

TO
THE PRESIDENT OF THE SCIENTIFIC JURY
conducting a Competition for awarding the Academic Position
“Professor” for the needs of the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia
University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

OPINION

Regarding the Scientific Production and the Teaching Activity of Assoc. Prof. Dr. S. Maria
Pirgova, Participant in a Competition for awarding the Academic Position “Professor” in
Professional Field 3.3. Political Science (Political Systems and Institutions),
announced in Official Journal No. 25 / 26.03.2019

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The Opinion has been drafted in accordance with the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA), the Rules for the Implementation of the DASRBA, and Order of the Rector of Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski” Poo 38-236/21.05.2019. The Opinion was assigned by a Decision of the members of the scientific jury for conducting the procedure - Protocol No. 1/10.06.2019.

I declare that I am not a person related to the candidate participating in the Competition for awarding the Academic Position “Professor” within the meaning of § 1 (5) of the Supplementary Provisions of the DASRBA and that I have no private interest which could affect the impartial and objective performance of my work as a member of the jury in this competition.

I. General characteristic of the candidate’s work.

The scientific papers proposed by the only candidate Assoc. Prof. Dr.S. Maria Pirgova reflect the thematic direction of the competition: Political Science (Political Systems and Institutions), and therefore can be accepted for review. The works include: 7 publications, of which 1 monograph “Problematic Fields in Political Science” (PH “St. Kliment Ohridski”, 2018. ISBN 978-954-07-4562-6). Other publications include studios and articles, one of which is in co-authorship and is accompanied by a separation protocol.

The publications presented do not repeat the publications for the acquisition of the scientific degree “Doctor of Sciences” and for acquisition of the academic position “Associate Professor”, and meet the requirements for obtaining the academic position “Professor”.

Apart from the papers submitted for review, the scientific output of the candidate includes numerous publications: 2 monographs, one of which has a second, revised and completed edition, 1 book of author’s texts, and 1 university textbook (which must be particularly emphasized), studies and articles. Some of them have been published in English, Russian and French by reputable publishers, incl. such reflected in the international databases with scientific information, or are the result of the candidate’s participation in significant international forums.

II. Brief biographical data and scientific development of the candidate.

The candidate graduated (obtaining a Master's degree) from MSU "M. B. Lomonosov" in 1977. She then made specializations in various aspects of political science at the universities of Leipzig (1985/86), Tübingen (1992/93) and Saarbrücken (1996). Her professional career is mainly related to Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“. In 1977, she became a Specialist, in 1980 – an Assistant Professor, in 1998 - an Associate Professor, in 1990, she obtained a PhD Degree, and in 2018, she obtained the title Doctor of Sciences.

The teaching and scientific realization of Assoc. Prof. Maria Pirgova covers various aspects of the political knowledge. It focuses mainly on the issues of political systems and institutions. Many of her publications have been cited by Bulgarian and foreign researchers. In addition to her immediate duties at Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski", she has taught at other universities in Bulgaria and has participated, including as a manager, in a number of national and international projects.

Assoc. Prof. M. Pirgova is also a productive pedagogue. She has supervised three PhD students, all of whom have graduated successfully, organizes student seminars and works actively with the Student Club of the Political Scientist at Sofia University „St. Kl. Ohridski“.

It is important to point out that Associate Professor Pirgova has a significant presence in the political life of our state. She has been an expert, an analyst, a parliamentary secretary of the Council of Ministers, an advisor to the President of the Republic of Bulgaria on political and constitutional affairs, and has participated in various formats of the democratic election process. She has performed successful administrative as well as consultancy activities. The candidate is a member of the editorial boards of scientific journals, professional and non-governmental organizations. She performs an enviable and notable public and journalistic activity: she is a participant in TV and radio-interviews and in analytical broadcasts. She has hundreds of publications in the periodic press on the issues of ongoing political processes in the country and the world.

III. Key moments in the candidate's scientific work.

The publications proposed by the candidate are on issues that fully meet the requirements of the competition. The bulk of them deals with topics and problems that clarify the essence of politics as a social phenomenon, its "background" and history, its contemporary manifestations, the system, the structure and the subjects of politics, their role in the contemporary political life of society. The monographs of Assoc. Prof. Pirgova deal with the same subjects. Her last monograph "Problematic Fields in Political Science" specifically explores this problem.

Several key problem areas can be outlined in the candidate's research. The first covers the most general, fundamental aspects of the theory and methodology of political science, whose placement and clarification, on the one hand, are an indicator of the "courage" (since there are not many authors in the Bulgarian political science who take upon themselves similar tasks) and the "qualification" level of Pirgova. On the other, they are a prerequisite for building the theoretical and methodological basis for forming the candidate's own "vision" of the essence and objectives of political science.

The second key problem area is "conceptually-substantial". In this area, the main research interests and achievements of the candidate are to be found. In many publications, Assoc. Prof. M. Pirgova justifies and expresses her views on issues ranging from the most

general questions about the essence of politics, through problems related to the manifestations of the political in the contemporary world, to the examination of specific “hot” topics of the Bulgarian and the international political life.

In this connection, the third key problem area of the candidate's research may be outlined, which is related to explaining the “technology” and “mechanisms” of “doing” politics and of political “action”.

The scientific production of Assoc. Prof. Pirgova thus presented demonstrates that she is a thorough researcher who “combines” the “high” theory with the “hot” problems of the current political practice. At the same time, in asking questions and in offering possible solutions to them, the candidate exhibits her ability to form her own, clear and consistent author's approach and position.

3.1. The characteristic of M. Pirgova's research approach thus outlined manifests itself completely **in her monograph entitled “Problematic Fields in Political Science” which she has presented as a habilitation thesis. That is why, I will focus on it in my Opinion.**

From a methodological point of view, this approach is implemented through two methodological “keys”. The first key is a “philosophical key”, which presents in an original manner different scientific fields of political science through the prism of the unity of a logical and a historical approach. In this way, the relation between the main concepts, through which the political process is analyzed, is presented in their sequence of development: from the simple exercise of power, through the state, to globalization.

Here, the influence of the second “key” also manifests itself: the author argues that the construction of a science-based, comprehensive picture in the study of global phenomena requires the application of a specific “political” approach. To support this view, she relies on the fact that this approach is the only interdisciplinary approach and the only approach that has historically taken place at the end of the 20th and early 21st century. She considers that this approach, as it is shown in her monograph, enables us to reveal and present the basic parameters of the political logic of global processes.

Content-wise, in my opinion, the following main aspects of the monograph may be outlined:

a) on the basis of the use of the two methodological “keys”, the author presents her understanding of politics, by outlining two main features of politics. First, Pirgova considers politics as one of the forms of social regulation. Politics is explained by the biological, transforming and social essence of men that is reflected in their self-consciousness. The monograph tracks how political regulation has historically emerged and has followed the development of state social forms to the age of global phenomena. It is shown that an essential feature of policy is that it has integrative, socializing, mobilizing functions and that it plays an exclusive role in safeguarding people's security at the levels of their existence.

Secondly, M. Pirgova perceives politics as inextricably linked with power in society. The monograph is based on the author's unified view of the nature of power and politics. According to this view, power is an asymmetric attitude of inequality that is “driven by” factors such as will and interest. It always manifests itself in a social environment, functioning through institutions and organizations. Power finds the most complete form of its stability in the state and is experiencing its most serious challenge in the processes of globalization. This understanding is consistently supported in separate chapters of the monograph with specific

authors and historical examples. At the beginning, Pirgova answers the questions about the objective nature of power relations and the management of society through power and political relations. She analyzes the role of inequality and will in the power relations and the political process. The author distinguishes the power and force fields in the society that arise in the course of exercising power. She conceptualizes these problem fields as concepts within the framework of politics and examines them in the unfolding of the analysis in the monograph.

b) In the monograph, Assoc. Prof. Pirgova formulates a number of concrete conceptions about the essence of many political “phenomena”, forming the content of politics. She examines them both from a historically and (what is particularly important) from a contemporary, up-to-date perspective. Here, I think, special attention deserves Maria Pirgova’s view of “reduced democracy”. As she points out, she used this concept for the first time in an article she wrote in 2011, but in the monograph, she further develops it in a holistic view. According to this view, the process of reducing democracy is linked to the achievement of a partial consensus in a certain political elite on temporarily giving up on full action and the rule of law and constitution. This consensus leads to a real limitation of the capacity of democratic institutions and of citizens’ rights that are based on the functioning of democracy. Reduced Democracy, for Ass. Professor Pirgova, is the assignment of unconstitutional powers to one of the authorities - presidential, executive or legislative. She reveals concrete manifestations of the process of “reducing” democracy, including in Bulgaria.

3.2. At the end of the opinion, I will point out that what was stated so far does not exhaust the main scientific and applied achievements of the monograph, nor does it touch upon many other very important aspects of the scientific work of Assoc. Prof. M. Pirgova. Among them, the following **important ideas and results** are of particular significance, both theoretically, historically and practically:

- Pirgova works on the issue of national ideal and national interest in global conditions. In this work, she develops and justifies the ideas that the national ideal in the global world, despite the changes in the functions of national states, continues to be related to the aspirations for peace and prosperity of specific national communities. It manifests itself more and more in the form of opportunities and conditions for the participation of the national community through its representatives in the decision-making that forms the general interest of the supranational community and are in harmony with the interest of the national state-community;

- Another important aspect in the research of Prof. Pirgova is the “typology” of the methodological approaches to globalization, as well as the outlining of the specificity and the essence of the political approach and its consistent application to the global phenomena. This gives an opportunity to show political logic in analyzing political processes. According to Pirgova, this logic reveals the fact that global processes are subject to political power. Power itself is subject to the pressure of technological and social phenomena that are characteristic of the global age. The main trend that can be outlined is the probability of a transition from a unipolar to a multipolar political world. The role of political regulation in this world is growing, which, according to Pirgova, raises the cost of political knowledge and thinking;

- In my opinion, the ideas of Assoc. Prof. M. Pirgova, developed in her works, which explore the essence of ideology in the modern world, as well as the left and right orientations in ideological diversity, are of particular interest. She regards ideology as a central construct of the mass consciousness that determines the identification of large groups in society and their

mobilization in the name of political causes. Pirgova points to the fact that, in contemporary science, and especially in political practice, it is rarely emphasized that the political ideologies have a liberal basis. Liberal ideology pluralizes by developing its values on the one hand to the left-wing in a social plan, and on the other to the right-wing conservative state order. In the modern world, there is a process of disruption of the liberal balance that results from the imposition of the ideas and practice of neoliberalism. Therefore, in her opinion, the need for the development of social-democratic and conservative values on a classical liberal basis is becoming increasingly acute;

- The existence of a number of ideas related to the analysis of the real political process in Bulgaria during the years of “transition” is also worth mentioning. I would like to highlight the candidate’s research on the problems of the rule of law and on the activities of the Bulgarian Parliament internally, and, especially, internationally, because this is not a “preferred” object of consideration. Pirgova's ideas on the importance of parliamentarism for the political life of a state and on the functioning and development of Bulgarian political parties, among which she devotes special attention to the BSP, are also important.

Before going to the conclusion, I would like to ask Associate Professor Pirgova the following question: In her work, she developed the thesis of the origination of ideologies in the 18th and 19th centuries. She argues, as noted, that political ideologies have liberal origins, and that liberal ideology has then subsequently pluralized by developing its values, on the one hand, to the left-wing in a social plan, and, on the other, to the right-wing conservative state order. She does this to create a “linear” “spectrum” of political ideologies based on the “left-right” attitude, at the center of which is liberalism. According to her, is it possible to have a “non-linear”, “alternative” model of the ideological “spectrum” that is built on the basis of the existence of two fundamental ideologies: “liberalism” – “communitarianism (socialism, communism)”)? These ideologies should be historically and inherently relatively independent and alternative to one another. May it be that around them, depending on the mutual “penetration” of ideas, two relatively distinct and opposite ideological “families” or two “spectra” should be built? Would this make it possible to overcome the “hard to harness” definition of political ideologies (and of political parties, programs, policies, practices, etc.) as “left” or “right”?

IV. Conclusion.

The outlined outcomes in the research papers proposed by the candidate give me the reasons to draw the following conclusions:

a) they reveal a serious research approach combined with the quest for “self-perception”. They present Assoc. Prof. Pirgova as an independent thinker, offering theoretical solutions, having serious “practical projections” in her work as a lecturer, an expert and a participant in the political life of our state;

b) they show that the candidate's self-assessment of her scientific contributions is accurate and can be accepted.

These results give me compelling reasons to propose to the honorable scientific jury to vote unanimously for the awarding of the academic position “Professor” in the professional field 3.3. Political Science to Associate Professor Maria Pirgova.

V. Declaration.

I, the undersigned Prof. Dr. Boris Manov, declare that I meet the minimum national requirements for occupying the academic position “Professor”.

12.08.2019
Sofia

Signature: _____
Prof. Dr. Boris Manov