

OPINION

By Prof. D.Sc. Dimitar Trendafilov Yonchev, field of higher education "Security and Defense", professional field 9.1. "National Security" on scientific production for participation in a competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" at "National and International Security" Department of the New Bulgarian University in the professional field 9.1. "National Security", announced in the State Gazette No. 84 of 21.10.2022, page 38, item 2, with candidate Chief Assistant Professor Michael Minev Dimitrov, PhD.

I. Research activity and results

1. The monographic work "The Western Balkans in the battle for the Rimland" has all the merits as such. The four chapters of the monographic work are organized according to the logic of the research, which is to provide the necessary elements for building a formalized image of the competitive space of the Western Balkans. This goal was achieved through a thorough and, one might say, comprehensive analysis of the state of processes in the Western Balkans region with a time depth determined by the relevant process under consideration.

The author's effort to fully cover the subject of his analysis makes a very good impression. To achieve this, he uses the possible sources correctly and in good faith with the necessary indications of both the respective source and the time of its use, when the source implies this.

The representation of each of the individual participants in the region is currently at the level of specialized analyses, the work of narrow specialists on the respective state-actors.

In the analytical part of the monographic work, I would emphasize as particularly successful the presentation of the overall picture of the energy features of the region of the Western Balkans. Acquaintance with this detailed and fact-supported picture involuntarily evokes a comparison with some statements of most of the politicians involved in these issues in our country. It can definitely be said that this comparison does not favor the latter.

At the center of the monograph is the formalized presentation of the Western Balkans as a competitive space. Doctor Michael Dimitrov had the good idea to use MACTOR applied specialized software developed by Laboratoire d'Investigation en Prospective, Stratégie et Organization (LIPSOR) and École Pour l'Informatique et les Techniques Avancées (EPITA). Thanks to its application, the author has achieved accuracy and objectivity of the results, which cannot be achieved by way of political and specialized analyses. The formalized picture of the competitive space carries a heuristic charge and is a good basis for the eventual deployment of mathematical modeling, with the help of which prognostic results could also be sought.

The academic style of the exposition mastered by doctor Michael Dimitrov should be noted, which distinguishes the monograph.

2. After the appointment at the academic position of Chief Assistant Professor on 31.01.2020, Michael Dimitrov carried out active research activities, which led to the publication of eight manuscripts, in addition to the monographic work, in Bulgarian and English in Bulgarian journals, as well as one publication in English language in edition of the Republic of North Macedonia.

The subject matter of these publications reveals essential aspects of the research in the monographic work, and each of them adds broader information.

3. The reference for citations by other authors is available, and according to the relevant scientometric indicator (\mathcal{I}), Chief Assistant Professor doctor Michael Dimitrov has indicated citations, which in total equal 80 points. A significant part of the citations is from well-established scientists and teachers, which speaks for the authority of our young Associate Professor candidate.

4. Doctor Michael Dimitrov successfully participates in research and creative projects, through which he strives for the results obtained by him to reach the practical field. As a teacher, he managed projects under EU, NATO programs and Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

II. Curricular and teaching activity

Chief Assistant Professor doctor Michael Dimitrov has successfully developed a number of lecture courses which he teaches expertly. He also provides the trainings and participates in the educational games of the students of the department during the time he is a teacher, without interruption. Doctor Michael Dimitrov works with the electronic training module MOODLE - NBU.

I believe that Chief Assistant Professor doctor Michael Dimitrov is one of the students' favorite professors.

III. Administrative and public activity

The candidate for position "Associate Professor" Chief Assistant Professor doctor Michael Dimitrov has been a program consultant at the "National and International Security" Department of the New Bulgarian University for the period from 1.10.2016 to 1.3.2017. He is currently also the chairman of the NGO "Bulgarian Hub for the United Balkans" (UIC: 205590304).

IV. Personal impressions of the candidate

I have known Michael Dimitrov since his first days on the student bench at NBU. I followed his development, which can be described in one word - progress. A brilliant student and later master's student, he attracted the attention of many of the professors. He legitimately

accepted the academic career and with his work shows that he has potential for its successful development. At his scientific events, which I have observed, Michael Dimitrov always gives the impression of a serious in his preparation and a responsible young scientist. His reports attract attention and, as a rule, provoke questions, such as are asked of experts in the relevant field, indicating that the colleagues listening to him perceive him as an expert.

V. Opinions, recommendations and notes on the activity and achievements of the candidate

A distinctive feature of Dr. Michael Dimitrov's texts is the scientific language, which at times suffers from excessive workload and complexity of expression. Some terms, as for example it happened in the monograph with the term "discourse", are used in a not particularly appropriate way. In this case, "discourse" is used as a synonym for speaking, while the semantic field of discourse is much more comprehensive.

I would point out as a recommendation that Dr. Michael Dimitrov adhere to the objectivity of the exposition as much as possible in his scientific production, as he did in a wonderful way in the fourth part of his monographic work, and to reduce as much as possible (if he cannot avoid it at all) the so-called "politically correct language". There is always some kind of political correctness but the scientist has his ways of remaining objective.

These recommendations in no way diminish my excellent impression of Michael Dimitrov's work and growth.

In conclusion, I state that I positively assess the academic activity of Chief Assistant Professor doctor Michael Minev Dimitrov, which is why I propose that he be allowed to be elected as an Associate Professor by the Academic Council of the NBU.

Date 30 January 2023

Signature