

REVIEW

By Professor Dr. Stefan Ivanov Michev, professional direction 9.1. "National Security", professor in the Department of "National Security", in the Faculty of "Information Sciences" of the University of Library Science and Information Technologies on the scientific works for the academic position "associate professor" in professional direction 9.1. National Security, for a competition announced by the New Bulgarian University in SG no. 84/21.10.2022, with candidate ch. Assistant Professor Michael Minev Dimitrov, Ph.D.

Sofia

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

From the submitted report on the implementation of the minimum national requirements from the chief assistant Dr. Michael Minev Dimitrov for participation in a competition, for holding the academic position of "associate professor" in the Department of "National and International Security" of the New Bulgarian University, in the field of higher education "Security and Defense", professional direction "National security" it is evident that the candidate meets these requirements.

The groups of indicators and the corresponding number of points for each of the presented scientific works are indicated in accordance with the minimum national requirements for the candidate's scientific activity. The numbering of the scientific works corresponds to the numbering presented in the list of the candidate's scientific production. According to group of indicators "D" the cited work of the candidate and the place of citation are indicated. The volume and type of publications for the competition, as well as citations, cover 495 points and exceed the minimum national requirements for science metric indicators.

II. Research activity.

1. Evaluation of the monographic work and other publications submitted for review.

The publications submitted for review correspond to the subject area of the announced competition and are accepted for review. The topics of the publications on the attachments from the candidate "List of works" refer to the field of higher education 9. "Security and defense", professional direction 9.1. "National Security".

I agree with the self-assessment of Ch. assistant professor Michael Dimitrov, Ph.D., that his scientific works for participation in the competition can be structured into three thematic groups:

1. Theory of regional security.
2. Political processes in the countries of the Western Balkans.
3. Energy security of the countries of the Three Seas region.

In the first group of publications (Theory of regional security), the thesis about the leading role of regional spaces in understanding the behavior of subjects in the international environment is argued. The publications in this group are aimed at formulating a methodology and mechanisms by which to operationalize regional spaces.

In the second group of publications (Political processes in the countries of the Western

Balkans), the directions on which efforts to reformat the main areas of public life in the Western Balkans are focused are analyzed.

A third group of publications (Energy Security of the States of the Three Seas Region) is devoted to the impact of energy and energy infrastructure on political processes in the States of the Three Seas region. Prospective directions are outlined both in the narrower context of the Western Balkans and for the construction of new diversification routes for gas and the corresponding countermeasures implemented by the Russian Federation.

The results of the scientific research activity, reflected in the scientific works of the candidate, meet the requirements for occupying the academic position "associate professor". The candidate's scientific activity is aimed at knowledge transfer, systematic analysis and definition of problems, validation of research results, innovation and redefinition of concepts.

The monographic work "The Western Balkans in the Battle for Romeland", which the candidate presents as a habilitation, is a serious study in which the thesis that the Western Balkans remain at the center of the geopolitical confrontation for control of the "Rainbow Land" is developed and argued.

In my opinion, the analysis of the so-called the "geographic destiny" of the region, which generates a series of vulnerabilities and risks that can be defined as synergistically reinforcing and as a result of the policies of the main geopolitical players.

Using and modernizing the methodology of Friedrich Ratzel, ch. assistant professor Michael Dimitrov examines the prerequisites of the "geobiological" environment of the Western Balkans and its impact on the internal political picture in the societies most affected by conflict potential, which can and is used to argue for military aggression.

The candidate for the academic post of "Associate Professor" thoroughly explores the "spatial meaning" of the main conflict axes in the region and the interrelationship between the dynamics along the Belgrade-Pristina line, the centrifugal processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, along with the increasing role of the Croatian element, which at cooperation with the ideologues of the "Serbian world" would lead to the termination of the existence of this state.

One of the main theses of ch. assistant professor Michael Dimitrov, that the energy security of the countries in the region becomes a determining factor for the lack of homogeneity in their foreign policy behavior, and hence leads to the blocking of the efforts to complete the development of the regional security community.

I especially emphasize the successful use of the computer-aided MACTOR method for the analysis of the competitive space in the Western Balkans.

In the published book based on a defended dissertation for the award of an educational and scientific degree "Doctor" "Methodological conditions for the analysis of regional security: scenario space for the development of the situation in Central Europe" there is an enrichment of the category apparatus in relation to the research of the regional security. Any specialist in the field of security would appreciate the analysis of regional spaces and through the prism of the functioning of security entities. And in this book, the theoretical framework is successfully complemented by computer-aided methods MICMAC, SMIC and Scenaring Tools, with the help of which the variables are identified, taking into account the direct, indirect and potential direct influences, with a view to creating an internally consistent picture of the future state of Central Europe.

In the articles and reports submitted for review, other important theoretical problems and practical approaches are analyzed, which are related to the competition for the academic position "associate professor" in professional direction 9.1. National Security.

More specifically, it is an analysis of the main mechanisms through which external centers of power have an impact on regional dynamics in the Western Balkans. Attention has been paid to the special role of guaranteeing the energy security of the countries, both from the point of view of the supply of crude oil and the supply of natural gas.

The peculiarities of the countries of the Western Balkans are examined, in the wider context of the "Trimory" and the geopolitics of the diagonals of Rudolf Köhler. The role of the main geo-economic axes and the impossibility of operationalizing them without completing the European integration processes are taken into account.

Economic trends in the region, including those affected by the spread of SARS-CoV-2, and the varying degree of resilience of domestic actors are explored.

I especially note the achievement in the article "Scenario space for the development of security dynamics in Central Europe", where a scenario space for the development of security dynamics in Central Europe is presented, based on the results of applying 3 computer-aided methods: a matrix accounting the changes of cross-influences aimed at categorization of quantities MICMAC (Matrice d'Impacts Croisés Multiplication Appliqués à un Classement), systems and matrices of cross-influences SMIC (Systèmes et Matrices d'Impacts Croisés) and scenario space

visualization application "Scenaring Tools ".

2. Evaluation of the results and contributions in the research of ch. Assistant Dr. Michael Dimitrov.

In my opinion, presented by Ch. Assistant Professor Michael Dimitrov, Ph.D. report on scientific contributions corresponds to the candidate's achievements. Among the stated scientific results and contributions, I would like to point out several that prove the originality of scientific research and scientific results:

- A methodology has been created for deriving the structure of regional spaces.
- An approach that goes beyond the substantive notions of the concept of "region" is proposed, based on a synchronic reading of the phenomena and processes.
- A classification of regional spaces has been compiled, with a view to deriving regularities in conducting the foreign policy line of leading centers of power in relation to them.
- The changes in the relative weight of the means, means and forms of manifestation of active measures aimed at vulnerable areas of the countries subject to interventions have been deduced.

All contributions in the peer-reviewed papers are the personal work of the author. Some of the contributions need editing because they describe the results of the research, not the moment of the contribution. This note does not call into question my overall positive assessment of the presence of contributions in the research of ch. Assistant Dr. Michael Dimitrov.

3. Evaluation of the results of participation in research and creative projects and application of the obtained results in practice.

In his capacity as chairman of the Association "Bulgarian Hub for the United Balkans", Ch. Assistant Professor Michael Dimitrov, Ph.D., has carried out activities on EP, NATO and Rockefeller Brothers Fund projects. Head of a project (Advanced Research Workshop type) under the Science for Peace and Security program of NATO, on the topic "Integration of the Western Balkans in NATO as a Guarantee for Regional Stability".

III. Learning and teaching activity.

1. Auditory and non-auditory employment, work in the electronic training module "MOODLE - NBU", provision of student practices and internships, work with students and doctoral students.

The candidate for the academic position "associate professor" Michael Dimitrov makes full

use of the electronic training module "Moodle - NBU", provides materials for lectures, self-study tests and virtual classrooms (if necessary, depending on the situation). Ch. assistant professor Michael Dimitrov actively participated in the signing of an agreement with the State Department of Justice at the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Bulgaria, directly related to the provision of student internships for the master's program "Criminology and Crime Prevention Policies". Supports the graduation process of students as a supervisor, reviewer and conservator in examination committees.

2. Work with Erasmus students.

Ch. assistant professor Michael Dimitrov, Ph.D., is an Erasmus+ academic coordinator of the National and International Security Department. As such, it carries out the activities of signing program agreements with partner universities, ensuring incoming and outgoing mobility of students, as well as staff members.

IV. Administrative and public activity.

Ch. Assistant Professor Michael Dimitrov actively participates in the non-governmental sector as a trainee under various programs (e.g. Young Balkan Leaders-the power of shared international knowledge and skills for successful management, Project №2018-1-BG01-KA205-047713), as well as in his capacity as a manager of his own projects.

1. Participation in collective management bodies of the NBU.

Ch. Assistant Professor Michael Dimitrov is a member of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Basic Education of the New Bulgarian University.

2. Attracting students to the program.

The candidate for the academic position "associate professor" Michael Dimitrov regularly gives lectures in the format of the NBU "Open Days" campaigns

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

I have no major criticisms. My recommendation in view of the competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" to the colleague Ch. assistant professor Michael Dimitrov, based on the results of his scientific research, is to publish a textbook for the needs of the educational process at NBU, as well as to continue his publication activity and participation in scientific forums, for which he has all the necessary prerequisites.

VI. Opinion on the presence or absence of plagiarism.

I have not detected plagiarism and I have not received a plagiarism alert in the works of Ch. Assistant Dr. Michael Dimitrov. The sources used are cited in good faith.

VII. Conclusion.

I positively assess the academic activity of chief assistant doctor Michael Minev Dimitrov. She meets the requirements of ZRASRB and PPZRASRB for occupying the academic position of "associate professor".

I propose that the chief assistant doctor Mihael Minev Dimitrov be allowed to be elected by the Academic Council of New Bulgarian University 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 9. "Security and defense", professional direction 9.1. "National Security".

Reviewer:

Professor, Dr. Stefan Michev