

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Social Sciences
Institute of International Studies

Protocol of BA thesis evaluation
(Supervisor's Evaluation)

Thesis presented by: Chen Yiji

Thesis' title: Comparative Analysis of Transformational Leadership: Václav Havel and Lee Teng-hui

1. CONTENT AND GOAL OF THE THESIS:

In writing this thesis, Ms. Chen Yiji (further referred to as the author) was inspired by the visit of the Czech Senate President Milos Vystrcil to Taiwan in 2020, during which he alluded to Vaclav Havel and Lee Teng-hui as sharing the role of the fathers of democracy and drivers of the democratization process. Vystrcil was not the first to drive the parallel, as Taiwanese leaders too occasionally allude to the likeness of Lee and Havel. However, once one begins closer examination of the two personalities and their path to leadership, both political and moral, significant differences start emerging. Yet, both Havel and Lee are perceived as “iconic figures who symbolize certain values” (p. 12) and as the author points out, “both leaders exemplify a unique ‘philosopher-king’ leadership” (p. 13). In the thesis, the author therefore aims to “explore the similarities and differences between the two leaders, particularly in the context of Transformational Leadership, considering the significant moral dimension inherent in their leadership styles” (p. 13). On p. 17, the author further elaborates on the research questions:

1. Are Vaclav Havel and Lee Teng-hui transformational leaders according to Bass' definition?
2. If yes, how are Vaclav Havel and Lee Teng-hui exhibiting qualities of transformational leaders?

The author expects to confirm, based on the stated criteria, that the two leaders “exemplify a unique “philosopher-king” leadership and that “both Havel and Lee are transformational leaders according to Bass' definition” (p. 17).

2. CONTENT (difficulty, creative approach, argumentation, logical structure, theoretical and methodological anchoring, work with sources and literature, appropriateness of appendices, etc.):

The thesis is divided into three chapters. After a short introduction, the first chapter introduces the research framework. The second chapter looks at Havel's and Lee's background - the author describes their family circumstances, their educational background, and their relationship to politics, including their “unexpected entrance to power”. At the end of the chapter, the author briefly mentions the legacy of both Havel and Lee. The third, core chapter is titled “Empirical part” and here, the author

explains different aspects of transformational leadership and applies it, albeit very selectively, to political ideas and behavior of Havel and Lee.

The choice of analytical framework is not particularly justified and well explained and it does not really help in the envisioned comparison. The author uses different terms, such as “philosopher-king”, but does not explain their meaning. It would also be advisable to use more contemporary scholarship on leadership studies - while the author decides to implement typology from 2015, she refers to scholarship from 1954 and 1978, but it is not clear how this helps the analysis.

3. FORMAL AND LINGUISTIC REQUIREMENTS (language and grammar, correct citations and references, graphic appearance, formal requirements etc.):

Overall, the thesis is well written and is generally read smoothly. The State of the Art section is not annotated. Also, from the style used, it is not clear when the author is referring to books or articles. In the bibliography, the list of resources is not divided into primary and secondary sources. The author uses a selection of sources in English, and Chinese to analyze her subject. The choice of sources was limited to English translations of Havel's work and books on Havel. Occasionally, the author's arguments are missing references. (e.g. p. 37).

4. I confirm that I got acquainted with the result of checking the originality of the text of the final thesis in the system:

Theses Turnitin Ouriginal (Urkund)

Comment:

Based on the result, the overall overlap according to Theses.cz is 4 percent and according to Turnitin, the overall similarity is 24 percent, but each item listed is less than 1 percent. The thesis therefore is considered to be original work.

5. COMMENTARY (overall perception of the BA thesis, strengths and e(celkový dojem z bakalářské práce, silné a slabé stránky, originalita myšlenek, naplnění cíle apod.):

The author has selected quite an interesting subject. Vaclav Havel, as he visited Taiwan in 2004, drew connections between the historical developments in the Czech Republic and Taiwan and demonstrated very good understanding of Taiwan's predicament, as illustrated by his quote on p. 9. It is true that both societies to a large extent hold both leaders, Havel and Lee, in high respect, as they are deemed founders/fathers of democracy in their respective countries. However, as the author correctly points out, while Havel and Lee happened to be the key drivers of democratization in their counties, their path was very different - Havel was a political outsider while Lee was part of the political elite. They were - to some extent - driven by the same values and principles, but the context that shaped their decision-making was different. Lee Teng-hui was trying to establish Taiwan as a de facto independent state, which would be able to use a higher moral ground vis-a-vis the PRC (by process of democratization) and could claim legitimacy in international affairs. Vaclav Havel led Czechoslovakia out of the Soviet subjugation to join the West.

In the empirical part, the author attempts to apply the framework of transformational leadership on the studied personalities. In doing so, she tries to find evidence in their statements and speeches where she tries to uncover philosophical underpinnings of

Havel's and Lee's approach to politics - seeing politics as "public service". She therefore looks in more detail at how they conceptualized politics, and less at their actual political acts. Some statements are however at least too idealistic and rather dubious: for example, on p. 31, the author claims that "the way Havel and Lee led their life is a real demonstration of upholding high standards of ethical and moral conduct." While this may have been their aspiration, it is hardly true, as both Havel and Lee had flaws in both personal as well as political lives.

The comparison of Lee's and Havel's legacy is a bit shallow since both politicians left behind a multilayered, multidimensional legacy. The overall comparison, as envisioned by the author, falls rather short primarily due to lack of clear criteria that would enable the comparison - and this is caused by the fact that the research questions themselves somehow miss the comparative aspect. The author takes the following categories of transformational leadership - 3.1/ idealized influence (p. 28), such as high standards of ethical and moral conduct, 3.2/ inspirational motivation (p. 34), 3.3/ intellectual stimulation, and 3.4/ Individual considerations, such as coaching other people -- and chooses situations or quotes where Havel and Lee fit these categories. Not only these are very hard to compare, in some subchapters, the author gives more space to one leader over the other (e.g. in 3.2, the analysis is focusing on Lee, but Havel's component is missing).

Both Havel and Lee, despite their popularity demonstrated by public opinion polls (p. 26), were subject to criticism - and while the author briefly mentioned criticism of Lee for e.g. failing to implement steps towards transitional justice, in case of Havel, such assessment is missing.

The conclusion to the thesis could have been longer. In one paragraph, the author concludes that "both Havel and Lee Teng-hui" generally meet the four requirements of transformational leadership (p. 42), but does not elaborate much further in order to conclude whether there were any common traits between Havel and Lee in exhibiting such leadership. Nevertheless, I believe that the author deserves credit for trying to connect the two personalities coming from very different political, social, and cultural circumstances in order to uncover the symbolic and inspirational role they both played in their respective societies and to show what they perhaps shared in common - their overall aspiration for their respective societies to be better off, the struggle to carve out a place for their nations on the global scene, all in allegiance to similar values.

6. QUESTIONS AND COMMENTARY THAT MAY BE ADDRESSED DURING THE DEFENSE OF THE THESIS (ONE TO THREE):

- What role was played by religion in case of Havel's and Lee's approach towards politics?
- How do you explain Lee's strong inclinations towards Taiwanese independence? And do you see any parallels in Havel's stance towards the split of Czechoslovakia?

- How does the young generation in Taiwan and the Czech Republic perceive Lee and Havel respectively? Has the generational change shaped the memory of Lee and Havel? If so, how?

6. RECOMMENDATION FOR DEFENSE AND PROPOSED GRADE

Chen Yijin's thesis fulfills the BA thesis requirements and therefore, I recommend it for defense and propose final grade D.

DATE: August 27, 2023

Signature: 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.