

## **REVIEW**

by Prof. DSc Vassil Kostadinov Prodanov

of the dissertation thesis for the award of the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**"

in the field of higher education: 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences,

professional field: 3.3 Political Science,

Doctoral programme: Political Science

Author: Veronika Georgieva Prezhdarova

**Theme: Evolution of Sovereignty in the Fourth Industrial Revolution**

**Scientific supervisor:** Assoc. Prof. Stoycho Petrov Stoychev, PhD

### **1. General description of the presented materials**

By Order No. P33-RD-21-21-33 of 14.12.2022 of the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU) I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury for providing a procedure for the defense of a dissertation on "**Evolution of Sovereignty in the Conditions of the Fourth Industrial Revolution**" for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.3. Political Science, PhD Programme Political Science.

The author of the dissertation is Veronika Georgieva Prezhdarova - a doctoral student in part-time study at the Department of Political Sciences and National Security at the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, with supervisor Assoc. Prof. Stoycho Petrov Stoychev, Ph.D. from SU "St. Kliment Ohridski".

The set of paper materials presented by Veronika Georgieva Prezhdarova is in accordance with Article 36 (1) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the PU, includes the following documents:

- request to the Rector of PU for initiation of the dissertation defense procedure;
- CV in European format;
- minutes of the departmental council related to the reporting of the readiness to open the procedure and the preliminary discussion of the dissertation;
- dissertation;
- abstract;
- list of scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation;
- copies of scientific publications;
- declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents.

The PhD student has attached 2 studies and 4 articles published in scientific journals.

## **2. Brief biographical data for the doctoral student**

Veronika Georgieva Prezhdarova has the biography of a person with interdisciplinary knowledge and experience. She graduated with a major in "Political Economy" from the UNSS, but also from the school at NATFIZ in "Directing, dramaturgy and editing of short film forms". At the same time, she worked in various non-governmental organizations and has experience and activities related to modern information technologies. From her student years, when she initiated the creation and stood at the head of the Club of the Creative Political Economist, through the time when she initiated the creation and became the head of an association of Bulgarian doctoral students in Russia, organizing various events and conferences, until now she has demonstrated communication and organizational qualities.

She has made documentaries and historical films, she is interested in applied arts. She has held positions related to digital technologies. All this has developed an interdisciplinary thinking and experience that has enabled her to deal actively in recent years with such an essential topic in political science as sovereignty, being interested not only in the different historical stages it goes through, but also in its most recent dimensions, such as digital sovereignty. She has organizational, computer, social, artistic skills.

## **3. Relevance of the topic and appropriateness of the set goals and tasks**

Every stage of technological development since the time of the printing press and gunpowder has been known to lead to changes in politics, with systemic consequences for society. This is especially true now in the context of the exponential development of new technologies. The relevance of the topic and the tasks set is first of all related to the fact that she examines sovereignty in the context of the latest trends in the development of technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the new digital space that it creates, but which at the same time gives rise to an increasing amount of new risks and a new area of conflict between states. The theme of sovereignty, which is classic in the definition of the nation-state, has been subordinated in recent decades to the more powerful trend of globalization and a sharp increase in the external interdependence of the states, which has both positive and negative sides, especially if conflicts start between them. We are now witnessing trends of deglobalization and regionalization, which everywhere are giving birth to political forces and politicians who are increasingly beginning to raise the issue of sovereignty again. The example of Great Britain and Brexit, through which it decided to regain its sovereignty, is typical. However, this example also has new dimensions related to a new global space created by digital technologies, which is explored little in the existing literature. The topic has both scientific and scientific-applied meaning, because at the moment, as part of the geopolitical battle between the USA, Russia and China, this dimension of sovereignty is becoming very important and in different

parts of the world, including the EU, it is emerging as a problem to be solved, and the regulation and control of one's digital space are increasing.

#### **4. Knowing the problem**

The PhD student has been researching this problem for the last five years and knows both its historical stages of development and its state today in the context of contemporary political, geopolitical and technological processes. She has an interdisciplinary training that enables her to evaluate it through different coordinate systems and in the context of the interaction among different systems, especially in the context of the latest processes related to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which is systematically changing social, economic and political systems, giving rise to numerous new problems for political science as well.

#### **5. Research methodology**

The dissertation examines the evolution of sovereignty, starting from the premise that from the beginning of its development until today, it undergoes qualitative changes, the result of two main factors - the cycles of capitalism and changes in technology, primarily technology in recent years. To this end, it relies on the famous concept of the world-system, which was developed by a group of world-renowned researchers, led by Immanuel Wallerstein, long-time director of the Fernand Braudel Center in New York, and his close associate Giovanni Arrighi. She has selected systematic and historical methods of analysis of the problem on the basis of a known macro-historical concept of four long cycles of capitalism, which she correlates with stages of changes in sovereignty, paying special attention to the new stage of such changes in the conditions of the unfolding over recent years of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The dialectical, comparative approach, as well as content analysis, are also used. At each stage, the analysis of sovereignty relies on changes in the sovereignty of states that have hegemonic role in the world system. At the modern stage of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, this is done on the basis of empirical material related to the unfolding of these processes in three leading geopolitical countries in the world today - the USA, China and Russia, on the basis of which adequate answers to the tasks examined in the dissertation work can be sought. This methodology is closely related to the research thesis and enables it to be confirmed in the research process.

#### **6. Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation work**

The dissertation has a clear and logical structure: it consists of an Introduction and three analytical chapters, the first of which builds the general theoretical foundations of the study, and in the other two, this issue is analyzed at the modern stage as it relates to the Fourth Industrial

Revolution. Finally, there is a conclusion, a self-assessment of scientific contributions, main conclusions and a bibliography (248 pages in total).

An analysis of the patterns of development and changes of one main characteristic of the modern state is carried out, which requires complex knowledge and affects both political science and political economy, as well as the philosophy of history, politics and law. The dissertation is based on a large amount of research in Bulgarian, Russian and English. The doctoral student examines her research problem within the framework of the entire history of the development of capitalism and its possible prospects today. The main research thesis is the connection of the cycles of capitalism with cycles of sovereignty, which at each subsequent stage is seen, however, not as a repetition of what was in the previous cycle, but as a developing and changing phenomenon. This development leads, at different stages of capitalism, to four types of sovereignty - state, popular, national and digital, related to the changes of the legitimate subject of power. The analysis is solid and reasoned, based on approaches, concepts and studies that are among the leading ones in the existing literature, and this makes it possible to achieve the corresponding scientific research results.

## **7. Contributions and significance of the dissertation for science and practice**

The research is significant and valuable, with its unique contribution to the subject. The contributions are theoretical but also have applied dimensions. It contains an analysis of long-term historical trends, but also of the latest processes currently unfolding in the conditions of pandemic, military, economic crises. A new problem related to the factors, stages and changes in the historical development of such a fundamental characteristic of the state as sovereignty is formulated and substantiated. The central theme of the analysis is the current stage of development of sovereignty, which is extremely important for understanding and explaining capitalism today in the conditions of multiple crises, deglobalization trends and the emergence of an increasing number of political forces in various countries that bring sovereignty to the fore. Moreover, this problem is particularly significant and unexplored in our country in its dimension of digital sovereignty, which is becoming more and more significant in the context of new geopolitical battles for a new hegemon and the growing risks that the digital space brings to states and societies. Here, in order to adequately divulge the changes of sovereignty, not only the actions of leading countries in this area are analyzed, but also a content analysis of their normative and strategic documents is carried out. On this basis, new trends and forecasts of developments in this field until the end of our decade are substantiated. Among the applied nature of the research results, of note are the analyses, comparisons and conclusions about the development of the digital sovereignty of Bulgaria as part of that of the EU,

and its comparison with the development of the digital sovereignty of Russia, as two countries going in different geopolitical directions.

Amongst the noteworthy contributions are the theses about the cyclical nature of sovereignty in the history of capitalism, which is connected on the one hand with successive technological revolutions, and on the other hand, with the systemic cycles of successive strengthening of the role of states and then of the role of market interactions and the movement of people, goods and services across borders. At the same time, the systemic nature of the consequences of technological revolutions can be seen dialectically, which can be a factor for weakening, but also for strengthening, sovereignty. The idea of the development of sovereignty as related to the changes of subjects that are considered as sovereign is also of note - from state sovereignty in the early stages of capitalism, when absolute monarchies are formed, through popular sovereignty, when the foundations of liberal democracy are laid, through the national sovereignty that comes with the formation of unified nations with common identities, a process that gave birth to a number of national liberation movements from the 19th century to the present day, when a new type of space is formed - the digital space, which is also initially globalized and non-sovereign, but in recent years it has also gradually entered a new cycle of deglobalization and strengthening of national states, in which the problem of sovereignty becomes more and more significant.

A scientific contribution of the doctoral student is the creation of a typology of sovereignties correlated with the cycles and technological revolutions of capitalism, the formulation of regularities and a special emphasis of the research analysis on processes of the last decade related to changes in sovereignty as a result of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. At the same time, it should be noted that the classification of sovereignties follows a classic dialectical principle from the time of Hegel's philosophy, according to which each subsequent stage of development contains in a condensed form the previous stage - in this sense, today digital sovereignty contains in a condensed form all previous stages of its development. In this context, different dimensions of digital sovereignty are discovered - informational, virtual, data sovereignty, technological and cyber sovereignty, and the protective mechanisms, through which it is realized, are identified. Here she deals with and seeks answers to the latest issues, which in recent years have been described as the "Balkanization of the Internet" and the "fragmentation of the Internet" in the context of both the Covid pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

It should also be noted the distinction between the descending (2010-2020) and ascending phase (2010-2020) of digital sovereignty, in which Russia, the EU and Bulgaria, analyzed through the content analysis of the strategic documents, find themselves today. On this basis, it should be

noted the classification of the dangers leading to digital sovereignty into technological, social, economic and cultural, the response to which are various combinations of digital authoritarianism and digital anarchism. In this context, the issues of digital freedom and the digital rights of citizens, which are currently at the center of world attention in connection with the so-called fake news in the digital space, are also discussed. The doctoral student also makes predictions about the next fifth cycle of capitalism, related to the next, Fifth Industrial Revolution and emphasizes that they should be taken into account in strategic plans of countries.

#### **8. Evaluation of publications related to the dissertation work**

On the topic of the dissertation, Veronika Prezdarova has six publications - in two collections of conference reports and four in the magazine "Political Horizons". Their topics, respectively, are "Evolution of state sovereignty in the world-system approach in post-epidemic conditions", "Social art: conflict or means of strengthening the national-cultural sovereignty of modern Russia?", "Influence of performance art on historical memory and national sovereignty of the Republic of Bulgaria", "Initiatives of the countries to protect cyber space: the cases of Russia and Bulgaria", "Application of the synergistic methodology for studying the digitalization of political processes", "Social contract, sovereignty, virtualization: evolutionary aspects". They examine various aspects of sovereignty today in its political, cultural, digital dimensions.

#### **9. Personal participation of the doctoral student**

The dissertation reveals the ability of the doctoral student to carry out both a macro-historical and general theoretical study of the development of sovereignty, as well as the ability to conduct an empirical study and comparative analysis of strategies for the development of digital sovereignty in the EU, Bulgaria and Russia. 393 monographs, studies, articles by various authors and strategic works of the states related to various dimensions of the topic were examined and on this basis the doctoral student asserts her own analyses, observations and conclusions. The written text is the result of her personal skills and extensive research on this topic. Citations and references to foreign sources are correct.

#### **10. Abstract**

The abstract synthesizes the most important of the content, structure, goals and tasks of the scientific research in 32 pages. It meets the requirements and reflects the main results achieved in the dissertation. It has a clear structure, without unnecessary repetitions.

#### **10. Critical remarks and recommendations**

I would recommend the PhD student to continue her work on digital sovereignty, as new processes are currently accelerating, related to both the exponential changes in technology and in particular artificial intelligence, Web 3.0 and the metaverse, and the rapid changes in the balance of power between different countries and regions, with the growing scale of cyberwars, of fake news and manipulation in the Internet space, cyberattacks and cybercrimes, which are yet to have systemic consequences on all spheres of modern societies, in particular on the sphere of politics.

## **12. Personal impressions**

I know the doctoral student from the time when she was my student in the bachelor's degree "Political Economy" and the master's degree "Political Economy and the Creative Economy" at UNWE. I have taught her in the disciplines "Introduction to Political Economy", "Global Political Economy", "Philosophy of Economics" and "Knowledge Management". My impressions of her are of a highly motivated student, attending lectures and taking an active position, enquiring and an in-depth reader. She stood out among the other students in this respect and her exam results were always excellent. After that, we remained in contact while she was in Russia, and she consulted with me more than once on the issue of digital sovereignty.

## **13. Recommendations for future use of dissertation contributions and results**

In view of the scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the dissertation research, I would recommend the dissertation student to promote her theses through future publications, including revisions according to new data and research. On this basis, she can also publish a revised and refined version of the dissertation.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, I would summarize that the presented dissertation contains scientific and scientific-applied results that represent an original contribution to science and meet all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of LDASRB and the relevant Regulations of PU "Paisiy Hilendarski".

The dissertation shows that the doctoral student Veronika Georgieva Prezhdarova possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty "Political Sciences" by demonstrating qualities and skills for independent conduct of scientific research.

In view of everything that has been said so far, I confidently give my positive assessment of the conducted research, presented by the above-reviewed dissertation work, abstract, achieved results and contributions, and I propose to the honorable scientific jury to award Veronika

Georgieva Predjadarova the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the field of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction: 3.3. Political Sciences.

January 23, 2023

Reviewer:.....

Prof. DSc. Vassil Prodanov