

STATEMENT

by Prof. Dr. Nikifor Hristov Stefanov Honored Lecturer at the Paisii Hilendarski University, Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, Department of Political Science and National Security , on the scientific works for participation in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in the professional field 9.1. National Security , announced in the State Gazette No. 84 of 21.10.2022, p. 38, item 2., with a candidate for the position of Associate Professor Dr. Michael Minev Dimitrov.

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

The candidate for participation in the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the Department of National and International Security of New Bulgarian University, in the field of higher education "Security and Defence", professional field "National Security", announced in the State Gazette No. 84 of 21.10.2022, page 38, item 2. *Associate Professor Dr. Michael Minev Dimitrov.*

has fulfilled the minimum national requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, Article 1a of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the requirements of New Bulgarian University.

II. Research (creative) activity and results

The list of the scientific production of Michael Dimitrov includes one habilitation work - a published monograph , one published book based on a defended dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" and 20 articles and reports published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes or in specialized publications for classified information and 3 scientific publications other than those submitted at the completion of the doctorate.

The scientific works proposed for opinion refer to three areas, namely

- Political Processes in the Western Balkan Countries (1.1, 3.1, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7, 3.9, 3.10, 3.13, 3.14, 3.15, 3.19, 3.20),
- Regional Security Theory (2.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.16, 3.18) and
- Energy security of the Three Seas region countries (3.6, 3.8, 3.11, 3.12, 3.17).

In the strand - **Political Processes in the Western Balkan Countries**, in which the monographic work is included, the candidate:

- focuses on the points of impact with the countries of origin in the Western Balkans, critical for the implementation of the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria.
- characterizes and assesses the trends of change in the regional actors' SDGs and systematizes triggering and restraining factors for action to transform their geopolitical orientation;
- identifies the predominant forms of influence-pushing in the Western Balkan states by regional powers and external actors with high potential for interference;
- identifies the main areas on which efforts to reformat relevant areas of public life are focused, including those with consequent effects on ethnic and religious homeostasis;
- demonstrates its destabilizing effect and potential to provoke power redistribution with disastrous consequences for the regional security community;
- proposes conclusions , which lead to an enriched understanding of the means of conducting indirect violence and exerting general limited influence in the contemporary context of socio-technological evolution.

In the area of **Regional Security Theory**, Senior Assistant Dimitrov argues for the leading role of regional spaces in understanding the behavior of players in the international environment. He identifies the presuppositions of the insufficiency of historical-geographical grounds in the delineation of distinct subsystems of state-social actors and proposes a general line for the application of an adapted structuralist approach based on recurrent sets of relations defining role positions.

The publications in this field are aimed at formulating methodological premises and mechanisms through which to operationalise regional spaces as an optimal starting point for the study of the military-political situation. The chosen designed approach is of practical-applied orientation and aims at increasing the effectiveness of the implemented information-analytical activity.

The third area - **Energy Security of the Three Seas Region countries** in the candidate's scientific production is devoted to the assessment and analysis of the energy determinants of the political process in the Three Seas region countries. In the publications, the author thoroughly reveals the relationship between the development of gas transmission infrastructure in the region and the general strategic line of interested external parties, with an emphasis on the export policy of Gazprom. He outlines the promising directions of the Western Balkans and assesses the overall situation influenced by the construction of new diversification routes and the corresponding countermeasures conducted by the Russian Federation. Dr Dimitrov Identifies the role of the so-called "small-scale" natural gas liquefaction infrastructure and its potential to "drive" new geo-economic axes in the Eurasian zone.

I define the contributions of the candidate's scientific production as further developing the knowledge for the professional field of National Security.

Senior Assistant Dr. Michael Minev Dimitrov has been cited in monographs and peer-reviewed collective volumes eight times and once in a non-peer-reviewed journal.

III. Teaching and learning activities

Senior Assistant Dr. Michael Minev Dimitrov is a graduate of New Bulgarian University, Department of National and International Security.

He started his teaching activity in 2017 as a lecturer, successively holding the positions of Assistant and Senior Assistant in the Department of National and International Security. The candidate's academic and non-academic employment is in accordance with the requirements of New Bulgarian University. His work in the e-learning module "MOODLE - NBU" is at a high level, as evidenced by the evaluations of the students' surveys.

IV. Administrative and public activities

Senior Assistant Dr. Michael Minev Dimitrov possesses administrative skills acquired in the performance of the functions of Program Consultant at the Department of National and International Security, New Bulgarian University, for the period 1.10.2016 - 1.3.2017. He is Chairman of the Bulgarian Hub for United Balkans Association (UIC: 205590304) and has managed projects under EU, NATO and Rockefeller Brothers Fund programs.

V. Personal impressions of the candidate

I know the candidate Senior Assistant Doctor Michael Minev Dimitrov from the time when he defended his dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Education and Science in the field of higher education. PhD degree in 9. National Security. Over the years he gained the necessary teaching and research experience and established himself as a worthy young scientist.

Conclusion

Senior Assistant Dr. Michael Minev Dimitrov has practical experience, published scientific works and meets the minimum national requirements for scientific and teaching activities for the academic position of Associate Professor.

I give a **POSITIVE EVALUATION** to the participant in the competition announced in the State Gazette No. 84 of 21.10.2022, p. 38, item 2. and I recommend to the distinguished members of the scientific jury to elect Senior Assistant Doctor Michael Minev Dimitrov for the academic position of Associate Professor in the professional field 9.1. National Security in the Department of National and International Security of New Bulgarian University.

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Drafted the opinion:

(Prof. Dr. Nikifor Stefanov)