

PUBLIC LECTURE EVALUATION

Masaryk University

Faculty	Faculty of Social Studies
Procedure field	Political Science
Applicant	doc. PhDr. Věra Stojarová, Ph.D.
Lecture date	15 th November 2024, 12:00
Lecture topic	Democratic backsliding in the Balkans – moving towards EU membership and away from liberal democracy
Persons present (number)	26
Designated evaluators (board members)	prof. JUDr. PhDr. Miroslav Mareš, Ph.D. prof. PhDr. Jan Holzer, Ph.D. prof. Mgr. Oldřich Bureš, Ph.D., M.A.

Věra Stojarová (the candidate) introduced the topic and structure of her lecture. It was divided into four main parts: theoretical considerations, an overview of the state of democracy in the Western Balkan states, elections, media, civil society and access to resources, and concluding remarks. She discussed categories of transitions and political regimes. She argued that illiberal politics is a set of policies that extend an electoral advantage for governing parties to remain in power indefinitely. The next part was dedicated to democratic indexes. Then candidate systematically and precisely analyzed the situation in individual countries – Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania, and Kosovo. The comparative approach included free and fair elections, media, judicial independence, privileged access to public resources, and civic society. Candidate presented as the result of her research a concept called “travesty democracy,” based on factors of state institutions disproportionately deployed by the incumbents, the judiciary in favor of the incumbents, universities, and other independent institutions under pressure, etc., and generally the state capture. She explained different patterns of weakness and stated that structural deficiencies centered around a strong executive, weak checks and balances, and institutionalized informality are exploited by political parties to tilt the electoral playing field. She was able to identify fertile grounds for illiberal practices. The board evaluates these findings as essential contribution to comparative political science knowledge on Western Balkan area.

The discussion after the lecture focused on various topics, such as irregularity in voting cycles, the state-of-the-art scientific debate about de-democratization in the Western Balkans, transnationalism, actors of changes, development of civil society, category of stability related to democracy in the researched area. All questions were answered, and the discussion was very fruitful.

Věra Stojarová is a researcher and lecturer with long-term scholarly and educational experience, and this fact was demonstrated in her lecture. Her well-structured presentation, topical issues, and reasoned arguments characterized her performance. The board highly

appreciates the innovative inclusion of findings from Stojarová's field research in the Western Balkans in the presentation. All questions were answered based on deep and broad knowledge. The rich empirical picture was interconnected with valuable theoretical analysis. In sum, Věra Stojarová is an excellent scholar, and her pedagogic skills achieve the highest academic standards.

Conclusion

The lecture delivered by Věra Stojarová, entitled *Democratic backsliding in the Balkans: moving towards EU membership and away from liberal democracy* and delivered as part of the professor appointment procedure, **demonstrated** sufficient scholarly qualifications and pedagogical capabilities expected of applicants participating in the professor appointment procedure in the field of Political Science.

Date: 15th November 2024

prof. JUDr. PhDr. Miroslav Mareš, Ph.D.

prof. PhDr. Jan Holzer, Ph.D.

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