

Evaluation of Master's Thesis

Luciana Carolina Serrano Parra: *Electoral Performance of the Radical Right in Central Europe*

Luciana Parra's MA thesis focuses on the electoral performance of radical right parties in Central Europe primarily in the past two decades. She attempts to analyze several important issues related to functioning, electoral performance, ideology and party politics position of radical right in CEE. The author used comprehensive literature, citing relevant and major work by classic and contemporary political science authors. The whole work is also in my opinion well structured. I would like to say that the author obviously spent a lot of time and effort invested in the preparation of the thesis under evaluation. We can see this effort made in the theoretical section, which is unusually long for this kind of work and shows signs of great interest and a good deal of understanding of her subject. I also evaluate very positively the discussion of radical right parties' electoral performance in CEE, as well as the overall description of both the Czech and Hungarian cases with their numerous characteristics.

The theoretical part is comprehensive and well structured, but it is too long and sometimes shows signs of an attempt to write about every theory on the subject in the literature. The author should have focused instead on the theoretical perspectives that are actually *utilized* in her thesis. Even though using theories of issue framing and supply-demand argument is legitimate, the reader is at first confused *how* it will be utilized in the thesis' analytical section. Primarily, the linkage between issue framing, behavior of political parties in the society and electoral performance is not clear. Only later, in the theory section, the author specifically links electoral performance and the success of radical right parties to their prevalent and effective use of social media. The author claims that issue framing „will provide our work a way of approaching the topic of the electoral performance of the radical right in or selected cases“ (p. 22–23). This connection is logical and potentially fruitful for empirical testing, however, later in the empirical part is not really that substantially analyzed, as it would seem from the author's initial theoretical standpoint.

Thus, it is not clear, whether the main goal of the thesis is to evaluate electoral performance of the two radical right parties in Hungary and Czech Republic or analyze the possibilities and practices of issue framing used by those political parties. The scope of the thesis' goals is thus unnecessarily broad, which could the author avoid by focusing on particular aspects of functioning of the radical right parties in CEE, such as the concept of issue ownership

(being salient and could tell us really some crucial analytic information). Therefore claiming that „we will present qualitative data linked with the theories of issue ownership and framing, that take account in the electoral performance of the selected parties“, but how this connection is operationalized is not explicitly stated.

Overall, I deem that the theoretical sections is sound and founded, however, suffers from unnecessarily broad scope and sometime opaqueness. Take for example the case of the second research question. So far, very few has been said in the thesis about the relation of mainstream parties and radical right parties even though later this topic becomes salient, as for example in the case of the quite benign relation between SPD and ANO 2011. Furthermore, it also leaves aside the issue of the concept of *contemporary* mainstream parties, which might be changing, i. e. are Lega Nord, or SNS in Slovakia mainstream parties?). In short, what seems to be lacking is clear hypothetical statement about electoral performance of radical right parties, which would make the whole methodology much more precise.

There are also several other issues as well. I lack radical right constant criticism of the entrance of LGBT issues into the political discourse mainstream in dealing with radical right ideology. What is even more surprising is the absence of strong anti-Islam rhetoric on the side of radical right (see SPD), which is tightly connected with instrumentalisation of potential links migration to Islamic terrorism in Europe (except p. 53 - 54). Last but not least, we are missing some more substantial discussion of the radical right political parties' use of social media, which was supposed to be one of the cornerstones of author's analysis (that is quite surprising , to say the very least). Although the author amassed quite tremendous amount of information, the conclusion is very short, despite her research questions and general goals were being broad in the beginning.

Definitely, the most negative aspect of the reviewed thesis is the level of English writing. I fully understand that it is very difficult to execute good and readable academic writing in your second language at this level, but this thesis could simply achieve much higher level of readability and clarity just if somebody else would have reviewed it. There are many grammatical and stylistic mistakes, typos etc. What is the worst is the authors' inability to construct a viable compound/complex sentences, which makes the whole work very hard to read and follow at times.

Even though I am not fully convinced that the author was able fully succeed in working according to her research design (which itself is partly at fault), on the other hand there has been

a lot of work put into this thesis, together with authors' significant knowledge in the theory and practice of radical right in CEE. Therefore, I recommend Miss Parra's MA thesis to be submitted to the thesis defense.

In Hradec Králové 24. 8. 2019

Mgr. Stanislav Myšička, Ph. D.