

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA
Fakulta sociálních věd
Institut mezinárodních studií

PROTOKOL O HODNOCENÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE
(Posudek vedoucí)

Práci předložil(a) student(ka): **Jakub Cajkář**

Název práce: Covert Racism in Presidential Campaigns: Exploiting Racial Prejudice by G. H. W. Bush in the 1988 Elections

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

Jakub Cajkář presented a thesis which focuses on “George H. W. Bush’s presidential campaign in 1988, in which he defeated Michael Dukakis... The main goal is to ascertain whether Bush continued in the pattern established by his predecessors and used implicit racial cues to garner white votes while disparaging African Americans. In other words, this thesis asks whether Bush’s campaign was covertly racist.” (p. 3).

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

Jakub Cajkář selected a challenging and rather original topic, as he uses his thesis to explore and analyze to what extent the Republican Party and its political candidates developed and internalized racial rhetoric into their election campaigns.

The thesis is well organized, as Jakub gradually develops his arguments. In the first chapter, he provides a broader context and demonstrates how candidates in the 1960s and 1970s used racial language to appeal to their constituents during the Civil Rights Movement, War in Vietnam, and Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society era in order to attract voters who were disappointed by the turn of events and felt marginalized by policies that highlighted the importance of different minority and disadvantaged groups. The author briefly covers campaigns of Barry Goldwater and George Wallance, the precursors of the so-called “Dog-whistle politics”, then takes a look at Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan who built upon Goldwater's campaign, and showcases the development of their rhetoric.

The second chapter then examines the GOP strategy for 1988 elections and introduces the chief architects behind George H. W. Bush’s campaign. Subsequently, the author looks at the role of negative advertising, introduces the types of negative ads, and then analyzes two controversial advertisements that were put out by the Bush campaign and its allies. The first, so-called Willie Horton ad, portrays Michael Dukakis, Bush’s Democratic opponent, as soft on crime, building upon the long-term framing of the Republican candidates as supporters of “law and order”. The second ad, created by the Bush team and called Revolving Door ad, built upon the messaging of the Willie Horton ad.

At the closing of the second chapter, the author further examines available campaign speeches of G. H. W. Bush in order to identify how the candidate further amplified the “tough on crime” message, using coded words that were understood as racially biased. The author selects several words (even though here it is not clear on what basis) that bore racial cues and measured their frequency in the available sample of Bush’s speeches.

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

Jakub Cajkář presented a well-written work with excellent levels of English. The footnotes are consistent. The thesis also contains a plethora of screenshots from the campaign advertisements used in the 1988 campaign to clearly illustrate Jakub's arguments. As far as sources are concerned, the bibliography is extensive and includes both primary and secondary sources. I appreciate the author's efforts to reach out to some of Bush's campaign managers and political advisors as well as American politics experts, although they were not successful.

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:

Based on the report from Theses, overall similarity is 6 percent, which means that this work is original.

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

Jakub Cajkář delivered a solid analysis of George H. W. Bush's campaign focused on racially-coded rhetoric -- and to that extent, the thesis fulfills the established goals. The author concludes that "based on the analysis of secondary sources, television advertisements, speeches that Bush delivered, and two presidential debates, this research showcased that George H. W. Bush's campaign in 1988 took advantage of racial bias and used covertly racist rhetoric" (p. 61).

The Willie Horton ad continues to be controversial and points to persistent racism within American society, racism that continues to be skilfully used by political campaigns to influence the electorate. It also points to the rise of identity politics. I have to commend Jakub for his effort to write an analysis of George H. W. Bush's rhetorics, as the access to resources is limited and many speeches of the presidential candidate have not been digitized yet. Jakub laboriously identified primary sources in different online archives to provide at least partial, yet - in my opinion - representative analysis of Bush's campaign rhetoric and thematization of race in the campaign through dissection of Bush's rhetoric. What I was missing in the paper is a more detailed explanation of the crimes for which William Horton was serving his time. From the text, it may seem as if his image was abused and that the use of his story as an example of a (Black) criminal was entirely unjust. However, Horton was a convicted felon who until nowadays serves time in prison for murder. Secondly, in the literature overview, Jakub does not provide any information on scholarly literature on discourse analysis, which he in fact used in the analysis of Bush's speeches.

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

- Can we identify which groups of voters were attuned to Bush's messaging using racial cues and how it impacted their electoral support? Has this group transformed over time?

- How have the Republicans built on this theme in subsequent campaigns - e.g. with George W. Bush, John McCain, Mitt Romney, and Donald Trump? What is the coded language today?
- Why did George H. W. Bush select the topic of law and order for the 1988 elections? Did the looming end of the Cold War play a role in it, or was it purely the domestic issues that drove this campaign theme?

7. DOPORUČENÍ / NEDOPORUČENÍ K OBHAJOBĚ A NAVRHOVANÁ ZNÁMKA

(A a B výborně, C a D velmi dobře, E dobře, F nevyhověl):

Jakub Cajkář fulfilled the requirements for a MA thesis and I recommend her thesis for defense. I propose grade A-B.

Datum: June 8, 2023

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.