

Opponent's assessment

Name: Democratic solidarity within the foreign policy of the Czech Republic. The case of the Venezuelan political crisis 2017-2022

Author: Andrés Pernía López

The topic of presented thesis is well justified pointing to the absence of studies focused on Czech foreign policy to non-European regions, the fact that seems of special importance considering the goal of the theses – the study of motivations behind the Czech Republic's foreign policy.

The work has also adequate theoretical foundation based on the concept of democratic solidarity. The author proved to be well-oriented in the theoretical literature in this thematic field and did not forget to present also the limits and main critics of introduced concepts. Theoretical part is based on relevant and sufficient sources. Democratic solidarity concept is well conceptualized and its operationalization is sufficient for further analysis when the author presents concrete expressions of democratic solidarity policy including coercive measures. The only confusion seems to be in the degrees of intensity when the third degree (strong approach) is hardly distinguishable from the democratic promotion concept. That would be better clarified.

With respect to the goals of the theses these are ambitious and verifiable at the same time. My only reproach is directed to the main „hypothesis“ presented in the introduction that in fact is not hypothesis in a strict and original sense because does not include the relationship between two variables! It more fits the term premise. This little mistake, at first, causes methodological confusion because from this hypothesis perspective does not seem that the work is going to strive for causal inference. Nevertheless, later on, the reader finds out that the author really conduct a causal investigation and the selection of the method – process tracing – is thus adequate. I would recommend to reformulate the main hypothesis to include causal relationship and not to indicate only application of the concept. The same is truth with respect to the „hypothesis“ in the part of smoking gun test.

Regarding the analysis I really like that the author considers not only official documents but also other levels of foreign policy – technical and practical, meaning concrete action and measures and by this evades the danger of bias because what is on paper does not necessarily translate itself into the action.

The proceedings of analytical part are logical, transparent and systematic when the author firstly identifies the actions of Czech foreign policy with respect to Venezuelan political crisis and then proceeds to the application of democratic solidarity concept. There is clear and well elaborated interconnection between theoretical and analytical parts and the interpretation of the data by the author is theoretically grounded!

What I really appreciate in the analysis is the author's capability to refute alternative and at the first glance convincing hypothesis in the process tracing part. The author provide us with sophisticated argumation in this respect.

I would have one recommendation for the the hoop test part where would be good as an additional evidence put the data about commercial and economic relations between the two states, meaning some numbers in comparative perspective. The authors evidence is too general referring to low economic and geopolitical connection and no historical conection but without concrete data, numbers and examples.

Overall, the work has solid theoretical and methodological foundation, analysis is based on sufficient amount of data and is well elaborated.

I recommend it to the defense

In Vrchlábí 17/8/2023

Barbora Vališková