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**Rakovski National Defence College**

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**REVIEW**

by professor doctor Pavel Borisov Penev,  
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Sofia 1504, Blvd. Evlogi and Hristo Georgievi No. 82,  
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of the dissertation work of Dr. Plamen Atanasov Atanasov  
on “Security and Communication”,  
submitted for the acquisition of the scientific degree “Doctor of Sciences”,  
in the field of higher education 9. “Security and Defense”,  
professional direction 9.1 “National security”,  
Doctoral Program “Security Strategies and Policy”

Sofia

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## **1. Relevance and significance of the developed scientific problem**

In the study of security, one inevitably comes to the communication of the person with other individuals, to the communication in the group and between social groups. Thus, it is logical to analyze the relationships between people organized in social systems in their various aspects. The author believes that this is unthinkable without communication between people organized in social systems and with the world around them.

Such a move acquires particular importance in the conditions of an information society, unthinkable without modern communication in social systems, which requires transforming or building new models for researching security in its various aspects, on a national, regional and global scale. For example, in the USA, communication has been formalized in such a way that the figure of the National Security Council Strategic Communications Coordinator of the White House (currently John Kirby) has been introduced, who prepares the American audience for extreme events.

I am not aware of any similar developments in our country based on the presented dissertation work. What is new in the dissertation is the approach proposed by the author, revealing security through communication in its broad context, focused on significant changes in different formats that people encounter in the course of their lives, as well as the analysis of the interconnectedness of security and communication.

The topic of the dissertation corresponds to the main content of the development.

The absence of a strict conceptual apparatus related to the problems of security and communication and of publications in our country on this subject (except for the author), as well as the different interpretations of the terms “security” and “communication”, determine the great relevance of the dissertation work developed by Dr. Plamen Atanasov. This is of particular importance at the current stage of the development of our society, due to the need for periodic updating of the

legal framework and the national conceptual-doctrinal documents related to the various aspects of security.

On the basis of the above, I believe that the problems researched and developed in Dr. Plamen Atanasov's dissertation work are current, significant and have important scientific and scientific-applied significance for the theory and practice of security and communication, regardless of the spheres of their application.

## **2. General characteristics and structure of the dissertation work**

The dissertation has a total volume of 307 pages and contains an introduction, five chapters with conclusions to each of them, a conclusion, four appendices and a bibliography.

The statement of the task in the dissertation is correct. In accordance with its purpose, the doctoral student has formulated three main tasks, object, subject, hypothesis and limitations, as well as research methodology.

The five chapters of the dissertation are logically connected and appropriately structured. In developing them, the author has successfully applied a system-oriented approach and a number of other research methods (analysis, comparison and synthesis), using interesting facts from documents of various institutions, from theoretical developments on the researched topic and from publicly available information from the media.

It is understood that in the first chapter of his dissertation work, conditionally divided into three parts, the author thoroughly analyzes the main conceptual apparatus of his research, introducing a working definition of security and a working understanding of communication.

In my opinion, in chapter two, the author has built the “scientific construction” of his dissertation work. The relationship between security and communication is substantiated (Fig. 6) and an original in-house study of speech dynamics since the beginning of the SARS-CoV-2 virus pandemic has been carried out. A model for dealing with significant changes is proposed (Fig. 8), and the

mechanisms for interfering with the understanding of disseminated information (censorship, propaganda, information wars) are added to the model. The latter are consistently explored in the dissertation work.

In the third chapter, in accordance with the systemic approach, the doctoral student reveals the genesis of the tool “censorship” as a communication phenomenon and its inclusion in the mechanism of knowing the world (Fig. 11). Of particular interest is Table No. 1, showing the difference between the years of the emergence of the mass media and the beginning of its censorship, the three rules of censorship proposed by the author, as well as the thesis about the role of censorship as a tool for achieving security.

In chapter four, given the finding that censorship is not a sufficient tool to manage the system in the context of security, the doctoral student reveals the genesis of the tool “propaganda” in a rather large volume, as well as its entry into the mechanism of knowing the world (Fig. 12). The connection with knowledge exchange and with the proposed model is shown in chapter two. The author conducts his own research in the global scholarly publication database “Publons” on the increasing number of titles containing the word “propaganda”, especially in the period 2015-2020. In doing so, propaganda is examined in the paper from five independent perspectives, with the doctoral student revealing specifics, techniques and principles of this management tool.

In the fifth chapter, given the changed realities in the XXI century, the author considers that, in accordance with the proposed model (Fig. 8), the situation is complex, in which it is necessary to create knowledge, and information wars come out as a management tool. The doctoral student reveals their genesis in detail, analyzes them in three contexts - civil, military and general, as well as the inclusion of information wars in the mechanism for learning about the world. The author examines various aspects of information connectivity in modern conditions (atomization, radicalization, terrorism), as well as cyberspace, cyberwarfare and the New Cold War.

Each of the five chapters of the dissertation ends with conclusions.

The scientific methodology used by the doctoral student is applicable to the achievement of the author's goal and corresponding tasks of the dissertation work.

The dissertation meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation.

### **3. Characteristics of the scientific and scientific-applied contributions in the dissertation work. Credibility of the material**

The scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the dissertation are related to such basic concepts for people and in security theory as security and communication and consist, in my opinion, primarily in the following:

- three working forms of security are defined - ideal, sought and achieved;
- the thesis is substantiated that communication is a basic element in communication, and security is revealed through communication in its broad context, aimed at significant changes in a different format that people face in the course of their lives;
- a model was synthesized for dealing with significant changes with three possible activities: dealing with one's own knowledge, dealing with non-own knowledge and creating (generating) knowledge;
- the relationship between the stages of the political order in the period XVII - XXI century and the model for overcoming change is shown;
- the model is appropriately linked to communication phenomena such as censorship, propaganda and information wars;
- the category of “speakers” as a tool of communication is substantiated and introduced, showing their potential capabilities and functional specifics, as well as the role of the media as a speaker;
- the threat of the appearance of a non-state entity in cyberspace is revealed and some of the mechanisms by which it imposes its interests are defined.

I accept the scientific and applied scientific contributions in the dissertation formulated by the doctoral student in the abstract.

The critical analysis in the dissertation of productions of classics on the researched topic, of modern, including Bulgarian scientists, the rich factual evidence from documents of various institutions and the author's use of scientific tools to justify his theses show that the credibility of the material on which builds the contributions in the dissertation work, is high.

#### **4. Evaluation of the scientific results and contributions of the dissertation work**

The obtained results and contributions of the dissertation work, in my opinion, help to enrich the existing knowledge in the theory and practice of security and communication. The author explains dependencies and formulates factors allowing to deal with the significant changes to achieve security. The obtained results benefit the concepts of social dimension of security.

There is the authorial participation of the doctoral student in the contributions of the dissertation work, which are his personal work.

#### **5. Evaluation of dissertation publications and authorship**

The main results of the research in the dissertation work are presented in 16 publications presenting articles and reports. One of these publications is an article (with a co-author) published in the journal “International Journal on Information Technologies and Security”, which is referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information (Web of Science). The remaining 15 publications (articles and reports) are independent and are placed in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or in edited collective volumes, as well as in specialized publications for classified information. These 15 publications were made on various forums, mainly at Vasil Levski National University, NBU and Rakovski National Defence College.

The indicated 16 scientific publications correspond to the topic of the dissertation work. The authorship of Dr. Plamen Atanasov is clearly expressed in the cited publications.

The author has been cited 5 times in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals. The scientific output of Dr. Plamen Atanasov meets and exceeds the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the NBU for the scientific degree “Doctor of Sciences”.

In general, the dissertations, as well as the scientific and scientific-applied contributions, are the personal work of the author.

## **6. Opinion on the presence or absence of plagiarism**

At the time of reviewing Dr. Plamen Atanasov's dissertation and the publications on it, I have not found and am not aware of any reports of plagiarism.

## **7. Literary awareness and competence of the doctoral student**

The doctoral student conscientiously used the scientific literature on the topic of the dissertation (377 sources), of which 220 sources are in Cyrillic (Bulgarian and Russian) and 157 sources are in Latin (English and German). He personally researched, developed and found a solution to the problems in the dissertation related to security and communication.

The knowledge and competence of the author regarding the state of the problem is also determined by the two master's degrees completed by the candidate - at TU “Sofia” and at SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”, as well as full-time doctoral studies at SU “St. Kliment Ohridski” in the professional direction 3.5 “Public communications and information sciences”. He is the author of the monograph “Reputational Crises Online” and co-author of the monograph “Managing Reputational Crises”. He is the author of 41 articles and reports, not included in the dissertation work for the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”, and in only three of these works the doctoral student is a co-author.

A significant part of the doctoral student's professional experience is related to the topic of the peer-reviewed dissertation. All this determines the high competence of Dr. Plamen Atanasov on the topic of the dissertation work.

## **8. Evaluation of the abstract**

The abstract was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules for its Implementation and correctly reflects the main points and scientific contributions of the dissertation work.

## **9. Critical notes**

I have three critical remarks about the dissertation work.

My first critical note concerns the sheer volume of the dissertation. In my opinion, it is not necessary to literally quote whole passages from the works of classics and modern authors in the text of the dissertation, but to analyze them in a deductive form. At the same time, at the end of the dissertation, there are no general conclusions, which are formulated in the abstract.

My second critical note concerns the author's separation of the purpose of the dissertation (pp. 16-17) and the task of research (p. 19). In my opinion, in accordance with the systematic approach, the purpose of the dissertation work, from which the tasks of the research derive, should be unambiguously formulated.

My third critical note comes down to the author calling the research tasks subtasks (p. 19). I believe that this question is not only editorial, because as a result of solving the tasks of the research, the goal of the dissertation work is realized.

The indicated critical remarks do not concern the main scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the reviewed dissertation work and in no way detract from the merits of the candidate's scientific production.

## **10. Personal impressions and other matters on which the reviewer feels he should take a stand**

I have no personal impressions of Dr. Plamen Atanasov's scientific development. From the dissertation and abstract submitted for review, I am left with the impression that he is a specialist with high professional and linguistic training.



## **11. Conclusion**

I believe that the dissertation work on the topic: “Security and Communication”, developed by Dr. Plamen Atanasov Atanasov fully meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its Application for the Acquisition of a Scientific Degree “Doctor of Sciences” in field of higher education 9. “Security and Defense”, professional direction 9.1 “National Security”.

## **12. Evaluation of the dissertation work**

Bearing in mind the above, I believe that the dissertation work on the topic: “Security and Communication”, developed by Dr. Plamen Atanasov Atanasov, should be given a positive assessment.

**Reviewer:**

Prof. Dr. ....(P. Penev)

10<sup>th</sup> November 2023

Sofia