

Prague, the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2016

### Assessment of Master Thesis – Opponent

The master's thesis written by Nataša Hemon deals with issues of historical concern now as it focuses on "the process of democratic transition in the Czech Republic in the time period from 1989 until 2004." (abstract). She wants, based on "Linz & Stepan's five arenas of the consolidated democracy. Civil society, political society, a rule of law, state bureaucracy and economic society [...]" (abstract). The work fulfill the requirements of a Bachelor thesis: number of pages, footnotes, quoted literature, topic. The thesis is based on theoretical literature and studies of the Czech transformation case.

The work counts an introduction (considered as the chapter one), two chapters (2. Nation of Velvet vs. Democracy and 3. Five arenas of consolidated democracy) and finally a conclusion. The two main chapters (2 and 3) are of unequal length and importance : 18 and 46 pages. The author begins by a research presenting the theories of democracy and democratic transition, to constitute the problematic. In the same chapter (2) she present some questions of the Czech case. Then, she develop a specific analysis of the Czech case according to the chosen model, in the chapter 3.

The structure of the work is not totally logic, as this chapter II has not a very clear status. It is not a purely theoretical chapter, neither the part concerning the Czech/Czechoslovak specificities are totally justified. These specificities could be presented as a part of the path dependency theory, or as a reason to critic the presented model. It is not the case. The Przeworski model could have been used for that purpose.

The part two propose to analyses the Czech case according to the five criteria of Linz and Stepan's model. This is very classical, but legitimate. This part (the longer one) is quite well provided. I can still see some problems. I believe that the criteria of civil society was misunderstood. Proposed by these authors, it has mainly to be understood in a Tocquevillian way, not Fergusonian one. It is not a question of opinion concerning democracy or rights to participate that are here important, but the existence of non-state NGO institutions. This is why this criteria is separated from the „political society “criteria“. Another point, the very Weberian „state bureaucracy“ should be understood as the introduction of a depoliticized body, based on meritocracy. And we know that the civil service law was introduced last year, but in a totally inefficient form.

The language is clear and pleasant, the references are serious and the conclusion is sophisticated. And despite my critics, I consider this work as excellent.

My questions for the defense:

- I. 'A nation of sheep will beget a government of wolves.' Do you believe that the Czech civil society is able to protect the Czech democracy from a populist evolution?
- II. The last evolutions in Poland and Hungary show that their democracy is not so "consolidated" as it could seem to be. How would you explain this using your explanatory model?