

REVIEW

of the dissertation of Associate Professor Dr. **Tatiana Trifonova Tomova**, Sofia University,
on the topic “*The Bulgarian path in social policy (History of the transition that does not end)*”
for awarding the **scientific degree “Doctor of Science”**
in professional field **3.3. “Political Science”** (Political Science - Public and Social Policies)

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I. General notes

What makes a strong and lasting impression from the very beginning to the very end is: high quality. This research creates huge expectations. It is very clear that the text is a material already taught - this gives it rhythm and courage. It is oversaturated with ideas and conclusions. The work is directly interdisciplinary and thus managerial - it is rooted in history, economics, political economy, sociology and administrative science. Tomova demonstrates a very broad general professional culture in all these fields - especially in political science, sociology and political economy. But she also demonstrates a broad special culture in public and social policy. This is evident in the perfect knowledge of literature, theories and research both at home and abroad, the leading authors are quoted, among many others. She juggles equally with all the main authors in this kaleidoscope of theoretical fields - Anthony Giddens, Hayek, Polanyi, Sabatier, Buchanan and Tullock, Weimer and Vining, March and Olson, and so on. Labor has a very heavy scientific apparatus. The study includes historical research spanning more than a few centuries ago from the Tudors in England and Bismarck in Germany, as well as geographical horizons reaching several continents, Europe, Latin and North America for sure. Tomova knows the jargon very well and obviously trusts it after using it freely and creatively.

The dissertation has three voluminous chapters. Each has a different focus. In practice, the result is three books collected in one dissertation - three parts, which are sufficiently comprehensive in three different topics: Social policy as public policy on the one hand and its connection with modern capitalism on the other;

Models of social policy and their diffusion, convergence and divergence; Bulgarian social policy. The text is full both with author's ideas and those of authors in several directions. In fact, three dissertations can be written from this work. However, to prepare a dissertation covering all issues is a difficult task. And since it has definitely succeeded in this direction, I claim that it has reached the phase of maximum complexity; simplification will inevitably follow in the author's future development. The step in this direction is made here. Certainly after this work - a dissertation or a book - the attitude towards something that is so detailed in a text will change.

From a substantive point of view, the work reveals the different philosophies of state intervention in the regulation of social relations and seeks the optimal among them. It is found in the instrumental, balanced technocratic version of social policy. The work is generally a proof that modern social policy must have a consistent existence in the bosom of modern capitalism in the form of no more than an instrument in the hands of political power and that in this respect Bulgarian social policy faces a need for significant change to systemic and adequate content. Social policy is an instrument for balancing capitalism against the emerging economic, social and political problems in Bulgaria.

At the same time, however, the boundary separating social policy from economic efficiency and social justice is respected, which is a delicate surgical act with a successful completion. Social policy is not able to change the socio-political system and this is not its purpose.

In terms of relations with politics, the main point is the dramatic attempt to emancipate social policy from ideologies, as it is viewed technocratically as a set of tools available to state power. The result is a paradox: the escape from ideology only leads to an ideological coloring of the analysis. Things lead to state macro-regulation through social policy, not policy due to social conflicts. The left-wing orientation stems from Carl Polanyi's idea of market reciprocity and State, used as the main argument for the emancipation of social policy from left-wing ideology, that it is not left-wing government that imposes the interests of "labor" as universal but social groups because of the principles of a democratic community. Social policy is presented almost as a market phenomenon, as it complements and supports it. From an instrument for achieving social cohesion by overcoming social conflict, social policy becomes an instrument for managing social and economic processes, an incentive for economic development. Clear of ambiguity is the important link between the welfare state and social policy - the welfare state reflects values of what social policy should be: all this is elevated to the rank of a basic thesis.

Yet the work remains in the territory of left-wing ideology in a delicate way: Keynes avoids the argument of class conflict and replaces it with a technocratic outcome to something like ideological neutrality. Tomova has a clear sympathy for the welfare state in my opinion. Even more - to social equality. But both the welfare state and social equality are very contradictory ideas with a very narrowed social existence at the expense of extended theoretical existence. While Tomova seeks a technocratic solution, she is full of faith in influential theories, but she herself admits that social policy is too fragile and dangerous, slippery territory, moreover, that there is no unanimity in it.

I find the discrepancy on the main topic of social policies with the Balkan Institute for Labor and Social Policy and Ivan Neykov, who are authorities in our country, indicative. This difference is highlighted by Tomova as a major theoretical specialist on the subject. Tomova is a scientist. Therefore, the difference between it and the number of Bulgarian public policy specialists is that it mainly approaches the topic deductively, from the standpoint of a theoretical framework, which it builds in advance, while they remain practitioners of inductive analysis. This makes Tomova a special value at the national level.

The theme is topical: as there is an asymmetric debate in favor of denying social policy in favor of the market through liberal arguments, this leads to a narrow assumption of social policy as compensation for extreme cases. Such a thesis should be refuted, which Tomova does.

CONCLUSION: The dissertation is based on a serious scientific apparatus. The work is an in-depth original creative analysis on a current topic. The dissertation combines theoretical and practical analysis and reaches convincing conclusions.

II. Notes on the procedure

From a formal point of view, the research presented fulfills all quantitative (over 300 standard pages) and qualitative criteria for the dissertation (structure, thesis, equal theoretical and empirical analysis). The theses, hypotheses, goals and methods of the analysis are strictly outlined. The scientific apparatus of over 200 titles in English and Bulgarian (approximately equally) is complete and used effectively without “hollow volumes” in the dissertation research. The text of the abstract fully presents the content and ideas in the dissertation. The scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation research are in sufficient volume and are written after the dates of the previous procedures in the scientific career of the dissertation or are unrelated to their subject matter. All author's publications listed

for the procedure are scientific, and the respective publishing houses are prestigious according to the formal requirements. I find the reference to the contributions in the dissertation to be accurate and in line with the analytical efforts. The procedure until the last moment of the defense of the dissertation is strictly followed.

The elements of the dissertation research are clearly exposed:

Goal - Tomova proves something original - that social policy is neither more nor less than an instrument of political power. This goal of the work in itself gives rise to a system of other goals. The main one is based on the understanding that social policy is obviously problematic and opportunities for its change should be sought - this is a leading idea in the analysis. This in-depth goal is multi-layered: separation from the ideology of social policy and analysis of existing practices. The escape from ideology and politics leads to the idea that an instrumental definition of social policy is needed, which means one thing - social policy as a tool of public governance - all authorities have this toolkit and the only question is whether they use it, not what the ideology is. Thus, policies are not a consequence of politics. Logically, the other leading idea is that there is inevitably a "path dependence" and that the beginning of the road must be analyzed, not the past before it. In other words, the model of social policy in Bulgaria as a result of the transformation in the 1990s should be studied. Hence the third goal, which is the inevitable reduction of liberal hatred towards social policy, perceived as a consequence of left-wing ideology at the expense of something original that Tomova offers - a technocratic understanding of its non-ideological, instrumental nature, i.e. against the ideology that social policy is a means of securing "social rights"; proving the origin of social policy not in ideology, but in its making, whence the transformations in social policy are only a consequence of the dependence on the path. It follows that, despite the diffusion of models, instrumentality as well as dependence on the path make it impossible for any Western ideal model (if such actually exists as a fully constructed rather than a set of elements) to be automatically perceived as a standard for direct perception. Therefore, everything is derived from the path dependence of the processes in the 90s - social policies are modeled by governments with different colors of the same tools, according to Tomova, and the question is to make policies, not what they are, because they are neither left nor right. "Goals are formulated in the policy process and even when they are turned into institutions, they can be reformulated if sufficient support is created for this" - this is the main thesis.

Object - the object of the final (essential) analysis is the transition era in which the evolving Bulgarian model of politics aroused. Not the quality of democracy, but the transition to it is a major object in this way, i.e. the logic of the model and the

possibilities for its change (for the better) and the deadlocks in which this change falls.

The subject of the research is the model of social policy, which in itself leads to contributions as it is about building a model.

Thesis: The final thesis is that the social policy in Bulgaria is unbalanced, with the predominant “protective function” at a low level of individual needs - which leads to dissatisfaction and obvious injustice. It cannot cultivate as a whole due to the presence of mainly political obstacles.

Method: It stems from the thesis that who formulates social policy (process) is complemented in a system of what is undertaken (content). Adopting an instrumental approach to defining policies in the hands of political power makes it possible to compare many different practices because they do the same job. A third chapter could add a comparative method, which is quite lacking.

Result: It is the achieved coherent author's theory of public policies between politics and public administration. It gravitates primarily in the field of rational “technocratic” analysis and is therefore a normative prescriptive theory of social governance. Moreover, the thesis about the formulation of policies differs from the thesis that they are developed, etc. It is very valuable to separate the process from the content of policies - its use and definition in itself is a significant contribution. The so-called “Policy paradigm” (Hall). Social policy can be left-wing, but also right-wing - its independence from ideology is a meaningfully and logically presented thesis. Social cohesion can be the result of social policy by influencing the social structure of society - such is the convincingly proven final thesis.

CONCLUSION: The purpose, the object, the subject, the thesis, the method and the results of the dissertation research of Assoc. Prof. Tomova are logically and clearly formulated.

III. Contributions

I find the self-assessment of the contributions to be correct, accurate and comprehensive. I agree with the following main contributions:

- that the policy process is random and unpredictable;
- that the process and content of policies differ;
- that it is appropriate to introduce an instrumental approach to policies, according to which they do not have a predetermined goal, but can be used to achieve certain impacts through which collective goals are achieved;
- that there are territorial and temporal models of social policy;

- that the market model of social policy is the result of the global spread of the ideas of globalization, neo-liberalism and the new public management;
- that from the beginning of the transition a path begins that limits the next policy changes.

I accept as an achievement the “new model” of social policy, introduced in the late 1990s, in which convergent trends are placed predominantly over divergent trends.

I find many leading these to be perfectly proven:

The path in Bulgarian social policy starts from the transition, not from the held socialism.

- A problem is the fact that the public debate is about tools, even techniques for their application, without agreeing on the goals.

- The model of social policy in our country, which on paper seems applicable and well-founded, has become a model that does not create economic advantages; is highly costly, does not contribute to European integration and the creation of a common market, and also creates public attitudes that divide rather than unite.

- The Bulgarian model of social policy does not meet the current challenges and emerging risks. (However, this is a problem of all existing models of social policy.)

- The return of the state to social policy is a consequence of the impossibility of the market model to exist in the conditions of insufficiently successful economy.

- The model does not work as intended. Changes in it begin immediately after its introduction. The main line in reforming the original model is related to increasing the role of the state.

- The main characteristics and indicators of the market model of social policy in Table. 10. are very well done in terms of features and indicators.

- It has been proven that the biggest problem of the market model of social policy in our country is that it expands social inequality, creates a relatively large group of poor, reduces the reach of the middle classes and excludes a significant part of citizens from normal economic and social reproduction.

- The thesis has been raised that the Bulgarian social policy should not contradict and not correspond to the European social model.

- A very good finding is the basis of the analysis on Douglas North, according to which the initial choice of institutional design has a lasting impact on economic and political performance and proves that these effects in politics are even stronger than those in economics.

In general, in the dissertation there is often a successful and important historical analysis, rhythmically appearing in the analysis. In addition, our and Western theories are well and meaningfully mixed. The main advantage of the work is the balance between deductive and inductive approach in building a model of the studied phenomena in the current situation in our country.

CONCLUSION: Dr. Tomova has successfully systematized the theoretical basis of public policies and social policy in particular, the leading historical cases of social policy formation, the Bulgarian practice in this direction for the entire period of transition after 1989.

IV. Critical remarks and questions

Despite the serious contributions as a result of the extremely in-depth analysis, in my opinion, the dissertation research reveals some problematic points that could be overcome.

In the first place, the division between public policy and social policy remains unclear, as if there is a hesitation for social policy to intervene in all sectors. In this regard, Dr. Tomova knows that such a trend is dangerous. However, no clear distinction has been made, although this is very significant. Social policy is just one type of public policy.

Secondly, the question arises, what is the difference between social order and social policy, if it is a state regulation of a higher level - is it (social policy) an instrument for achieving public order? This would be an undesirable and harmful development and the path of analysis in this direction should be clearly blocked by arguments.

Third, according to Tomova, the path and “lock-in” of social policy is supported by political strategies for “finding fault”. She defines such a thesis as her contribution. Guilt has political, moral and sociological dimensions. Not everything in politics is governance. Tomova also argues that political “fault-finding” strategies need to be abandoned and replaced with “community-building” strategies. This is OK, but in the “criminal” (parochial) transition this is unattainable - in Bulgaria several Bulgaria coexist peacefully. How is a community created under the Triple Coalition or Jean Videnov? Is social policy the tool for this? What about a basic argument that doesn't work in any direction? With so many other arguments in the text? The “search for guilt” is objective and inevitable - it is not a problem in itself, but its unresolved. Somewhere the fact of export of capital with suitcases should be recognized: FPB, TSB,... Somewhere it should still be about SIC and VIS. If the

guilt issue had been resolved, things would have worked out by now. This problem cannot be solved. Isn't a pure sample of guilt in the sense of the problem of eliminating the substitution of property rights with all its positive consequences as personal wealth with small equalization supplements through social funds, leaning entirely on the budget - redistribution by the state on all as compensation for the deprivation of rights, is this equality?!

Fourth, the goal-tool difference is perhaps a vulnerable point in the analysis, although Tomova does her best to separate them, but the difference remains conditional. The danger of defining almost all political measures as social has not been completely eliminated, despite Tomova's titanic battle with the use of powerful and numerous arguments. There is no defining argument, not a decisive one. The fact that many authors are beginning to write about the responsibility of the state for the individual does not mean that this line goes beyond the current not very satisfactory state of social policy in most political systems. It should not turn out that social policy is a concept without content because it covers all public policies that are essentially "social". What limits social policy as an intervention - how far is it allowed to invade? What rejects it if it is not, for example, the market?

Fifth, the adopted model of social policy in Bulgaria is formed as a result of convergent factors, but the actual convergence is towards an ideal model that sets the tone for the reforms in the western welfare states, but is nowhere fully realized. What are these convergent factors? To be listed in at least one place. There is always an ideal. The question is how close the approximations to it work. Capitalism in our case is not to blame, but the retreats from it as a result of the management of the processes in the last 30 years by the "culprits".

Sixth, there are too many of the theories mentioned in terms of the needs of general analysis, although they help to demonstrate a professional culture - such as increasing returns or reactive sequences theory, and many others that follow one another without being used further to clarify the "Bulgarian path of social policy". Not everything in a theory must be presented if there is no direct connection with the general line of research. As Dr. Tomova herself mentions, in principle, the whole theory of politics is chaos without unanimity on the conceptual apparatus and what is the backbone of any unified methodological approach, although it has its own jargon and a set of related statements.

Seventh, I find it untrue that there are no successful policies if there are losers. According to Tomova, in order to be successful, policies must compensate for the natural game with zero amount and turn it into a game with a positive amount. Therefore, according to her, the transition policies cannot be defined as successful,

because of the losers and their growing distrust of power. But there are always losers in every policy! The idea of a game with a positive ending as a basis for policy should take this fact into account.

In the eighth place, Tomova claims that the disintegration of the state-socialist regime is a result of the closure of the COMECON, which has led to a complete decline in the Bulgarian economy... I do not think so - the deficit economy collapsed on its own. China has proved it - it has shown where the rotten apple is: this is the social economy. Social equality in the previous socio-political system, called socialism, was not equality, but equalization - equal portions of compensation for each citizen with the maximum degree of deprivation of rights and deprivation of individual opportunities. Inequality is objective, the problems with it are different. Who said that equality or conditions close to it are good? They are as bad as excessive stratification. Objectively, there is no equality and there should not be. There is equality only in the lowlands, and we saw this as an equation as it looked during socialism. Social equality is a concept that must be handled very carefully, it is not a self-evident ideal, but rather a historical chimera, viewed from the pragmatic point of view of management science. Inequality seems more justified. Who has proved that equality is good - in management practice it remains an ideological value and nothing more. Justice is not a reduction of inequality through policy, but a separate policy in support of those affected by a policy.

CONCLUSION: The unjustifiably heavy theoretical charge in relation to the practical purpose of the research and the ideological coloring of the analysis of places despite the aspiration for avoidance can be defined as known problems of the dissertation work.

V. Recommendations

I would like to make only one general recommendation (as a separate direction in the further research work of Dr. Tomova):

Tomova uses motives to ignore the value-cultural context in her analysis of social policy. This is a deficit. There is a lot of political culture in everything studied. Therefore, I recommend that in the future he should keep in mind and even specifically “attack” the cultural context (at least Hofstede at first). This important topic intervenes briefly in p. 80 (when choosing instruments), but it can be done much more intensively, not only as a statement of authority. Moreover, Tomova herself rightly states that “political communities with similar characteristics adopt the same policy instruments and achieve approximately the same results” - political

culture are such value-based ideal and real types, which in itself can and should be used as a basis for analysis. It is not the similarity in the development of countries that groups them in terms of policies. Political cultures are grouped and it depends on who is predominant in a national cultural system. This is more effective than the widely used abstraction “political environment”, which is not what varies significantly - the political environment itself is a variable that depends on the cultural environment. Political culture gives legitimacy to spending and any other decisions. Diffusion or culture?! It is no coincidence that a common European public policy is impossible, since political cultures are so far apart.

VI. Conclusion

Given the indisputable competence of Dr. Tatiana Trifonova Tomova in a specific and poorly researched field, her theoretical and practical expertise in the broad field of dissertation research as a result of two decades of active work, known to both the scientific community and many representatives at all levels of government, the direct importance of the conclusions for the development of administrative theory and practice in our country, the value of the acquired through new concepts, methods, approaches and know-how for other researchers, and the act of contributing to the development of a branch of political science in our country and above all because of the contributions made in the dissertation research, I propose to the esteemed scientific jury to propose the award of the scientific degree “Doctor of Science” in scientific specialty 3.3 Political Science to Associate Professor Dr. Tatiana Trifonova Tomova for her dissertation “Bulgarian Way in social policy (History of the transition that does not end)”.

July 20, 2020

REVIEWER: