

OPINION

from

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full-time lecturer at the New Bulgarian University (NBU), habilitation in professional field

3.6. "Law"

on

the scientific works for participation in a competition for appointment at the academic position "Associate Professor", in professional field 9.1. "National Security", announced in State Gazette (SG) Issue 84 of

21.10.2022,

with candidate

Ch. Asst. Prof. Michael Minev Dimitrov, PhD

I. Assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the New Bulgarian University

Based on the submitted documents, a conclusion could be drawn that the scientific production presented by the candidate for this competition meets both the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA), and the requirements of the Ordinance on the Development of the Academic Staff of the NBU. It is noteworthy that the applicant exceeded the minimum requirements of the DASRBA on certain indicators (for example, indicator "Д"), and in other cases significantly exceeded them (for example, indicator "Г").

II. Research activity and results

1. The monographic.

The candidate participates in the competition with the monograph "The Western Balkans in the Battle for the Rimland". The monograph is published. The work is balanced, with a clear structure and idea. It consists of an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. Review of with the monograph with StrikePlagiarism.com plagiarism prevention software demonstrates 4.20% similarity. An analysis of the nature of the similarities shows that the phrases within this indicator are of nature that excludes plagiarism. For example, "Common Foreign and Security Policy" is flagged by the software as a match phrase.

In the first chapter, entitled "The Chessboard of the Western Balkans", the author outlines the geographic framework of his research by referring to key events and processes for the political development of the countries in the region. In a discourse that, it seems, is inspired Brzezinski's work not only in title but also in content, the candidate highlighted key political challenges for the region, both domestically and internationally, focusing on the key issues, including for our country, related to the relations Sofia-Skopje and Belgrade-Pristina. To a lesser extent, attention has been given to the challenges along the Sarajevo -

Banja Luka (Belgrade) axis, and this axis has a specific vulnerability with the potential to cause significant ramifications.

In the second chapter, entitled "Geoenergetic War and Cold Peace", the candidate introduces the functional vector of the study - the resources, more specifically energy resources. Arguing the importance of Russia in this bailiwick, the study attempts to analyse the energy perspective from Moscow's point of view. This approach has its merits, but the study would benefit from presenting another outlook, thus revealing the spheres of overlapping political interests of the players in the field of energy supply. Indeed, the Three Seas initiative is discussed in more detail later in the monograph, but one might propose that the discussion is integrated here.

The third chapter, entitled "Raumsinn: between *"Divide et impera"* and *"In varietate concordia"*", focuses on how the functional vector affects the geographic frame. This chapter also presents the Three Seas initiative in more details. In my opinion, both in the presentation of this initiative and in the presentation of the initial positions of the Kremlin on the subject, more could have been given from the point of view of historical and geopolitical motivations. In this regard, the author could have shared his views on whether there is a nexus between *Trimarium* and Pilsudski's idea of *Intermarium*.

The fourth chapter, "Formalized Presentation of the Competitive Space in the Western Balkans" has a central role. By using a dedicated toolkit - the specialized software MACTOR - the candidate analyses the interrelations among interested parties and makes proposals for the direction of further development of relations among the participants. Undoubtedly, this chapter contributes the most to the originality of the study and its significance.

2. On the other submitted publications

The candidate participates in the competition with a published book based on his Ph.D. dissertation entitled "Methodological Conditions for the Analysis of Regional Security: Scenario Space for the Development of the Situation in Europe Médiane", twenty articles and reports published in non-refereed journals with scientific review and in edited collective volumes. Two of these articles and reports are co-authored. Four are in English, with two of them published in international journals from South-Eastern Europe. Three other scientific papers are also presented.

The publications study various aspects of the issues covered in the monograph. These publications have played the role of a basis for writing the monograph, without necessarily repeating any of its parts. They demonstrate candidate's interest in the field of energy policy and geopolitics.

3. Citation from other authors.

From the submitted reference, it is evident that the candidate has identified citations from other authors accounting for 80 points, with a minimum of 50 points required. They are formed by citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review (75 points) and citation in a non-refereed journal with scientific review (5 points).

III. Curricular and teaching activity

The candidate is the Erasmus coordinator of the National and International Security Department (NISD), NBU. Willingly participates in the initiatives of NISD, and in 2022 played a pivotal role in organizing the annual international scientific conference of NISD and the publication of the reports in a volume. Contributed to the conclusion of the cooperation agreement between the General Directorate "Execution of Punishments", Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Bulgaria (GDEP) and the NBU, which is the basis for internships for NISD students at the GDEP. In his teaching activity, he meets the requirements for classroom and non-auditory engagement, as well as work in the e-learning module "MOODLE – NBU". Students' opinions for Mr. Dimitrov in the student surveys are positive.

IV. Administrative and public activity

The candidate is currently a member of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Basic Education, NBU. He was a program consultant at NISD, NBU.

He is the chairman of the "Bulgarian Hub for United Balkans" association, which managed projects under EU, NATO and Rockefeller Brothers Fund programmes.

V. Personal impression of the candidate

Knowing the candidate as a student, doctoral candidate and assistant professor at the NISD, NBU, in my opinion, he has the potential to continue his academic development by becoming an associate professor.

Conclusion

Considering the above, I express my positive assessment. I consider that the monograph and the presented articles meet the requirements of DASRBA and merit the appointment in the academic position "Associate Professor" in professional field 9.1. "National Security", announced in SG Issue 84 of 21.10.2022. I recommend to the Scientific Jury to propose to the NBU Academic Council to elect Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Michael Minev Dimitrov as an "Associate Professor" in the specified professional field.

28.01.2023

Signature