

**UNIVERZITA KARLOVA**  
**Fakulta sociálních věd**  
**Institut mezinárodních studií**

**PROTOKOL O HODNOCENÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE**  
**(Posudek oponenta)**

Práci předložil(a) student(ka): **David Robert Mulica**

Název práce: **Democratic Party's Foreign Policy Voting: A Network Analysis**

Oponoval (u externích oponentů uveďte též adresu a funkci v rámci instituce):

**doc. PhDr. Francis Raška, PhD.**

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

**This paper analyzes the voting behavior of Democratic Party members in the 117th Congress. Specifically, it examines roll call votes related to U.S. foreign policy. Namely, it examines votes on funding allocations for the two major policy departments of the executive branch - the Department of State and the Department of Defense, votes on resolutions, and other legislative actions in which Congress has jurisdiction over U.S. foreign policy. More particularly, this study is interested in the voting behavior of members of the so-called "Congressional Progressive Caucus" (CPC), one of the ideological caucuses in the U.S. Congress that has been gaining political strength, especially in recent years. The aim of the study is to show whether the "Progressive Caucus" has developed to be a political force that is already showing tendencies to vote differently from the rest of the Democratic Party, or which specific members of Congress are potentially in positions to mediate between the "CPC" and the rest of the party on foreign policy issues.**

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

**The topic is indeed a demanding one. The argumentation, structure, and theoretical/methodological grounding is fine as is the choice of sources.**

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

**I have absolutely no problem with the formal aspects. The presentation is excellent.**

4. **KONTROLA ORIGINALITY TEXTU**

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

[ ] Theses [ ] Turnitin [xxx] Ouriginal (Urkund)

Komentář k výsledku kontroly:

**The originality of the text is beyond doubt.**

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

**David Robert Mulica has written his Master's dissertation on foreign policy voting patterns of Democrats in the US Congress. The work is highly original, based on original research (both primary and secondary), and well-argued. Moreover, David has consulted with scholars on both sides of the Atlantic. The treatise is divided into an Introduction, four main chapters, and a Conclusion. I will offer my thoughts on each section in the ensuing paragraphs.**

**In the Introduction, David spells out clearly the aim of the thesis. The methodology used is social network analysis (SNA). The issue that David tackles is the foreign policy voting of the Congressional Progressive Caucus in the 117<sup>th</sup> US Congress, which was in session from 3 January 2021 until 3 January 2023. Essential background information is provided, data selection is explained, and the reader gets a sense of precisely what to expect in the body of the work. I quite enjoy the Introduction because it gently guides the reader into Chapter 1.**

**Chapter 1 addresses the theoretical background. The function of the US Congress within the American political system is explained. David then delves into the issue of partisan politics and the role of congressional caucuses. More specifically, he defines the background and aims of the Congressional Progressive Caucus and some of its most prominent members. Subsequently, the constitutional role of the**

US Congress in foreign policy is explained as is the evolution of that role. Allocations of funding for military projects are discussed as are the importance of congressional delegations sent abroad to garner information. Mention is made of some of the most recent foreign policy challenges, such as the US military withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Furthermore, David discusses the importance of party unity and ideological cohesion and presents his hypotheses, which read as follows:

1. Hypothesis 1: The CPC will show a high connectedness on voting on foreign policy topics, due to the ideological nature of the Caucus supporting "progressive" policy making. (H1)
2. Hypothesis 2: Hypothesis 1 leads to the presumption that there won't be nearly any outstanding congress members who would be a part of the CPC but have a higher connectedness to the non-CPC group of congress members in the network. If there are, they would cease to be CPC members after the 117th Congress. (H2)
3. Hypothesis 3: The CPC network will show weaker connectedness to the remaining Democratic Party members which will demonstrate the ideological tendencies of the caucus and different opinions on foreign policy issues of the U.S. (H3)
4. Hypothesis 4: Rep. Pramila Jayapal (WA-7) as caucus chairperson will show strong ties to the vast majority of the members of the CPC network, effectively confirming her central position among the caucus. The same would apply to CPC vice-chair rep. Ilhan Omar (MN-5). (H4)

In the last sections of the chapter, David explains his decision to analyze large amounts of data and expresses his view that the information emanating from the data can reveal certain patterns and the overall relationship between the Congressional Progressive Caucus and the rest of the Democratic Party members of Congress. This chapter is very informative, especially for someone like me, who is a historian.

Methodology, methods, and data selection form the subject of Chapter 2. Various terminology is explained and the significance of technical terms concerning data is likewise elucidated. As the functioning of Congress is rather complicated, David explains the various procedures involved in the voting process. Social network analysis and its application to the specific issues studied in this treatise are scrutinized in meticulous detail. Once again, this chapter reveals to the reader just how quantitative certain methods of the social sciences have become.

In Chapter 3, data analysis and so-called network projection are explained. The utility of the open-source software tool Gephi is clarified, as are network aggregation, bi-modal and one-mode networks. Then, so-called network projection is performed. This chapter is very technical and, I readily admit, that the concepts discussed are beyond my field of expertise as I do not engage in quantitative research. I think that David has fulfilled his task of explaining how the research was conducted and naturally leads into the final chapter.

Chapter 4 presents David's findings on the basis of his research. As David writes:

While the discussion of results is not limited to it, this study primarily focuses on confirming the following hypotheses in the projections and network analysis:

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Both the text and the corresponding graphs explain the findings in a very detailed, technical manner. What is good here is that the reader is very eager to read the final conclusions David draws. The chapter is of superb quality.

In his Conclusion, David states the following:

1. The voting cohesiveness of the Democratic Party is fairly high, with the average voting similarity of the congress members being 71% (Graph no. 1) or 74.6% (Graph no. 5). This confirms a strong party discipline among the Democratic Party in voting on the floor of the U.S. Congress.
  2. There are three politically relevant and statistically confirmed communities within the network of House Democratic Party congress members - one community including the majority (77.5%) of the non-CPC congress members, a second community including the majority (77%) of CPC members and a third community including four CPC member from the new wave of progressive democrats (Graph no. 5). This observation confirms Hypotheses 1 and 3.
  3. There are outstanding congress members from both two communities who are not voting in alliance with the majority of their official ideological partners in congress. There is about 22-23% of CPC members voting more often with the non-majority CPC community and vice versa. This means that the CPC is not yet completely consolidated in its voting in Congress, thus refuting Hypothesis 2.
  4. Individual congress members and their "mediator" factor in the network:
    - a. In the isolated CPC network but also the whole network of House Democrats, rep. Ayanna Pressley (MA-7) is by far the most central figure in connecting the congress members with each other, based on the analysis of voting similarity.
    - b. CPC vice-chair rep. Ilhan Omar (MN-5) also has a very high betweenness centrality coefficient in the CPC network (172), however, she shows exceptionally low voting cohesiveness with the non-CPC DEM congress members.
    - c. Regarding the evaluation of voting similarity, CPC chairperson Pramila Jayapal (WA-7) has a near exact average betweenness centrality coefficient in the isolated CPC network (32). In the whole network of House Democrats, she is moderately above average from the perspective of all Democratic congress members. Overall, there is no indication that her role as CPC chair is built on strong mediation responsibilities, thus questioning the extent of her impact as chairperson of the CPC. This observation partially confirms H4 (in rep. Omar's case) and partially refutes it (in rep. Jayapal's case).
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- I. Based on observations no. 2 and 3, the CPC has developed to be a politically relevant body of congress members which has the potential to play a significant role in the power distribution within the Democratic Party. However, it has not consolidated its voting behavior in a manner which would prevent CPC members not voting with the majority of the CPC network on a near unanimous level.
  - II. The voting analysis confirms that the new progressive democrats centered around the so-called "squad" female congress members (reps. Bush, Tlaib, Omar, Ocasio-Cortez) has formed into a politically relevant community of voting members of the U.S. House. They show a weaker voting similarity index to the remainder of the CPC and even more so to the non-CPC House Democrats.
  - III. Omar and rep. Ayanna Pressley, another new progressive CPC member, serve as the primary mediators between the remainder of the new progressives' community and the rest of the CPC. Additionally, Ocasio-Cortez and Pressley serve as potential mediators between the new progressives and the non-CPC House Democrats, based on their voting similarity with the network.
  - IV. Based on voting similarity, CPC chairperson Pramila Jayapal (WA-7) does not play a key role in the CPC voting behavior.
  - V. When advocating, lobbying, or whipping votes for a given legislative matter on foreign policy issues, stakeholders are advised to consult rep. Pressley (MA-7) from the CPC caucus or reps. Klimer (WA-6) and DeLauro (CT-3) from the non-CPC House Democrats in order to maximize the chances of the Democratic Party to vote on the given legislation. Klimer and DeLauro are members of the crucial House Appropriations committee, with DeLauro being the chairperson of the committee in the

**117th Congress. This is in addition to the standard advocacy and lobbying targets being the Democratic leadership in the House (starting with Majority leader Pelosi in the 117th Congress).**

**I must say that this is the first dissertation I remember reading that is based on quantitative research. It is impressive and the student should be applauded for possessing the skills needed to undertake this sort of project. I recommend a classification of A without reservation.**

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

**What other questions can be raised and answered using this quantitative approach? Please explain.**

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

Datum: **15 June 2023**

Podpis:

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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.