

OPINION

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About: Dissertation for the conferment of Doctorate degree in 2.3 (Philosophy) (Philosophy of Politics)

Author of the dissertation: Ani Dimitrova Dimitrova

Title: “THE INSTITUTION OF PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA 1992 – 2017”

1. Overall characteristics of the dissertation

1.1 Overall specifications

The presented dissertation has a main body of 280 pages and 89 pages of bibliography, appendixes and other additional information. The structure contains an introduction, a conclusion and five chapters. It is noteworthy that there are large differences in the volume of the individual chapters (the fifth chapter is only 13 pages long). The layout of the main text is excellent and the content is smooth and at the required academic level. The text is well-arranged and has diligent structure. A technical disadvantage is the way in which citations are presented in footnotes - often there is no interval after commas, there are blank lines between the notes, different fonts are used, etc. Additionally, if the footnotes were written (especially online sources) using some of the world-recognized standards it would assist the author and the reader for better understanding. In addition, for easier accessibility of the text, the author may use more figures and tables in good readable format. The bibliography is well-organized and extremely inclusive, which is a distinctive feature of the dissertation.

The overall impression is very good, with Ani Dimitrova handling the necessary precision and detail orientation, except for the design of the citations and the balance in the volume of the individual chapters.

1.2 Relevance and importance of the topic

The topic presented is relevant and has considerable potential for research and evaluation of the development of the Presidential Institution in Bulgaria. There is a wide range of literature and research on this topic. The main idea behind the presidential institution is to symbolize the unity of the nation and to be a balancing force between the legislative, executive and judicial powers. In reality, however, especially in recent years, the escalation of tensions between the president and the government seems to have become the norm and basic framework for analyzing all political processes in the country. In almost every crisis, regardless of its origin, ideas about the role and powers of the Presidential Institution in Bulgaria are often raised among all the issues discussed. These views are presented as an all-purpose solution for societal problems and institutional shortcomings. Therefore, the debate, the consistent analysis and the vision for the development of the presidential institution is an extremely relevant field for research efforts.

1.3 Assessment of the structure and elements of the thesis

The main purpose and hypothesis of the study imply several expectations. First, the relationship between the presidential institution and individuals would be examined in depth. Secondly, the different presidents would be compared in the light of how they have performed in their duties. Third, that there would be similarities and differences between them - when certain factors have contributed to or hindered the proper manifestation of the “philosophy of the presidential institute”. Fourth, the reader expects that author is going to clarify the individual personal operational code in relation to the speeches and actions of each president. In addition, the hypothesis suggests the implication of an analysis of the “philosophy of the presidential institute” through the various philosophical schools that consider analyzing leadership, its origins, roles, actions, etc. Hence, to find the connection between these primary schools and their practical manifestations at the head of state institute in particular countries. The first chapter makes some reference to this, but lacks the connection with the schools of philosophy.

The author herself raises the question of the role of the individual and the personal character of the particular presidents in Bulgaria. Creating a theoretical model of causation and the logic of the text would contribute to an easier understanding of the author's basic assumptions. Theoretical guidelines could seek their empirical evidence in answering the questions: What type of leaders are the analyzed presidents? What helped them and what hindered them? What personality traits and external factors have prevailed in each particular situation? What are the intervening variables that determine a president to fulfill the presented philosophy of the institution? These are just some of the questions that the hypothesis raises, but are somehow difficult to trace in the solid text, due to the lack of a pre-set theoretical framework for the causal relationships of the individual variables.

The analysis in brief moments is emotional and is based more on the intuition of the author (used expressions as indisputable, cannot be denied, etc.), and not so much on facts. But in the end, this is an author's reading of the processes and it is a demonstration of commitment to the topic. The dissertation stimulates reflection and raises various questions and ideas. An interesting nuance would be to monitor whether each president has experienced a metamorphosis in their visions and actions before and during their presidency (for example, President Georgi Parvanov and NATO membership), and to relate this to the philosophy of the institution, and to other relevant factors.

The efforts made by Ani Dimitrova are significant. The text is extremely inclusive in data and is consistently tracking the evolutionary processes in the presidential institution. A theoretical framework recommendation does not take away from the **overall positive image of the thesis.**

Chapter two is an extremely well-structured overview of the background of the Head of State institute in Bulgaria. There is an emphasis on the evolution of the institute and the factors that influenced it. The conclusions in this chapter are comprehensive and cleverly related to the issue under analysis.

Chapter three makes a concrete attempt to present basic philosophical concepts related to power and authority. The first part of this chapter is well organized. And the second part, concerning the powers of the President, has the character of a thorough reference, which presents the facts in the relations between the powers in Bulgaria. In this chapter, the recommendation to apply more figures and tables would help to make the information easier to acquire.

Chapter four fulfills its intentions and it is straight forward to the point. On the other hand, chapter five, with its small volume, could be integrated into the conclusion (or into chapter four), presenting major perspectives for future research and analysis. In my opinion, the main purpose of the conclusion should be giving answers to the goal, tasks and hypotheses of the study, which are set out in the introduction. To what extent they are fulfilled or rejected. Additionally, recommendations may be made for future studies or new questions could be outlined for future analysis. In this case, the author has chosen to give a summary of the chapters and the issues discussed earlier, which somehow leaves the elaborate work without a final touch and an evaluation of its results.

2. Evaluation of scientific and applied contributions

For the most part, the presented reference to scientific contributions are relevant and correct. Among them I can point out:

- a comprehensive historical overview of the development of the Head of State Institute from the establishment of the Third Bulgarian State to the present days;
- a comprehensive study of the philosophy of the President Institute in the Bulgarian state-legal tradition is presented;
- the decisions, which are included in the state-legal framework of the Third Bulgarian State, are reviewed.

3. Evaluation of the presented publications

Ani Dimitrov has presented two scientific publications. Both of them accurately reflect the research efforts of the dissertation and give wider access to the results achieved.

4. Evaluation of the summary of the dissertation

In the author's summary, the essence of the dissertation is reflected correctly and precisely enough.

5. Critical notes, recommendations and questions

For the sake of clarity, I have outlined some of the critical remarks above. Here I will repeat some of them. The recommendations are:

- A clearer statement of the hypothesis and purpose of the study.
- The need for a theoretical model to follow the logic of the thesis.
- Optimization of the structure of the text.
- Improvements of the citation formatting.

6. Conclusion

Despite the outlined recommendations, a comprehensive and in-depth study on the topic is presented for defense. The dissertation work **meets all legislative requirements**. The presented dissertation convinced me to give my **positive assessment** to Ani Dimitrova and to suggest that the members of the scientific jury vote positively in order to award her with the doctoral degree in professional field 2.3 “Philosophy” (Philosophy of Politics).

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Signature:
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