

OPINION

by prof. Valentina Zlatanova

on the dissertation work of Martin Konstantinov Konstantinov

titled

**THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE WEST AND CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA:
ATTITUDES IN CONTEMPORARY BULGARIAN SOCIETY
(VALUES AND IDEOLOGIES)**

The dissertation consists of an introduction, an exposition in three chapters, a conclusion, a list of used literature and three applications. Its total volume is 259 pages, of which 222 pages is the main text. Cited bibliographic sources include 284 sources, of which 40 in Bulgarian, 228 in English and 16 Internet sources. The text includes 86 figures and 11 tables. The appendices contain tables and pie charts with statistical dependencies between the studied types of parties and political values, as well as between individual political values.

The publications on the topic of the dissertation are 4, of which 2 are in international editions.

The requirements that each dissertation must meet are:

1. Relevance of the problem and clearly formulated research thesis, goal, subject and tasks;
2. Contributions in terms of innovation, expansion of existing knowledge on the problem and opportunities for application in practice.

There is no doubt about the relevance of the research topic. In his doctoral dissertation on **"THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN RUSSIA AND THE WEST - VALUES AND IDEOLOGIES IN CONTEMPORARY BULGARIAN SOCIETY"** the doctoral student Martin Konstantinov Konstantinov explores the role of values in the lives of individuals and societies. The topic is particularly sensitive, topical and highly politicized and its research is very important. Apart from scientific, it also has practical and applied significance. Apart from politics, it has serious consequences on the overall social system and the moral foundations of culturally defined norms and values. The goals, tasks, hypotheses, limitations and research methods and techniques used are described in detail.

Content analysis of the scientific achievements of the doctoral student

1. The doctoral student cites a lot of scientific research for his theses, which shows that he has adopted a large-scale, critical and thorough approach. He has made an original reading of a complex sociological matter and makes significant contributions of theoretical and methodological nature in building new and enriching existing knowledge.
2. Martin Konstantinov Konstantinov formulates theoretical indicators and research models and instruments, which have been operationalized until the establishment of empirical regularities. Original models, approaches and techniques for research of the set goals and tasks of the dissertation have been developed, which is a significant scientific achievement.
3. The work is a complex construct of theory, methodology and empiricism. The doctoral student is convincing, detailed and comprehensive in his theses and analyzes. His work sheds light on a less studied aspect of research on the structure of values, namely the idea that each individual value can be expressed in different ways. This concept is especially useful in the field of politics, as each individual value expression has unique consequences.
4. The doctoral student thoroughly studies the relationship between political values and ideologies, where he achieves remarkable results of scientific and applied nature. Moreover, at this stage there is no unified theoretical framework for political values, as well as a consensus on the number and content, and different authors point to different numbers of political values with somewhat overlapping scope and content.
5. Martin Konstantinov's dissertation is a product of original large-scale research in 8 districts of the country, 107 interviews, 3 focus groups with own methodological tool and scenarios. Questionnaires for interviews and focus groups have been precisely developed. In addition, after a competition of BAS for young scientists under the project DFNP 17-172 / 03.08.17 "**VALUES AND IDEOLOGICAL-POLITICAL ORIENTATION: LINKS AND DEPENDENCIES**", funded by a program to support young scientists and PhD students - 2017, the PhD student deepens his research of certain research aspects of the dissertation topic.

The volume of the performed activities on the research part of the dissertation many times exceeds the definition of a doctoral dissertation. Processing and analyzing so much information is extremely challenging. There is a great danger to overburden the text with numbers and graphs, but Martin Konstantinov managed to find a perfect balance. For all analyzes an exceptional objectivity can be noted, along with a depth, precision and professional intelligence, that command respect from the reader. From the vast amount of information, he has produced a high-quality scientific product by examining the relationship between politics and values in all aspects of public life. The text is light and balanced in a theoretical - empirical sense. In addition, he has achieved that

independence of analysis over personal bias in terms of values, ideologies and partisanship, which is ultimately a vocation of science.

Notable scientific contributions

- The dissertation marks the beginning of the research of the link between values and ideologies in our country;

- The theoretical concept of ideological and political orientation in the social and economic spheres is the basis for its more precise measurement and facilitates the process of ideological identification and the correct use of ideological labels;

- The original three-stage model of the ideological orientation of the individual as a function of the basic individual values through the mediation of political values outlines the different ideological and political attitudes and beliefs. This is a serious attempt to structure the ideological and political orientations in our country at the moment;

- The use of attitudes towards the confrontation between Russia and the West as an indicator of the ideological and political orientation of the individual is an original theoretical approach, the heuristic potential of which can be applied to other socio-political conflicts containing ideological components;

- The precise use of ideological concepts embedded in the theoretical concept contributes to the orientation in the public and academic discourse on ideological issues, and hence to the increase of the civic political culture and literacy in the conditions of growing ideological polarization;

- For the first time in Bulgaria the subject of research is the perceptions of value violations. They play a key role in assessing groups and individuals as deviant. The data obtained through the methodological tools developed for their study confirm the observations from other countries that when the stake is values, prejudices and discrimination know no ideological boundaries. Both liberal and conservative actors define as deviant groups that violate their values and support discrimination against them;

- A methodological toolkit has been developed that is relevant for Bulgaria and provides an opportunity for the objective establishment and quantitative measurement of the ideological and political orientation by examining the attitudes on a wide range of topics. Thus, self-identification is not relied on, which in most cases is the product of insufficient information of citizens regarding ideologies;

- The empirical tools of the research can be used both to establish common ideological orientations, political and value attitudes of individuals, and to study their attitudes to various socio-political conflicts containing ideological components;

- For the first time in Bulgaria the object of study is the ideological and political orientation of the members of political parties. The 107 interviews conducted represent a serious database that can be used in further research in this scientific field.

Personal impressions of the doctoral student

I have excellent impressions of the professional training and research skills of Martin Konstantinov as a MSc in Politics, Security and Integration, from University College London, 2010, as well as from his appearances at scientific forums at home and abroad, participation in research projects and publications. Martin Konstantinov exceeds the minimum national requirements for the scientific degree "doctor". All these "objective indicators" are combined with exceptional performance, self-discipline and teamwork skills. The doctoral student demonstrates a good style of presentation, uses literature sources and data correctly. His clear and engaging language has a solid scientific content. The abstract correctly reflects the content of the dissertation, as well as the contributions made in it.

Notes and recommendations

The dissertation raises many questions that I see as new research fields in the issue of values and ideologies, the development of which in the future would have both scientific and concrete practical effect.

Conclusion

The work of Martin Konstantinov is an achievement in the sociological research and scientific explanation of the relationship between values and ideological orientation. Given the scientific contributions listed above, I believe that the work significantly exceeds the requirements for the award of the scientific degree "Doctor". In his dissertation Martin Konstantinov demonstrates high research capacity. The original contributions made have important scientific-theoretical and applied significance for the researched issues. That is why I strongly suggest to the esteemed Scientific Jury to unanimously award Martin Konstantinov Konstantinov the scientific degree of "Doctor of Sociology".

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Signed:

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