Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Eliška Djokićova
Thesis title: At a Loss for Words: Capturing the Duality of Political Correctness (PC)
Programme/year: MV/2024
Author of Evaluation (supervisor): Michal Parizek

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	9
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	25
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	30
Total		80	64
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	8
	Style	5	4
	Formal requirements	5	4
Total		20	16
TOTAL		100	80

Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Political Studies / Smetanovo nabrezi 6, 110 01 Prague 1, Czech Republic, info@fsv.cuni.cz, tel: +420 222 112 111

www.fsv.cuni.cz

Evaluation

Major criteria:

The thesis seeks to explore the complex issue of political correctness (PC), largely from a psychological/individual/first-image perspective. It reviews the history of the concept and agenda, it explores its constitutive dimensions. Further, it seeks to present a survey-experimental study that would capture a) the relations between the two key theorized dimensions of PC – implicit/normative and explicit/behavioral, b) estimate the gap between the two, and c) identify psychological factors associate with the size of the gap.

This is one of the most difficult thesis to review that I have seen in recent years. One reason is that it is heavily rooted in psychology, rather than IR or related fields of my direct expertise. Another reason is that the thesis is, unfortunately, quite imbalanced. The thesis was planned to be enormously ambitious, which is perhaps recognizable already in my short summary. At the same time, the conceptual and historical part of the thesis as it stands is well crafted. I have reservations to it, but it is generally extremely robust and – as far as I can tell, given my limited knowledge of the psychological literature – appears highly comprehensive. On the other hand, the planned empirical design was not carried out and what the thesis presents are partial results of three small pilot studies. So from what I can say, the thesis represents in some way an impressive attempt at a highly original piece of genuine research. I commend that. On the other hand, the execution of that plan was not truly successful.

Let me elaborate on several specific points:

1) On the positive side, as mentioned, the thesis is highly complex, elaborate, the author clearly engaged with the topic in unusual depth, and took upon herself to execute a long range of various statistical tests, explore the various dimensions of the phenomenon, engaged with relevant literature. It is a sign of fairly unusual independence that a student undertakes to explore such a complex and difficult topic and does so largely with minimal help from the supervisor (as was the case here). Again, I commend the ambition and craft with which especially the historical and conceptual part have been prepared.

Now to my critical remarks:

2) An important problem of the thesis is its only limited link to any relevant IR debates. It is a stand-alone piece exploring micro-mechanisms of norms (adoption, contestation,...) and individual behaviour. The links to IR as a discipline are in the introduction (really one paragraph), then on p. 30 shortly, and then quite robustly in the theory framework, across a number of pages where the author draws on Wendt. I wish the author made a much more systematic attempt to link to the literature on norms in IR (eg diffusion of norms, socialization, individual level attitudes and normative acceptability of norm violation, etc.). I do reckon the author was really after the most micro-mechanisms, without necessarily an interest e.g. in transnational diffusion, but still the link to IR is particularly weak here. Some justice should have been done to theories and literatures from critical scholarship which substantively engage with similar highly contentious normative agenda (post-colonial theory, critical race theory, etc.). I understand that given the positivist framework of the author, this was not the literature she found useful to engage with, but some robust explicit acknowledgment of that would have helped.

3) The adoption of the state-level systemic theorizing by Wendt does not seem particularly helpful here in this micro-level framework.

4) The major weakness of the thesis is that the proposed study – the actual implementation of the planned survey experiment on a nationally representative sample of citizens (the plan was N>300) was not carried out. I understand the financial constraints that have probably led to that, as the author writes. But that should have been anticipated. I appreciate the three pilot studies that have been carried out, however. Already they represent a contribution, albeit limited. But the thesis really becomes interesting – in my view – when it gets to the empirical part. And that is necessarily only limited, given that the main study was not carried out.

5) The presentation of the results from the pilot studies is weak. Compared to the highly organized, structured, well-crafted and well-written text especially in the historical part and the introduction, the somewhat hasty and way to short presentation of the empirical results is disappointing.

Minor criteria:

The thesis is very well-written and clear for the most part (the main exception being the last, empirical part, sadly the only that promised to deliver the most interesting results). Some formal issues arose – a pdf file without the author's name was apparently uploaded in SIS. This should be rectified. Otherwise, the thesis satisfies all other formal criteria.

Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Political Studies / Smetanovo nabrezi 6, 110 01 Prague 1, Czech Republic, info@fsv.cuni.cz, tel: +420 222 112 111

www.fsv.cuni.cz

Assessment of plagiarism:

There are no signs of plagiarism.

Overall evaluation:

The thesis has a major merit in a highly original topic selection, the courage of the author to undertake a conceptually and empirically complex analysis of multi-faceted and controversial topic. For the most part, it is also very well written. On the other hand, a prominent weakness is in the failure to deliver the main empirical survey-experimental analysis. Another weakness is in a weak and quite selective connection to IR literature.

Suggested grade: C/B

Signature: