

OPINION

by Prof. Georgi Lyubenov Manolov, Doctor of Political Sciences
University of National and World Economy

on the materials submitted for participation in a competition
for the academic position of „associate professor“
of Plovdiv University „Paisii Hilendarski“

by field of higher education sphere: 3 „Social, business and legal sciences“
professional field: „Political Sciences (elections and electoral systems)“

The sole candidate in the competition for „associate professor“ published in the State Gazette, issue 40 dated 14 May 2021 and on the web page of Plovdiv University „Paisii Hilendarski“ for the needs of department „Political Sciences and National Security“ with the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences is Chief Assist. Daniela Dobрева Pastarmadzhieva, PhD, from the aforesaid department.

1. General presentation of the procedure and of the candidate

The set of materials submitted by Chief Assist. Daniela Dobрева Pastarmadzhieva, PhD, both as a hard copy and on electronic media complies with the Regulations for the development of the academic staff of the University of Plovdiv and includes all the necessary documents which are required for the competition.

The candidate, Chief Assist. Daniela Dobрева Pastarmadzhieva, has submitted in total 42 scientific works including 1 monograph (published in a book), PhD, 2 books of school aid, 3 studies (all 3 of them subject to joint authorship), 16 articles (11 of them subject to joint authorship) and 20 reports (from 3 national and 17 international conferences). All presented works are outside the topic of the doctoral thesis, were published after its defence and comply with the issues of the competition.

I am personally acquainted with this candidate ever since she was a student at the University of National and World Economy in Sofia and in my capacity of her former lecturer, I have excellent impressions from her scientific training. My opinion of her teaching work as a senior associate professor and doctor is also excellent; her attitude to students' training is serious and she presents the teaching materials at a high professional level.

2. General characteristics of the candidate's activity

The participant in the competition participates actively as a lecturer in the overall educational and teaching activity in compliance with the accepted requirements of the university. Chief Assist. Daniela Pastarmadzhieva, PhD, has the full teaching norm of 150 hours of lectures (minimum 45 of which are on the specifics of the professional field) under the subjects of elections and electoral systems, political culture, comparative political researches etc. Her direct work with the students, the development of training courses and the participation in various projects are also impressive and they add to the teaching and scientific and research activities of the candidate.

The main work which Chief Assist. Daniela Dobрева Pastarmadzhieva, PhD, has submitted to be reviewed in this competition is a monograph on the following topic: „The majority electoral system and the development of society“ which shall be assessed in the subsequent statement.

The monographic work under the aforesaid title consists of 223 standard pages, and from a structural point of view it consists of an introduction, three chapters (each with separate

paragraphs), a conclusion and bibliography (121 cited sources in Cyrillic and Latin) as well as 60 appendices.

It has to be emphasized in the very beginning that the author has meticulously proposed a systematized and logically well-constructed structure of the presentation which is obvious from the introduction which precisely formulates the main purpose of the study and namely: to determine whether the states with majority electoral systems (MES) are better developed than the ones using proportional or mixed systems and respectively what is the co-relation between the electoral system and the degree of development of the state as far as the most significant social spheres are concerned. Further to this, several specific research tasks have been set and namely: to define a general conceptual framework of the electoral engineering as a concept and its practical realization; to explore the debate on the introduction of the majority electoral system in Bulgaria (after 1989); to explore the experience of the Balkan states in the application of the majority electoral system; to present empirical data regarding the development of the electoral systems in the states; to analyze and summarize the accumulated theoretical and empirical data; and to draw forecasts regarding the introduction of MES in Bulgaria and the possible positive results (social, economic, political) for the country.

The theoretical realization of these tasks finds a specific development in the first chapter of the work which has a methodological character as a priority. It presents in details the concept of electoral engineering and treats a number of issues connected with its totality, goals, factors, results etc. The approach in the context of interaction with the types of electoral systems is not palliative but rather interdisciplinary as the electoral engineering is considered from a wide point of view where the significance of the political system, the degree of the economic development, the sustainability of the political regime etc. are also important factors for the progress of one or another electoral process. Various methods and approaches have been used – historical, comparative, interdisciplinary, statistical etc, the usage of which grants greater completeness and depth to the analysis in the work. In this sense, the consequences from the application of the types of electoral systems in the political life are given, which further develops and expands the range of the considered scientific problem. In general, this chapter reveals a high level of theoretical maturity and in-depth knowledge of the subject which is a serious asset for the author of the monograph.

On the grounds of the above stated methodological instruments, the second chapter provides a detailed dissection of the Bulgarian debate on the introduction of the majority election following the democratic changes of 1989, considering it not only as an isolated case but within the context of the Balkan peninsula and the European experience in this regard. The presentation of this debate is distinguished by two characteristic peculiarities: the first is that it is not dull as it is not confined only within the legal requirements of the majority election; the other is that it has been interpreted through the prism of the political, economic and social development of Bulgaria depending on the specific political processes in the country (for example the confrontation „communism vs anti-communism“ during the 1990s, p. 81-87 etc). In other words the advantages and disadvantages of the majority electoral system in the strained ideological confrontation at that time have been laid down in details without any manifestation of prejudice or right or left theoretical deviations. This is a notable achievement on behalf of the author which reveals an in-depth command of the subject and analysis of the facts and circumstances as they are and not as we want them to be.

In the last third chapter the author has significantly expanded the scope of the research in the presented model for assessment and development of the society by presenting the respective electoral rules and electoral systems in 183 states. What is valuable in the disclosures of this model stems from the circumstance that the empirical results have been obtained via different types of indices - for democracy, for freedom in the world, for the least developed countries, for human development, for supremacy of the law etc. (8 in total), as a result of which certain dependencies are established. According to them the proportional electoral systems in the states show better

results than the majority electoral systems. And this is not the only thing – huge empirical, statistical and electoral material has been obtained within the model, which material has been successfully interpreted so that an objective presentation of the results under each of the indices can be achieved.

The conclusion of the monographic work (p. 173-177) states the main conclusions arising from the topic and indicates the more significant moments of contribution of the monograph.

Along with what has been stated so far, some other essential merits of this work shall be formulated which in our opinion also have a significant contribution.

One of the undisputable merits of the monograph is the introduction, justification and development of the concept „electoral engineering“ in the Bulgarian political literature. This is a definite innovation in the development of the theory as a whole (politological, legal, sociological) because it concerns directly the co-relation „electoral behavior – electoral systems“ depending on the overall development of the respective state – social, economic etc.

Another thing to be highlighted is the significance of the model for the assessment of the development of the societies according to the type of the electoral system and respectively the results achieved from its approbation in the different states. What’s more, a complex of indices and indicators have been used for its development which contribute significantly for the expansion of this analysis in terms of its scientific integrity and exhaustiveness thus providing it, of course, with valuable ending.

Another definite contribution is the extreme in-depth comparative analysis of the application of the majority electoral system in various countries all over the world which impartially reports the advantages and disadvantages of the system. Such a global comparative characteristics is currently absent in the specialized literature in our country, for which the author should be congratulated.

What comes last is another merit of the monograph which is not to be omitted and which is of practical application nature, as the monograph, in its current state, can serve both as a valuable theoretical source in the electoral systems as well as a valuable practical aid for everyone who is interested in this subject – scientists, students, journalists, politicians, public figures etc.

3. Critical notes and recommendations

First. The work would have gained much more if it contained a special comparative analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the majority and proportional electoral systems (currently there is a similar but very short comparison on p. 70). In this way the similarities and differences between the systems in the context of the current issues (incl. when reflecting the debates about the majority vote in Bulgaria) would be even more prominent. Further to that, in my opinion, the thesis of the work has to be reformulated because in its current form it sounds more like a conclusion and not as a scientific thesis.

Second. The balance between the politological and legal knowledge and interpretations regarding the elections and the electoral systems in terms of the theoretical formulations is disrupted at certain places in the monographic explanation. It is correct that these subjects intertwine with each other in a number of cases, but it is also correct that they could be specified more precisely and in bigger detail in order to separate more clearly the political issues from the legal ones.

Third. The criticism and the critical accents in the monograph, especially in its theoretical part (almost in the entire first chapter) are not sufficient enough thus the author’s opinion on individual theses and conceptions is sometimes lost. Therefore, of course, a future revision (and edition) of the work has to be considered in which not only the criticism has to be increased but some elements of text adaptation which exist at some places in the current explanation have to be ignored.

CONCLUSION

The documents and the materials submitted by Chief Assist. Daniela Dobрева Pastarmadzhieva, PhD, comply with all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the application of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and the respective regulation of Plovdiv University „Paisii Hilendarski“.

The candidate in the competition has submitted sufficient number of scientific works published after the materials used for the defence of the educational and scientific degree of „doctor“. The candidate’s work is characterized by original and applied scientific contributions which have gained international recognition and a representative part of them have been published in magazines and scientific collections issued by international academic publishing houses (magazines, collections etc). Her theoretical developments are characterized by practical applicability and part of them are directly oriented to education. The scientific and teaching qualification of Chief Assist. Daniela Dobрева Pastarmadzhieva, PhD, is **unquestionable**.

The results which Chief Assist. Daniela Dobрева Pastarmadzhieva, PhD, has achieved in her teaching and research work **fully comply** with the specific requirements of the Department of Economic and Social Studies in connection with the Regulations of the University of Plovdiv for the application of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria.

After getting acquainted with the materials and scientific works presented in the competition, having analyzed their significance and the scientific, applied scientific and applied contributions which they contain, I find it reasonable to give my **positive assessment** and to recommend to the Scientific Committee to prepare a report-proposal to the Department Council of the Department of Economic and Social Sciences regarding the election of Chief Assist. Daniela Dobрева Pastarmadzhieva, PhD, for the academic position of „associate professor“ at Plovdiv University „Paisii Hilendarski“ in the professional filed „Political Sciences (elections and electoral systems)“.

5.09.2021

The opinion is drawn by:

(Prof. Georgi Manolov
Doctor of Political Sciences)