

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE
Fakulta sociálních věd
Institut mezinárodních studií, Katedra amerických studií

PROTOKOL O HODNOCENÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE
(Posudek oponenta)

Práci předložil(a) student(ka): Bc. Jan Hornát

Název práce: Liberal Democracy and Chinese Political Culture: American Perspectives and Perceptions

Oponent práce (u externích vedoucích uveďte též adresu a funkci v rámci instituce):

Mgr. Jana Sehnálková

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

The author analyses China's views on democracy in the context of U.S. policy of democracy promotion and criticizes the U.S. push for democracy without taking into account the target country's cultural specifics. He argues that the U.S. expectations that China will implement liberal democratic reforms, as the US defines them, are incompatible with Chinese political and cultural traditions that have been heavily influenced by Confucianism.

He points out that Chinese thinkers, both past and present, were aware of the deficiencies of democracy and were therefore wary of implementing democratic reforms in China. The author also traces back the support for Confucian values among prominent Chinese thinkers, which include Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kaishek, and points out how Confucian values continue to impact the organization and beliefs in lives of common Chinese, despite the modernity of Chinese society.

The author then expresses his skepticism towards the U.S. goal of democracy promotion vis-à-vis China. In his opinion, the U.S. is bound to get disappointed, as Chinese political thinking is not open to ideas of liberal democracy – and he points not only to the prevalence of Confucian values, but also the factor of Chinese ethnocentrism and nationalism, which materializes in distrust of anything foreign.

The author however warns against an „a priori assumption that Confucian political culture is incapable of adopting modern democracy is misleading and hinders constructive dialogue about China's political future.“ (p. 52). He points out that democracy may be defined in a number of different ways – and while China may not subscribe to liberal democracy, it may in fact proceed with some form of democratic reform, which will result in a „democracy with Asian face“, reflecting the distinct „Asian values“. There are numerous examples of „democracies with Asian face“ – such as Japan, South Korea or Taiwan, where, as the author points out, the U.S. was instrumental in helping with democratic transformation.

In conclusion, the author draws recommendations for U.S. foreign policy makers. In his opinion, China should not be expected to adopt Western-style liberal democracy. Such expectations will only lead to disappointment, misinterpretation and miscalculation. Instead, China may develop a democracy with Chinese characteristics for cultural, historical and social reasons, extensively elaborated in the text. He underscores that an effort to impose U.S.-style democracy and values are bound to create a dangerous backlash.

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

The writing is clear, logical, thorough, and very well-organized. The author uses a number of references to theoreticians of democracy, democratic peace, democratic transformation, civil culture as well as works on China's political thought. All of these provide the conceptual framework for his analysis. The author uses relevant sources and professes understanding of the basic concepts of Chinese political thought as well as the theories of democracy.

The only comment that I could add to Jan Hornát's exhaustive description of the specific features of Chinese political culture is that another distinctive feature – also related to the influence of Confucianism – is the general unwillingness, or even fear, of challenging higher authorities (be it a superior, a teacher, a ruler, or, in contemporary situation, the Party), especially in situations where the general public is experiencing prosperity. However, this observation, while not mentioned explicitly, can be in fact drawn from the text, especially the passage about the role of the ruler in Chinese political culture (p. 28).

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

As far as the formal and language requirements are concerned, I have not found any major flaws. With the exception of a few misplaced commas, the paper's formal and language standards are very high.

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

Jan Hornát's thesis is the best that I have so far read at the Department of American Studies. He selected a highly interesting topic, which has been in fact discussed since at least the Clinton's Administration. The admission that China in fact may not be willing to adopt liberal democracy has huge implications for U.S. foreign policy, as it represents a challenge to U.S. political ideology that Washington promotes all around the world.

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

- What is the current administration's approach towards democracy promotion in China? Has the fact that China in fact may not be willing to adopt liberal democracy been reflected in political discussions?
- Democratic transformation was often pushed for by the middle class, which has been quickly changing in China, having access to internet, being well-traveled etc. Also, the Chinese society has been changing – it is becoming more individualistic. Can we expect that one day, Confucian values will be fully rejected and China's middle class making a big push for democratic reform in China?

7. DOPORUČENÍ / NEDOPORUČENÍ K OBHAJOBĚ A NAVRHOVANÁ ZNÁMKA

(výborně, velmi dobře, dobře, nevyhověl):

The thesis fulfills all the requirements for a Master's thesis and it is ready to be defended. As for the final grade, I propose **EXCELLENT** and recommend the thesis for Dean's commendation. I certainly hope the paper gets published.

Datum: 13. června 2013

Podpis: Jana Sehnálková

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.