

Рецензия

за дисертационния труд
на Мила Боянова Мошелова

на тема „Влияние на радикално десния политически дискурс върху системните
политически партии в България и Великобритания (2010 г. – 2019 г.)“

за присъждане на образователна и научна степен „Доктор“ в професионално направление
3.3. Политически науки

от проф. д-р Румяна Коларова, катедра „Политология“, Философски факултет, СУ „Св.
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Review

for the dissertation
of Mila Boyanova Moshelova

on the topic "Influence of the radical right-wing political discourse on the main stream political
parties in Bulgaria and Great Britain (2010 - 2019)"

for the awarding of an educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in a professional field 3.3.
Political Sciences

by Prof. Dr. Rumiana Kolarova, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Philosophy, SU "St.
Kliment Ohridski"

Data on the PhD candidate

Mila Moshelova has been a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Political Science at the SU, distinguished by her active involvement in educational and research activities not only and not so much within the doctoral program of the Faculty of Philosophy, but by her participation in summer schools, trainings and specializations in prestigious European academic institutions - European Consortium for Policy Studies, European University Viadrina - Frankfurt am Oder, European University Institute - Florence. I should also point out her active participation in academic research projects, as well as the diverse publications - book reviews, participation in doctoral conferences, articles presented at international forums. The Moshelova has actively participated in the activities of non-governmental organizations - in the preparation of analytical reports and the organization of academic forums. This naturally determines the high academic standards to which the proposed dissertation defence meets.

Significance of the researched problem. Reasonableness of goals and objectives

Over the past 20 years, the topic of the growing role and importance of radical right-wing parties in European democracies has dominated comparative research, and in parallel with the trend of its "massification" and "trivialization", we also observe another trend - to analyze not only the radical right-wing parties themselves as phenomenon, and also the systemic changes that their ubiquity causes. As we observe several generations of radical right-wing parties, the question of the systemic change that their emergence provokes goes beyond the analysis of their party programs, their specific party leadership, mechanisms of electoral mobilization and the theme of their populist nature. The dissertation of Mila Moshelova sets precisely such a research goal, which has its laconic formulation on page 12 of the text - "to trace the effect of radical right-wing parties on three levels - topics and policies, inter-party competition and party system". This objective is a request for a thorough and well-reasoned study, while we must nevertheless bear in mind the known overlap of the second and third of the indicated levels, inasmuch as the party system is by its definition a model of inter-party competition.

We must emphasize the high academic standards in the development of the theoretical model of the study, the brevity in the formulation of the research objective being very appropriately complemented by the detailed definition of the research questions and research tasks. At first glance, the banal topic is examined from a key point of view - the strategies that the system parties apply in relation to the radical right parties, the effect of these strategies on the positions of the system parties and on the party system as a whole. The list of research tasks is very scrupulous and outlines a very extensive research field - an analysis of the literature, in which both different theoretical approaches and time-specific "cycles" are distinguished; analysis of the political discourse of the radical right and its borrowing by systemic parties; analysis of the political programs of the systemic parties (more specifically, the messages and policies generated as a reaction to the radical right); analysis of these processes within two specific case studies - the United Kingdom and Bulgaria.

The structure of the doctoral thesis essentially corresponds to the formulated six research tasks, which were fulfilled through systematic and in-depth studies.

The doctorate thesis offers a complex study of the existing publications in the research field thus outlined, a good knowledge and active use of the existing databases from comparative studies

of party programs and the dynamics of party systems, as well as a study of two case studies - the party system in the United Kingdom and in Bulgaria .

Knowledge of the state of the problem and correspondence of the literature used

Undoubtedly, Mila Moshelova has deep and complex knowledge of the topics and problems she researches, demonstrating freedom in the analysis of both the scientific literature dedicated to the radical right-wing parties and the documents and empirical data concerning the topic. The free handling of both the conceptual apparatus and the existing databases from empirical studies of party systems and party manifestos (programmes) is impressive.

The PhD candidate argues for her model of comparative research - the most distant (different) cases, seeming to be fully aware of its methodological limitations, inasmuch as the presentation is structured as a study of two separate cases. The comparative analysis between Bulgaria and the United Kingdom was conducted adequately - at a higher level of abstraction.

The conceptual apparatus and the databases used are up-to-date, the volume of theoretical sources is impressive - over 140, which are supplemented by over 80 media sources. I am convinced that Moshelova's knowledge of the state of the problem is impressive, and the indicated sources (both the theoretical and analytical models and the results of the cited empirical studies) are fully used in the dissertation work.

Theoretical model, correspondence between the chosen methodology and the set goals and objectives

In her study of the effects of the emergence of radical right-wing parties on systemic parties, Mila Moshelova focuses on those results of the activities of "mainstream" parties that shape public discourse (party programs, election documents, political speeches and speeches, speeches on legislative issues, as well as the positions of the deputies during the respective votes). At the same time, the database used is the result of expert analyzes and evaluations, which are systematically collected and organized. To a large extent, the empirical basis of the dissertation work is provided by the data of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES-Europe), which assesses the positioning of the parties in terms of ideology, policies and international relations in a global plan, but only selected the themes that are characteristic of radical right-wing parties in Europe. It is about the positioning of the parties on the GAL/TAN scale, as well

as on European integration, immigration policies, civil liberties, law and order. As for the analysis of political programs and messages, Moshelova draws on data from the Comparative Manifesto Project,

In fact, Mila Moshelova handles a rich set of empirical data that have varying degrees of relevance to the researched processes. These heterogeneous in nature data are subjected to a secondary analysis correctly aligned with the clearly formulated research tasks, which guarantees the good quality of the research and testifies to the systematic and thorough work of the PhD candidate. It should be emphasized that for the purposes of her dissertation, Moshelova very successfully combines content analysis of program documents with discursive analysis of radical messages.

Evaluation of the dissertation and its contributions

The dissertation has a volume of 194 pages and includes an introduction, five chapters (the first of which is entitled "Overview of the dissertation"), a conclusion, appendices and a bibliography. The bibliography includes over 200 sources, which (as stated) are fully used in the text. In terms of form, structure and content, the dissertation meets the normative requirements for obtaining the scientific and educational degree "doctor", insofar as it shows that "the candidate possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and the ability for independent scientific research", and his work "contains, both scientific and applied scientific results that constitute an original contribution'.

I will single out three main contributions in Mila Moshelova's dissertation work:

- offers a well-argued assessment of the interaction between radical right parties and their 'mainstream' competitors, which is not bounded by the left-right divide.

- traces the effects of the emergence of radical right-wing populist parties in two European democracies - Bulgaria and the United Kingdom, and the comparison is carried out in accordance with the highest standards of comparative political science - on the one hand, the dissertation offers a complex analysis of two separate cases (case studies), which makes it possible to evaluate the effect of the emergence of radical right-wing populist parties in two qualitatively different party systems, in two qualitatively different government configurations, in two qualitatively different political arrangements, political traditions and specific political situations. On the other hand, she correctly manages to derive general regularities valid for these

two "most distant/different" cases, completely avoiding the danger of unargued and superficial analogies between the two cases.

- examines the Bulgarian case through the prism of current comparative studies of the effect of the electoral success of radical right-wing populist parties in other European democracies. Her publications testify that she manages to achieve the opposite – to make sense of the diversity of European processes through the prism of the Bulgarian case study.

Of course, some critical remarks can be made to the proposed dissertation text. I would like to address only one question that I did not receive an answer to in the dissertation text. When the doctoral candidate analyses the dynamics in the positions of the Bulgarian parties on the topics listed above (analysed using the tools of the Comparative Manifesto Project), the DPS is systematically absent. This party can only be found in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES-Europe) summary.

Dissertation impacts on the external environment.

Mila Moshelova's research is essentially and primarily a secondary analysis of both academic publications proposing theoretical models and the results of the main empirical studies of the dynamics in inter-party competition and its effects on party programs, strategies and concrete actions. It places Bulgaria in the context of pan-European processes, representing an important step towards overcoming existing provincialism in some academic studies and especially popular political analyzes of the Bulgarian party system.

CONCLUSION

Bearing in mind the importance of the topic, the research work carried out on the dissertation work, the originality of the main research results and the scientific contributions of the work submitted for defence, I will vote "for" with conviction that **Mila Boyanova Moshelova** be awarded the educational and scientific degree "DOCTOR".

Sofia, 25.10.2022

Prof. Dr. Romyana Kolarova