

## REVIEW

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**For obtaining the scientific degree "PhD" in the professional field 3.3. Political Science  
(Comparative Political Science) with candidate Hristo Hristov Panchugov**

This review examines and evaluates a dissertation on *"Organizational Building and Institutionalization of Political Parties in Bulgaria: 1990 - 2018. Patterns of consolidation and fragmentation of the party system in transition."* In general, the text meets the requirements for a scientific work and can be reviewed. The candidate meets the requirements of the RRDA, the Regulations for the Implementation of the RRDA and the internal rules of the NBU. An abstract with a self-assessment of the contributions of the thesis and a list of 11 publications in total, 5 of which are co-authored, 9 of which are in English, is provided. I assume that the required minimum of three publications on the dissertation topic are available. The dissertation contains 183 pages, of which 177 pages of main text in an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion and 6 pages of appendices. It includes 9 figures and 8 tables and 1 appendix which contains 6 tables. The bibliography comprises 121 titles, 21 in Cyrillic, 96 in Latin, and 4 sources of statistical information from the Internet.

### **Significance of the research problem in scientific and applied terms**

Undoubtedly, the issues of political parties are among the ones that are constantly arousing the interest of researchers. This is not only because parties and party systems are the basis of democratic governance, but also because they are constantly changing, evolving or declining, appearing or disappearing, changing their ideological and programmatic foundations, expanding or contracting their electoral support, and so on. Such circumstances undoubtedly make all research in this area relevant. This dissertation examines both the theoretical underpinnings and methodological challenges of studying the dynamics and mechanics of party systems. The skillful application of well-established methodologies to Bulgarian practice actually builds on them in

methodological terms, which is why I find the research to be significant in scientific and applied terms.

### **Evaluation of the aims and objectives of the dissertation**

The author has clearly and precisely formulated the aims and objectives of the thesis. The text is structured in accordance with the stated aims and objectives and evidence is conscientiously selected and provided to investigate the hypotheses raised. The conclusions follow the logic of the study. The objectives of Hristo Panchugov are directed in two directions. The first is related to party systems, and the second - to the role, meaning and nature of emerging and parties involved in governance since their inception.

In the first strand, the aim is to adapt models of research which, when applied, will bring out characteristics of the Bulgarian party system in the chosen period that are different from existing generalizations. At least two important steps stand out in the achievement of this goal, the first being the analysis of existing models and typologies of party systems. The author chooses the criteria for the effective number of parties and analyzes the polarization of the party system, assessing the mechanics of the parties' relationships in addition to the number of effective parties. Second, the paper addresses the problem by examining the relationship between the organizational development of parties and how the stability or change of the party system is affected. The comparative analysis of the emergence and development of three Bulgarian parties gives further strength to the study.

The set aims and objectives provide a very good basis for the research and its successful completion.

### **Degree of knowledge of the state of the problem and consistency of the literature used**

Hristo Panchugov has an excellent knowledge of the literature on political parties and party systems. Moreover, he skillfully polemicalises with classical authors as well as with contemporary researchers. In the process of constructing the methodology of the study, not only is the choice of certain authors pointed out and justified, but the refusal to use classifications of other authors is also justified.

There is complete correspondence between the literature used and the bibliography cited. The author demonstrates a wide range of knowledge about the state of party systems in Europe and the United States, as well as the impact of party systems on government. There is ample evidence in the dissertation that the issues explored are fully understood and perceived through Panchugov's personal experience as a participant in and leader of political parties in Bulgaria, and as an established analyst of political processes.

Since the author aims to create a methodology through which to make a comparative analysis of three newly emerged and participated in the government of Bulgaria parties, he selects indicators and criteria used by other authors, which do not contradict each other, but on the contrary, help to build on the research and allow a more complete description.

The references in the dissertation are correct and contribute to the delineation of the author's contributions and the continuity of scholarship on which he relies to achieve the goals of his research.

### **Evaluation of the theoretical model of the study**

The theoretical model of the study is well developed and justified. The methodology and methods are fully consistent with the stated aims and objectives. In addition to the polemical analysis of the scientific achievements of classical and contemporary authors on the problems of parties and party systems, the author applies several other methods related to the secondary analysis of databases, both statistical, as well as the results of demoscopic and sociological studies and the results of exit polls. All this helps him to make an analysis and synthesis in which a systematization of knowledge appears. Comparative analysis as a research method occupies a special place in the dissertation. It is through the discovery of differences, respectively similarities, that the possibility to characterize the emergence, organizational development, ideological characteristics of new parties, as well as their impact on the party system is improved.

### **Evaluation of the research contributions**

There is no doubt that the dissertation under review is entirely the work of Hristo Panchugov. In this connection I am obliged to note that I have found no signs of plagiarism. The contributions to the research are also those of the author. The abstract fully reflects the methodology, methodology and results achieved. Panchugov has managed to present his research

in a clear and systematic way, has made a self-assessment of his contributions, and has provided a list of publications.

First of all, I would like to point out that today we are discussing a multilayered study of parties and party systems, which also provides its own, different reading of the Bulgarian party system in the period 1990-2018 (the results of the analysis are in the last part and the summary of the first chapter), as well as a specific model of explanation of the newly emerged parties in Bulgaria (Ataka, NDSV and GERB) in the post-2001 period, which successfully reached participation in government immediately after their establishment, and some of them even before that in the form of a civic movement (the third chapter of the dissertation).

I will begin with a self-assessment of the contributions of the thesis that Panchugov offers us. He has separated them into 6 items without distinguishing them into theoretical or applied. We could distinguish contributions of both types.

To the **theoretical** I would refer the systematization of existing approaches to the analysis of party systems, as well as the main typologies aimed at explaining them. Any systematization would be impossible if the author did not know in detail the achievements of scholars before him. In his polemics with classical and contemporary authors, Panchugov undoubtedly proves his skills as a scholar and conscientious researcher. He builds on methodological approaches and concepts in an able and reasoned manner. Second in the same group of contributions are the systematization of typologies of party organizations and the construction of a model for the analysis of the interaction between the environment and the organizational models of Bulgarian parties. And thirdly, I would include in this group of contributions the systematization of concepts for explaining the charismatic party, as well as the operationalization of criteria for its evaluation.

Among the **scientific and applied** contributions I would refer to the new approach to examining the Bulgarian party system through the prism of stability/change. The results of the application of this approach (see the last part of chapter one) lead to the formulation of a periodisation in the development of the party system in Bulgaria from 1990 to 2018. Secondly, I note the application and demonstration of the applicability of methodologies for the study of party systems, for the measurement and evaluation of party organisations, in the specific context of the Bulgarian party system. Thirdly, the contribution to updating and complementing the available data on Bulgarian parties should be highlighted, thus expanding the possibilities for comparisons against

already identified main trends of the functioning of this system, with other political systems and against major global trends.

### **Impacts of the thesis on the external environment**

*Assessment of the publications on the dissertation: number, nature of the publications in which they have been published.*

For the purposes of this review, I accept the publications on the topic of this dissertation listed under numbers 1, 5 and 6. The publications are specialized scientific periodicals, and two of them are in English. The publisher is NBU. The remaining publications, 11 in total, are evidence of the author's serious engagement with political science issues, but since most of them are also co-authored and no separation protocol has been provided, I will not comment on them. The three publications are sufficient for the successful completion of the doctoral dissertation defense procedure.

*Personal qualities of the author*

I know Hristo Panchugov as a principled and dedicated researcher and person. He is known to a wide audience for his moderate comments on political and public facts and processes, devoid of personal emotion and party affiliation. I don't know his work as a teacher directly, but I assume that students receive not only academic knowledge, but also lessons to form a lasting interest in political science and research skills. Panchugov's language is clear and conceptually correct, and his expression is understandable to a wide audience. These skills undoubtedly place him among the analysts and commentators who manage, without violating scholarly norms, to present arguments and evidence in defense of their theses in a language and style that is understandable to a wide audience.

### **Recommendations, comments and questions**

As usual, every scientific study implies at least one other point of view than the author's. In this case, I am not talking about critical remarks, but only about a different perspective, especially on the structure of the dissertation. And I would like to hear the author's opinion on whether or not it is methodologically more correct to start the analysis with parties as organizations (chapter two of the text) and move on to the problems of party systems and patterns of fragmentation and

consolidation? My question is based on adopting an analytical approach from the particular to the general. The opposite approach is also permissible.

Would the dissertation benefit from a theoretical chapter outlining the methodology for the study of parties and party systems and another chapter applying this methodology to Bulgarian parties, followed by a chapter examining the Bulgarian party system?

The questions I ask in no way detract from the merits of the dissertation under discussion. I respect the chosen approach of exposition, because it is the right of the author, and he is Hristo Panchugov. I confidently recommend that his work on the study of the Bulgarian party system should continue along the chosen path, while allowing myself one question that is beyond the scope of his research. Since in recent years three new parties have emerged, ITN, Revival and We Continue the Change, and NDSV and Ataka no longer have any influence on the process of governance and the party system, can we say that the process of change of the party system after 2001, which is described in the dissertation, is not only continuing, but is coming to an end? Does it see similar characteristics in the emergence of new parties? If there are similarities, what are they due to?

I take the liberty of recommending that, after some revision and adaptation of the text to the monograph genre, the dissertation be published to make it available to a wider readership.

**In conclusion, I can confidently state my positive evaluation of the dissertation and recommend that the degree of Doctor of Science be awarded to Hristo Hristov Panchugov in the professional field 3.3. Political Science (Comparative Political Science).**

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