

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE
Fakulta sociálních věd
Institut mezinárodních studií

PROTOKOL O HODNOCENÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE
(Posudek oponenta)

Práci předložil(a) student(ka): Evelína Beníšková

Název práce: Sebe prezentace Ruska v pořadu Večer s Vladimírem Solovjovem na příkladu ústupu z Chersonu / Russia's self-presentation on Evening with Vladimir Solovyov on the example of the Kherson retreat

Oponoval (u externích oponentů uveďte též adresu a funkci v rámci instituce): Valeriya Korablyova, Ph.D.

1. **OBSAH A CÍL PRÁCE** (stručná informace o práci, formulace cíle): The thesis exposes the narratives delivered at one of the most popular propagandist TV shows on Russian television (Evening with Vladimir Solovyov) at one of the weakest points for Russia in the ongoing war (Russian retreat from Kherson), while focusing on the rhetorical ways how Russia and the West are discursively constructed in opposition to one another. The structure is well balanced between three parts: contextualization (incl. theoretical framework), narration (re-telling the content of the TV shows), and analysis.

2. **VĚCNÉ ZPRACOVÁNÍ** (náročnost, tvůrčí přístup, argumentace, logická struktura, teoretické a metodologické ukotvení, práce s prameny a literaturou, vhodnost příloh apod.):

I appreciate the topic, chosen by the author, her boldness in tackling the material, for many reasons under-analysed in the existing scholarly literature, and grounding the work on the empirical data and the author's own interpretations of it. The discourse analysis is well-balanced in terms of the summary and interpretive parts. Moreover, the presented digest of the main building blocks of Russian propaganda, exemplified in the analysed episodes of the show, allows broader interpretations beyond the Russia - West dichotomy. I would recommend engaging – along with Lasswell – with more recent conceptualizations of Russian discursive strategies (e.g. Shekhovtsov) to bring in agenda-setting, silencing, and emotional mobilization. It would be fruitful to compare the “classical” century-old propagandist strategies built on circulating certain narratives with the “postmodernist” ones, looser and hardly detectable, when the question of what is being said must be complemented with who gets to talk, where it directs our thinking (regardless of our predispositions), and how it makes us feel. The author has good research instincts: bringing in structuralism that grew out of the analysis of fairytales and magical thinking of so-called “primitive” people is capable of explaining how Kremlin narratives attempt to digress people to this magical thinking, which is simplified, irrational, and teleological, justifying all the wrongs by a sacred mission. Developing the topic forward – should the author decide so – it would be great to engage with poststructuralism proper to further deconstruct Russian narratives (machine-assisted coding could be of use, as well as insights from psychoanalysis). The overall structure – not only the content! – of every episode of the talk show is illustrative: a bigger picture with a moral twist, usually articulated by the host, Vladimir Solovyov; justification and blame-shifting to the West; no facts from the battlefield but rather from the economic domain (“roads are built”) to add a positive note. The moral claims of the speakers are justified by their road trips to Donbas as allegedly trustworthy first-hand knowledge.

3. **FORMÁLNÍ A JAZYKOVÉ ZPRACOVÁNÍ** (jazykový projev, správnost citace a odkazů na literaturu, grafická úprava, formální náležitosti práce apod.):

The thesis is written in a clear transparent manner, explaining the contexts to the extent that it is accessible to a broader readership. Close watching of the episodes of the talk show despite the existing restrictions and language limitations presents a robust research approach. Several tables in the conclusion that summarize the author's findings graphically are a good solution, too.

4. **KONTROLA ORIGINALITY TEXTU**

The text was machine-tested for plagiarism; no problem detected.

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5. STRUČNÝ KOMENTÁŘ HODNOTITELE (celkový dojem z bakalářské práce, silné a slabé stránky, originalita myšlenek, naplnění cíle apod.):

It is a decent work that fulfils all the criteria for BA theses. Its main strengths are twofold: clearly defined empirical and theoretical base, and the main focus on primary data. At the same time, the connection between the topic and the chosen empirical material should be better justified: the four episodes at the moment of the Russian retreat from Kherson are geared towards moral justifications of this perceived failure and mitigation of rising tensions in Russian society. Therefore, it is rather about changing the self-representation of Russia in a broadening context where the collective West and China are increasingly more important than the alleged Nazi junta in Kyiv. For future development of the topic, I suggest two further refinements. 1) Profiling and comparing the target audience of Solovyov's show with other clusters of the audience ("militarised war-hawks" watching 'voenkors' (military correspondents) on YouTube; and "pragmatic", "entrepreneurial" upper middle class, targeted by different content). 2) Along with the confrontational binary logic of Us vs Them, Russian propaganda works with "Russia" and "the West" as *floating signifiers* with flexible content. For the Czech context, it is crucial to track how the Czech Republic is situationally constructed as insider/outsider of both entities. The self-representation of Russia is far from monolithic too: its regions are consistently sidelined, and its internal dissenters are presented as national traitors. Using machine-assisted analysis with a bigger scope of codes could provide interesting results.

6. OTÁZKY A PŘIPOMÍNKY DOPORUČENÉ K BLIŽŠÍMU VYSVĚTLENÍ PŘI OBHAJOBĚ (jedna až tři):

1. How would you summarize the self-presentation of Russia in the analysed content, apart from being "anti-West"? Does it have a positive component? Does it expose internal regional and social diversity?
2. Have you noticed the EU/Europe mentioned and any differentiation in its position from the USA, or are they lumped together as the collective West? You define in the beginning the West as unified around European values and the democratic model (p. 10) – but in the analysed speeches it is mostly about NATO and the USA rather than anything else.
3. I noticed in the analysed speeches quite a few projections (in the psychological sense) when Russian actions/strategies are ascribed to Ukraine and the West, and vice versa. Does such presentation of true facts ascribed to wrong actors still fit into grey propaganda, or do we need other concepts to engage more with psychology?

7. DOPORUČENÍ / NEDOPORUČENÍ K OBHAJOBĚ A NAVRHOVANÁ ZNÁMKKA

(A-F): Doporučuji. The text deserves a B grade.

Datum: 30. 5. 2024

Podpis:



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.