

## **R E V I E W**

by Prof. Mumun Tahirov PhD on the dissertation entitled  
**THE PRESIDENTIAL INSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
BULGARIA 1992 - 2017 (problems and perspectives)**

by Ani Dimitrova, a PhD candidate in section “Social Theories, Strategies and Prognoses” with the Philosophy and Sociology Institute of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The dissertation has been presented for public defense for awarding the educational and scientific degree PhD in professional field 2.3 Philosophy

### **1. Outlining the problem. Relevance and significance**

The form of state governance is an element of the state determining the system of organization of the higher state bodies, the order of their formation, terms of activity and competence, the order of interaction of these bodies with each other and with the population, as well as the degree of public participation in their formation. The criteria for the form of governance are the nature of the higher governmental bodies and the relationships between them. According to Art. 1, para. 1 of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria of 1991 Bulgaria is a republic with a parliamentary governance. One of the hallmarks of a republican form of government is that the head of state is the president who exercises his power on behalf of the people.

Ani Dimitrova’s dissertation “The Presidential Institution of the Republic of Bulgaria 1992 - 2017 (problems and perspectives) is devoted to this issue. The first impression of the work is that it has an interdisciplinary character and is the subject of research in cultural and social anthropology, philosophy, ethnology, ethnography, social psychology, psychoanalysis and other scientific fields dealing

with the form of governance, the state system and political regimes that characterize the type of state.

I do not intend to elaborate on the content of each chapter, but I must point out that the dissertation student has been able to find the particular, unique and distinctive in the chosen issues, the focal point around which to build and structure her work, which is tailored to the logical interconnectedness and interdependence of the issues under consideration. The main text of the dissertation is distributed relatively evenly among five chapters, sections and subsections, with conclusions drawn after each chapter, preceded by an introduction and respectively conclusions, appendices and bibliography as a final touch. The total volume of the dissertation is 366 standard pages, incl. main text – 286 pages. The list of references contains sources mainly in Bulgarian, English, French and Russian.

The relevance of the topic offered by Ani Dimitrova is more than indisputable and evident in today's turbulent and contentious, and in many ways even unpredictable, socio-historical times. In this context, the dissertation is a complete, timely, useful and conscientious study of the philosophy of the Presidential Institution in the Bulgarian state-legal tradition, based on the general concepts of the philosophy of power. Its importance is growing in view of the constant discussion in the Bulgarian society about the role and position of the President, as well as the current relations between the President and the ones in power.

The topic is also relevant because of the actions by which each of the presidents so far has consolidated the powers conferred on him by the constitution. As the doctoral student points out, since the establishment of this institution in the state pyramid, the interest in it has been constant – at certain periods it reaches a peak value and even dominates the discussions conducted in the political life of Bulgaria. In her view, this comes from a misunderstanding of the philosophy behind the establishment of the Presidential Institution, as well as a failure to take into account the objective fact that it 'has grown' with the political culture of both

political entities and citizens. This issue has also been considered for the first time in terms of the philosophy that has given rise to the need to consolidate the institution President of the Republic of Bulgaria in the institutional framework; the philosophy of the institution has been analyzed, which makes the president one of the main factors in the Bulgarian political process. These problem-thematic circles are sufficient to undoubtedly accept the thesis of the objective need for increased attention and solid scientific commitment to the research of the topic chosen by the doctoral student. I do not know in our national specialized literature another study that has so systematically approached this institution from a philosophical point of view.

In fact, the topic offered by Ani Dimitrova is at the right time and in the right place, which is undoubtedly a plus in her multifaceted analytical evaluation. And here the main merits of the dissertation, whose contribution to this under-researched area is evident, should also be sought.

It should be noted that the Presidential institution in Bulgaria was introduced at the beginning of the transition to a democratic form of governance. And this can obviously be seen. Despite the considerable number of developments on the issue of transition from one political regime to another, the scientific debate on the concept and classification of the transition regarding its time boundaries, structures and features is still ongoing. The general analysis of transitional processes in society, state and political regimes, carried out in different sciences, today urgently needs a theory of the transitional states of the political regime, which combines the problems of interaction between society and the state in the conditions of transition to democracy. In this context, one of the contributing points in the thesis is the current one, namely that the present work can be defined as a comprehensive and in-depth philosophical review of the institution – as the actions of the presidents, and last but not least – the philosophy enshrined in and on periodically made proposals for the development of the Institution, including reconsidering its existence.

## **2. Methodology of the research**

The methodology of the research is consistent with the logic of solving the main objectives. It is based on the combination of historical, regulatory, systematic and comparative method of analysis. Conceptual analysis, systematic, comparative, historically descriptive approach, etc. are used. This makes the research methods sustainable, meaningful and capable of gathering and processing the information needed to develop a scientific work, that is, the doctoral student goes beyond the plane of simplified description and substantive synthesis has been achieved through analyses.

### **3. Awareness of the subject-matter**

The PhD candidate has been able to find out the special, unique and distinctive traits in the chosen issues, that focal point around which to build and structure her work. In five separate, relatively well-balanced problem-related chapters, the doctoral student has managed to cover enough theoretical and practical issues with the analysis and explanation of demarcation lines, as well as the meaning and problem areas of the Presidential Institution and their use by and in politics.

The PhD student has accurately formulated the relevance, significance, object, subject-matter, aim and objectives of the dissertation; she has well motivated her research tasks, solving them one by one in the course of the exposition and achieving her aim. She is aware of critically analyzes major research sources. The dissertation is written clearly, concisely and competently – the language and style of the exposition are characterized by consistency, structure and scientific approach. In this sense, it can be said that dissertation is generally a good scientific text. There is a correspondence between the formulated scientific problem whose clear definition is of paramount importance and the content of the work, which gives completeness and validity to the author's concept.

From the above-said, it can be concluded that the author knows the subject matter well and has both theoretical and applied contributions in the course of its development. It seems to me that it is necessary to note here another merit of suggestions for reviewing the work, namely that the doctoral student is not satisfied

or stops only at the description of the problems and topics in the theoretical lens of the author, but continues to the search for relevant adequate and useful to our contemporary practical dimensions and various, in particular, political mechanisms, to postulate strategies that suggest and stimulate the much needed normalization, democratization and humanization of interconnections among the three authorities – the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. In practice, the Head of State interacts with the three authorities without placing the institution above them. Otherwise, the president would run counter to the principle of separation of powers, which is also a fundamental constitutional principle, as the doctoral student rightly points out.

Raising the philosophical problems connected with the president as an institution does not imply an immediate and definite unambiguous answer, Ani Dimitrova is convinced. And it is right because in philosophy, questions are more important than answers. Nevertheless, the doctoral student has done an excellent job. She has demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the basic facts and theories related to the topic under development, which are well-systematized and summarized. In fact, she has achieved the basic research goal of a dissertation, which “is to derive the philosophy laid down in the Presidential Institution through the prism of the way in which the President exercises his/her powers and reacts in crisis situations to each of those who have completed their term as President of the Republic. Bulgaria has so far and, according to the author “the purpose of the legislator was not to create a detached, self-sufficient and independent presidential institution, but through its powers, a system of rights, obligations to introduce another tool to ensure the functioning of the constitutionally enshrined democratic legal order.” Referring presidential powers defined in Art. 98-105 of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, she has correctly concluded that “in exercising its powers, the presidential institution cannot and does not have to be a continuation of the parliamentary majority and/or opposition. When the institution was set up, the president was supposed to be a corrective person, so he could not, and should not

expect, anything other than in the exercise of his/her constitutional powers to exercise the rights conferred on him/her, along with other bodies referred to in the Constitution, but without being over them with unlimited authority and irresponsible actions.”

#### **4. The Reference Paper on the Dissertation**

Ani Dimitrova’s dissertation is, as I have already mentioned, a timely, useful and conscientiously conducted interdisciplinary research, which intersects the approaches and methods of different fields and scientific disciplines with a view to formulating policies for philosophical reflection on the position of the Presidential Institution.

The reference paper fully and completely reflects the content of the dissertation, presenting the main ideas in it, as well as the results achieved. I accept the author’s contributions from the presented results in the reference paper.

#### **5. Critical notes and recommendations**

I have no serious critical notes on Ani Dimitrova’s dissertation. I can only note that the logic of my recommendation lies in the fact that the first chapter, point one: The monarchy as a form of government and the role of the monarch. The constitutional monarchy is rather wasteful – a lot of space has been devoted to monarchies. Of course, the problem of the length of the texts is debatable and this is a preference of the authors themselves. But it is known that too long texts are difficult to hold the attention of the reader, who, if interested in much of this issue, can find it in many other sources. In my opinion, this chapter could have been better if it had been more concise and shorter and the main ones were formulated in particular without unnecessary verbal extravagance; but this does not in any way affect the high level of the dissertation.

The PhD candidate has not accurately separated the used sources into: books, articles, documents, internet sources, etc. This is not a formal feature, but is evidence of a marked attitude towards the references used in the dissertation.

#### **6. Conclusion**

The reviewed interesting and in-depth scientific work fully complies with the requirements of the Law on the Academic Staff Development, the Regulations for Application of the Law and the Regulations for its Implementation, the Rules for the Conditions and Procedures for Acquiring Degrees and Occupation of Academic Positions at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Given the relevance of the problem, the contributions of the dissertation and my complex positive assessment of Ani Dimitrova, I recommend that the members of the honorable scientific jury award her the educational and scientific degree of PhD in the professional field 2.3. "Philosophy"

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Sofia

**Reviewer:**

(Prof. Mumun Tahirov PhD)