

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Title of the thesis:	Technocratic-Populism in India: How Modi & the BJP Maintain Their Vast Winning Coalition
Author of the thesis:	Sabyasachi Saikia
Referee (incl. titles):	Doc. PhDr. Miloš Brunclík, Ph.D.

Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the five numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).

1) Theoretical background: The theoretical part is clearly the single most positive aspect of the thesis which was guided by numerous conceptual and theoretical arguments. The theoretical part is robust, convincing, and opening venues for subsequent research. The theory used has been consistently in applied throughout the thesis, including hypotheses. The student has demonstrated a genuine understanding of the theory.

2) Contribution: The author of the thesis is not convincing in showing that the thesis brings original ideas and findings. First, the BJP is commonly referred to as a populist party, often including a technocratic rhetoric and policies. The author refers to a number of resources that study the BJP through the perspectives of populism and/or technocracy (e.g. Sajjanhar, A. (2021). The new experts: Populism, technocracy and politics of expertise in contemporary India. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, pp. 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2021.1934889>). Hence, the value added of the thesis seems limited. Second, the BJP seems to be the most likely case to which the concepts of populism and technocracy could be applied. Hypotheses of the theses are formulated in a very specific and detailed way as if the author knew answers to these questions beforehand. The author should have elaborated more on the case selection and justification of the hypotheses to show that the thesis's findings are original rather than re-exploring hitherto knowledge. In other words, one may pose a question of what the thesis's contribution to the existing knowledge in the area under study is. Not knowing much about the BJP, I do not wish to be unfair to the student in this regard and perhaps the contribution I do not see in the thesis lies in peculiarities of particular concepts, usage of a particular methodology etc.

3) Methods: Methods of the thesis are stated and presented clearly. The research design combines using data received from surveys and a discursive analysis. Hypotheses are testable and methods used allow for further verification and testing, even though the discursive analysis is inherently loaded with a degree of subjectivism. The student demonstrates a good work with data (collected from surveys), correct operationalization of variables and a conscientious discursive analysis completed with a number of quotes and well-presented arguments.

4) Literature:

It is beyond doubt that the thesis demonstrates the author's full understanding and command of the most recent literature whose range is wide indeed. It seems the author took advantage of the all relevant literature.

5) Manuscript form:

The thesis is well structured. Perhaps, limits of the research could have been presented in the methodological part of the thesis, not in the very end (in the conclusion). Although the student has used appropriate language, the style and way of argumentation is perhaps too ponderous making the thesis bit more difficult to read and follow. The text might have been more straightforward. Still, the structure of the thesis is clear, logical and well-arranged. There are just minor mistakes as far as referencing are concerned.

Suggested questions for the defence are:

What do you consider the major contribution of the thesis? Which findings do expand the hitherto knowledge on the BJP in connection to populism and technocracy?

How do other parties react to the BJP technocratic populism? Can we see any signs of efforts to emulate the BJP in the technocratic policies and populist argumentation?

I recommend the thesis for final defence.

SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED (for details, see below):

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20 points)</i>	20
<i>Contribution (max. 20 points)</i>	11
<i>Methods (max. 20 points)</i>	18
<i>Literature (max. 20 points)</i>	20
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20 points)</i>	13
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)	82
The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)	B

DATE OF EVALUATION: 13th January 2022

Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	A	= outstanding (high honour)
81 – 90	B	= superior (honour)
71 – 80	C	= good
61 – 70	D	= satisfactory
51 – 60	E	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	F	= failing. The thesis is not recommended for defence.

The referee should give comments to the following requirements:

1) THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: Can you recognize that the thesis was guided by some **theoretical fundamentals** relevant to this thesis topic? Were some important theoretical concepts **omitted**? Was the theory used in the thesis consistently **incorporated with the topic** and hypotheses tested? Has the author demonstrated a genuine **understanding** of the theories addressed?

Strong	Average	Weak	
20	15	< 10	points

2) CONTRIBUTION: Evaluate if the author presents **original ideas** on the topic and aims at demonstrating **critical thinking** and the ability to draw **conclusions** based on the knowledge of relevant theory and relevant empirical material. Is there a distinct **value added** of the thesis (relative to knowledge of a university-educated person interested in given topic)? Did the author explain **why** the observed phenomena occurred? Were the **policy implications** well founded?

Strong	Average	Weak	
20	15	< 10	points

3) METHODS: Are the **hypotheses** for this study clearly stated, allowing their further **verification and testing**? Are the theoretical explanations, empirical material and **analytical tools** used in the thesis relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the aspiration level of the study? Is the thesis **topic comprehensively analyzed** and does the thesis not make trivial or **irrelevant detours** off the main body stated in the thesis proposal? More than 12 points signal an exceptional work, **which requires your explanation "why" it is so**).

Strong	Average	Weak	
20	15	< 10	points

4) LITERATURE REVIEW: The thesis demonstrates the author's full understanding and **command of recent literature**. The author **quotes** relevant literature in a **proper way** and works with a **representative bibliography**. (Remarks: references to Wikipedia, websites and newspaper articles are a sign of **poor research**. If they dominate, you cannot give more than 8 points. References to books published by prestigious publishers and articles in renowned journals give a much better impression. Any sort of **plagiarism** disqualifies the thesis from admission to defence.)

Strong	Average	Weak	
20	15	< 10	points

5) MANUSCRIPT FORM: The thesis is **clear and well structured**. The author uses appropriate **language and style**, including the academic **format for quotations**, graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables, is easily readable and **stimulates thinking**. The text is free from typos and easy to comprehend.

Strong	Average	Weak	
20	15	< 10	points

Remarks for the referees:

- 1) Download the thesis from the SIS. If you have no access to SIS, please ask the secretary of IPS (katerina.bubnova@fsv.cuni.cz, tel. 296 824 641) for sending you the thesis by e-mail.
- 2) Use the IEPS Thesis Report form only for your comments. **It is a standard at the FSV UK that the Referee's Report is at least 400 words.** In case you assess the thesis as "non-defendable", please explain the concrete reasons for that in detail.
- 3) Retain your critical stance. You cannot confer more than 80 points upon a thesis that does not satisfy research standards in top European universities.
- 4) Upload the Report as PDF/A file into the SIS. Instructions on how to convert .DOCx to PDF/A): „Save as“ – select „PDF“ – check-in „Options or Možnosti“ that „PDF options“ tick „ISO 19005-1 compliant /kompatibilní s/ (PDF/A)“ – „Save“. If you have no access to SIS, please send the unsigned PDF file to the secretary of IPS (katerina.bubnova@fsv.cuni.cz).
- 5) Please deliver to the IPS Secretariat, Pekařská 16, 158 00 Praha 5- Nové Butovice, **two hand-signed originals**. Unfortunately, a photocopied report with signature does not suffice. Sorry.
- 6) Your Report will be remunerated, so we need also your account information (separate from this form).