

## Review

by Profesor Georgi Mateev Karasimeonov

of the scientific publications of Milen Todorov Lyubenov in a competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in Political Science (Political Science - Political Parties and Party Systems) at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski "

Distinguished members of the scientific jury,

To participate in the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" Milen Lyubenov presented a list of publications on the topic of political parties and party systems - 2 monographs, 3 studies, one of which is co-authored, one chapter of a collective monograph and 5 articles, a total of 11 scientific work.

At the same time, Milen Lyubenov is a long-term lecturer in the Department of Political Science at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski "with a solid authority as a prominent specialist in the field of political parties.

In the field of research, his main theoretical contributions can be distinguished in the following areas.

In his analysis of the evolution of party systems in Europe, Lyubenov argues that, compared to emerging political parties in general, traditional parties in Europe have greater resilience. According to the author, the initially chosen path, based on organizational and value factors, is largely the main reason for their survival and their leading role in political life in the modern world. Dependence on the chosen path plays a key role in the different degrees of institutionalization of Western European party systems and those in post-communist European democracies.

Lyubenov analyzes in depth the reasons for the fragmentation of party systems and the emergence of a number of new parties in Europe over the past twenty years. He concludes that this is due not only to new topics in political discourse and dividing lines, but above all to the expansion of resources through which parties can be created - media, financial resources of an entrepreneur, social networks, digital technologies .

Lyubenov also convincingly substantiates his thesis that electoral competition is one of the reasons for the changes in the positioning of voters on the left-right scale. Then, when a new competitor appears, claiming to accommodate or displace the old actors from the left or right space, the voters who felt threatened change their positioning from the center to the end spectrum.

An important contribution is his study of the value attitudes of Bulgarian citizens regarding the classical dichotomy "left-right" by constructing rocks "Likert", grouped in two categories - socio-economic populism and economic conservatism.

Lyubenov has delved deeply into the study of cleavages and has contributed to the further development of this leading theory in partology. Proceeding from the narrow definition of Meyer and

Bartolini for the three characteristics of the cleavages (clear social division, shared collective identity and organization), Lyubenov distinguishes between two types of cleavages – “cleavage potential” and “real cleavage”. There is “real cleavage” when all three structural elements of the cleavage are present, and when one of them is absent - it is a question of “cleavage potential”.

One of the studies substantiates the thesis that the weak cleavage structure in Bulgaria is one of the main reasons for the low level of institutionalization of the party system. The stronger the influence of the cleavages, the lower the level of electoral instability.

Lyubenov distinguishes between intrasystem and extrasystem volatility, based on the model proposed by Omar Sanchez (2009). Sanchez sees extra-systemic volatility as a change in the vote of voters from large to smaller parties. Lyubenov proposes an adapted version of this model, defining extra-system volatility as the transfer of a vote from parliamentary parties to entirely new parties. In the case of entirely new parties, the subjects that arise as a result of merging or splitting of existing parties are excluded. The increase in extra-systemic electoral volatility is an indicator of the deinstitutionalization of the party system and the lack of systemicity.

A number of his works have been cited in Bulgarian and foreign scientific journals.

As an assistant and later a senior assistant in the Department of Political Science at Sofia University "Kliment Ohridski", I can definitely confirm, as his longtime colleague, closely monitoring his teaching activities, that Milen Lyubenov stands out with solid training and versatile knowledge. Together we prepared scientific meetings and seminars, where we included our students. Many students have shared their respect for him.

I would even add that in the name of presenting himself for the competition for an associate professor with the necessary experience and many publications, he deliberately waited in time, but I think that there is no doubt about his qualities and abilities to take the academic position of "associate professor". “.

Finally, let me add something personal. In my many years of communication with Milen Lyubenov, as researchers and lecturers engaged in common scientific projects, I want to emphasize that he is very ethical as a person and conscientious as a scientist. One of the political scientists who firmly adheres to the objective analysis and does not succumb to conjunctural interests and influences.

In conclusion, I fully support the candidacy of Milen Lyubenov for the academic position of "Associate Professor" of Political Science.

Prof. Georgi Karasimeonov

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