr. Corneo gives example of the four features (appeal to legitimate power source, appeal to historical importance of the culture in which the discourse is situated, construction of an evil 'other', appeal for unification) to show the prevalence of these linguistic constructs.

The final chapter discusses approaches to humanitarian intervention initially from the perspective of liberal idealism, classical realism and neoliberal pragmatism, followed by a second analysis of interpretations from neoliberal, realist and radical perspectives.

Coming from the field of communication it is difficult to assess the methods and approaches that Mr. Corneo has chosen, since I am unaware of the research methods commonly used in this major. Surely at this level critical discourse analysis is much more appropriate, and would provide empirical clout to his theoretical outline. In addition, a deeper examination of legitimacy and rationalization theories could have been useful. The organization of the paper is at times confusing, and brief summaries or discourse markers would have helped it link together more effectively. Although improved with later versions, personalization still appears, and grandiose, subjective statements such as 'George W. Bush's War on Terror' are perhaps more appropriate for non-academic writing.

Overall the paper is successful in contributing to the discussion of approaches to understanding persuasive approaches to gaining public consent for military intervention, and gives a satisfactory overview of relevant theoretical approaches.

2. SUGGESTED MARK

Good (2)

Date: 15.06.2012

Signature: