

## REVIEW

by Associate Prof. Dr. Milen Todorov Lyubenov,  
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of Alexander Ivanov Draganov's dissertation on the topic "The political parties of the USA and Canada in the context of the opposition between liberals and conservatives" for the awarding of an educational and scientific degree "doctor" in a professional field  
3.3. Political Science (Political Science - Comparative Political Science)

### 1. Information about the doctoral candidate

Alexander Ivanov Draganov is enrolled in full-time doctoral studies at the "Political Science" department under professional field 3.3. Political Science (Political Science - Comparative Political Science) in 2020. He is a graduate of Sofia University. In 2007, he graduated with a bachelor's degree in cultural studies, and in 2012 he graduated with a master's degree in political management in the department of political science.

During his doctoral studies, he worked actively and fully in the scientific life of our department. He participated in several seminars, scientific conferences, and wrote reviews of graduates in the bachelor's and master's programs of the department.

I also know Alexander Draganov in my capacity as his academic supervisor during the writing of his master's thesis, in the political management program dedicated to the green parties. Alexander has always demonstrated thoroughness, innovation, and creativity in

his research work. The presented dissertation fully confirms these earlier impressions of mine.

## 2. General characteristics of the dissertation

The dissertation is a comparative analysis of political parties in the United States and Canada in the context of the opposition between liberals and conservatives. Political polarization as a research problem has been rediscovered as a topic in the last decade. Evidence of this is the numerous scientific studies devoted to populism, radicalization, new value cleavages. The current dissertation can also be placed in this broad field. What is different about Alexander Draganov's work is not so much the choice of cases, but rather the research question seeking the reasons for the growing polarization in the United States and the lack of it in Canada.

The dissertation has a volume of 212 pages, covering an introduction, four main chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography. The topic is dissertationable, well developed in terms of structure and content. 174 sources are cited, including scientific literature, media publications, websites, and party documents.

## 3. Structure, content, and results of the dissertation

The dissertation has a clearly defined object and subject of the research. The object of the research is the political parties in the USA and Canada. During the dissertation, an in-depth analysis with a historical overview of the development of the main parties in both countries was made. The subject of the study is the opposition between the parties because of the political competition between them. The doctoral candidate uses qualitative methodology. The main research hypothesis states that "Canadian voters reject fringes in contemporary politics, while Americans, heavily influenced by the country's media climate, are more likely to vote for fringe candidates, particularly on the right."

The first chapter of the dissertation provides a comprehensive theoretical overview of the scientific literature devoted to the differences in the two countries. The doctoral candidate has not simply presented the views of the cited authors, but has done so critically, challenging some of their theses, in search of those key factors that outline the differences in terms of polarization in the US and Canada.

The second chapter examines the development of political parties in the United States in the context of the opposition between liberals and conservatives. The doctoral candidate takes this opposition as dichotomous in the context of the left-right political spectrum and looks for how the two main formations are positioned in it.

The third chapter is identical in conception and execution to the second. An in-depth historical overview of political parties and the development of the party system in Canada is provided. The main political lines of inter-party competition and cooperation between parties are outlined.

The fourth chapter makes a comparative analysis of the two systems. Several main factors that explain differences in degrees of polarization are examined – cultural, institutional, demographic, social policies, party systems, media, and social networks. The doctoral candidate concludes that the greater polarization in the US compared to Canada is due to a complex of factors related to political institutions, the party system, and the different degree of social security in the two countries. The most significant role, according to the dissertation, is played by the media - television and social networks, which intensify radicalization and polarization between individual political audiences.

#### 4. Evaluation of the scientific contributions of the dissertation

A major contribution of the dissertation is the in-depth comparative analysis that highlights the differences in the US and Canadian party systems in terms of polarization in recent years.

Such a topic has not been presented to the Bulgarian public, which should be appreciated, especially since the work on nothing is inferior in quality to scientific publications on the topic written by Canadians or Americans.

#### 5. Evaluation of dissertation publications

The doctoral candidate has presented three publications on the topic of the dissertation work. One of them is co-authored. All three articles have been published in peer-reviewed

journals. This fulfills the minimum publication requirements for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

#### 6. Evaluation of the abstract

The abstract corresponds to the dissertation work and meets the stipulated normative and scientific requirements. The individual chapters of the dissertation are correctly presented.

#### 7. Criticisms, recommendations, and questions

Some weaknesses are also noticeable in the dissertation.

First, theoretically, the doctoral candidate has done a thorough analysis of the various theories and viewpoints that explain the differences between the United States and Canada. This is done critically and in a dialogic form between the doctoral candidate and the authors cited by him. At the same time, he never settles on a guiding theory to serve as a conceptual basis for his work.

Second, when talking about relations between parties and party polarization, attention should be paid to party systems theory, which is underrepresented in the work.

Third, it is not well argued why the period of the study mentioned in the title was chosen. The period of three years is too short to study a complex political and social phenomenon like polarization with its causes and consequences. The doctoral candidate considers this as a limitation of the work. The period set in the title does not even coincide with Donald Trump's full four-year presidential term, although the text does provide analysis of the 2020 US presidential election and the 2021 Canadian parliamentary election.

The media and social networks have acted as a catalyst for political radicalization and polarization over the past decade. This is the subject of numerous studies. But why is this effect so strong in the US and less so in Canada? Are there other factors, beyond those listed, that increase polarization in the United States?

Conclusion:

The submitted dissertation is a thorough study that meets all scholarly standards. The doctoral candidate has fulfilled the set goals and tasks. The main hypothesis is defended with arguments.

Therefore, my assessment of the work is positive and I will vote for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional field 3.3. Political Sciences (Political Science - Comparative Political Science) by Alexander Ivanov Draganov.

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Sofia

Signature:

Associate Professor Milen Lyubenov