

BACHELOR'S THESIS EXAMINER REPORT
PPE – Bachelor's in Politics, Philosophy and Economics
Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Thesis title:	Populism in the Slovak Republic and its Threats
Student's name:	Samuel Blecharž
Referee's name:	Jakub Franěk

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Contribution and argument (quality of research and analysis, originality)	50	27
	Research question (definition of objectives, plausibility of hypotheses)	15	13
	Theoretical framework (methods relevant to the research question)	15	10
<i>Total</i>		80	50
Minor Criteria			
	Sources, literature	10	7
	Presentation (language, style, cohesion)	5	3
	Manuscript form (structure, logical coherence, layout, tables, figures)	5	3
<i>Total</i>		20	13
TOTAL		100	63

Plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score:

[NB:] If the plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score is above 15%, the reviewer has to include his/her assessment of the originality of the reviewed thesis in his/her review.

Reviewer's commentary according to the above criteria (min. 1800 characters including spaces when recommending a passing grade, min. 2500 characters including spaces when recommending a failing grade):

The author has chosen an interesting and both theoretically and politically relevant topic for his BA Thesis: an assessment and critical interpretation of the recent rise of political populism in Slovakia with regard to its impact on liberal democracy. The thesis has a pretty straight-forward structure, being divided into two parts where the first one consists of a theoretical overview of populism (and its relation to representative liberal democracy), while the second part is more empirically oriented, dealing with the recent resurgence of populism in Slovakia.

The author should be commended not only for his choice of a highly relevant topic, but also for the genuine concern he feels for the fate of his country as well as the time and energy he invested into studying relevant literature on populism.

Unfortunately, the resulting thesis is not entirely persuasive since it suffers from a number of shortcomings. While a brief look at the table of contents gives the reader an impression of a well-structured BA Thesis, a closer reading of the actual body of the thesis leads to a rather different impression. See for instance Chapter 2 entitled “Literature Review”, which encompasses less than two pages and its content does not really provide the reader with the promised literature review. In reality, the first five out of seven chapters (including the Introduction and the Conclusion) are devoted to the theoretical framework, as well as a brief (and to some extent misleading) discussion of the methods employed in the research.

The theoretical part consists largely of synopses of the reviewed texts about political populism and its relation to representative democracy and/or liberalism. The author does not even attempt to come up with some synthesis of the studied material. Apart from that, the reader is on more than on one occasion forced to wonder how the discussed subject-matter is related to the actual topic of the thesis. (See e.g. the first two paragraphs of subchapter 5.3 devoted to the Know Nothing Party in 19th century US and the French Boulanist movement of late 19th century.)

The empirical part, which should logically form the focal point of the thesis, is unexpectedly very short, comprising of a single chapter that covers some twelve pages. More importantly, the author in this section does not follow the plan outlined in the Introduction since Chapter 6 does not contain the promised analysis of the party manifestos. Instead, it consists largely of a discussion of various corruption scandals, which attest to a low degree of political culture in Slovakia rather than to the populist nature of its governing parties, as well as to concrete policies aimed to concentrate the power in the hands of the executive branch.

Despite of the critical points outlined above, I am convinced that the reviewed thesis meets all the required criteria and can be recommended for defence.

Proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F): D

Suggested questions for the defence are:

I (do not) recommend the thesis for final defence.

Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	A	= outstanding (high honor)
81 – 90	B	= superior (honor)
71 – 80	C	= good
61 – 70	D	= satisfactory
51 – 60	E	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	F	= failing. The thesis is not recommended for defence.