

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA
Fakulta sociálních věd
Institut mezinárodních studií

PROTOKOL O HODNOCENÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE
(Posudek vedoucího)

Práci předložil(a) student(ka): Tereza Štěpařová

Název práce: Rhetoric of U.S. Foreign Environmental Policy: Case Study of the Paris Agreement

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

Jan Hornát

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

In a broad sense, this thesis deals with US environmental policy on the international and multilateral level. Rather than focusing on the practice of US policy, it is oriented on the framing and rhetoric of its leaders. As the author notes, “Actions matter, but rhetoric can have a great influence on how these actions will be perceived by domestic and international audiences” (p. 11). The aim of the thesis is “to analyze what were the rhetorical strategies of the federal political elites – the administration and the Congress - during the Obama and Trump presidencies of 2015 through 2020”. As such, it wishes to provide “a better understanding of what narratives can be used to justify certain policies and how such narratives can vary and/or overlap for two different administrations or Congresses, when they cover the same topic – in this case the Paris Climate Agreement” (p. 11).

In the first chapter, the thesis identifies the “sources” of US environmental policy, i.e. the potential intervening variables that either limit or support US engagement with multilateral platforms concerned with environmental issues. Namely, these sources include structural factors (relations between the executive and legislative branches of the US government), material concerns (economic impacts and security) and ideational issues (the myths of American exceptionalism and the ensuing mistrust of multilateralism, and political polarization). With a nod to Putnam’s two-level game theory, Ms. Štěpařová concludes that a varying mix of these variables through time helps us understand why US international policies “do not follow a consistent pattern” (p. 17).

In the brief second chapter, the thesis discusses the legal nature of the Paris Agreement from the perspective of domestic US practice, highlighting the notorious tensions between identifying codified international obligations of the US as “treaties” or “executive agreements”. The third chapter holds the analysis of discourse itself.

It is structured around the six variables introduced in the first chapter and demonstrates how these variables help to shape various narratives that are either supportive or critical of US international environmental policy. In conclusion, the thesis furthers interesting arguments, for instance that “regardless of partisanship the administrations were trying to satisfy domestic audience while not upsetting the international audience (the Trump case) or to satisfy international audience while not upsetting ordinary Americans and the opposing party back at home (the Obama case)” (p. 108).

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

Ms. Štěpařová worked with an extensive amount of primary and secondary literature and sources. Her thesis is well-grounded in the existing scholarship and holds together by a relevant theoretical and methodological framework. As a theoretical starting point, she utilizes Robert Putnam’s two-level game theory, which “implies that the U.S. approach to international environmental politics has its roots in domestic politics, especially on the federal level: the U.S. Congress and the president” (p. 11). These institutions then need to balance the demands of the international and domestic actors to create viable policy. In terms of the applied method, studying rhetoric is a qualitative approach conducted through discourse analysis and so the thesis focuses on the public discourse of congressmen and congresswomen and members of the US executive, including the President, in the period 2013-2021.

The paper has a logical structure and explains the function of each subchapter to the reader – i.e. no part of the thesis is redundant or decontextualized. Ms. Štěpařová’s argumentation is clear and persuasive, she provides enough examples to support her argumentation and does a decent job in generalizing the varying rhetoric into

coherent “narratives” and patterns. The sources used – both the secondary and primary – are relevant and representative.

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

The paper meets all the formal criteria of an MA thesis – the citation norm is coherent; the language is clear and without any major grammatical or stylistic issues.

4. KONTROLA ORIGINALITY TEXTU

Prohlašuji, že jsem se seznámil/a s výsledkem kontroly originality textu závěrečné práce v systému:

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Komentář k výsledku kontroly: The results of the analysis do not indicate plagiarism.

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

I see this thesis as a solid piece of research with a clear definition of the research aims and a sound theoretical and methodological foundation. Perhaps the weaker point in the thesis is the scope it aims to cover – though the Paris Climate Agreement is a narrow enough case study, the intervening variables that shape the discourses are perhaps too numerous to encompass in one MA thesis. Still, the author managed to present coherent findings and the thesis is consistent. I would welcome some elaboration why the case study concerns the Paris Climate Agreement in particular – apart from the obvious reasons, Ms. Štěpařová could have mentioned why she preferred Paris, for instance, to the Kyoto Protocol. Also, the author could have been more explicit in explaining how the conclusions from this study can be generalized across other cases.

6. SPOLUPRÁCE S VEDOUCÍM PRÁCE (komunikace s vedoucím práce, schopnost reflektovat připomínky, posun od původního záměru apod.)

Consultations with me as supervisor were frequent and Ms. Štěpařová always made an effort to integrate my suggestions and comments. Nonetheless, from the outset, Ms. Štěpařová had a very clear vision of what she wanted to do and how to frame her research, so my interventions were not even that necessary.

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

1. Are there narratives/frames/talking points that both Democrats and Republicans can agree on when it comes to international climate change mitigation agreements? In other words, what rhetoric would a US president need to apply if their intention was to de-polarize the debate in the US?
2. Did you witness any differences in framing when the audience of US political elites' discourse was domestic or international?

8. DOPORUČENÍ / NEDOPORUČENÍ K OBHAJOBĚ A NAVRHOVANÁ ZNÁMKA (A a B výborně, C a D velmi dobře, E dobře, F nevyhovělo):

I suggest the grade **A or B** based on the performance during the defense.

Datum: 26 May 2023

Podpis: