

Review

By Professor Vladimir Chukov, Dr. Habil, University of Russe “Angel Kanchev”

For the applicant Iskren Plamenov Ivanov, Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

For the academic position of Associate Professor in 3.3. Political Science (International Politics and Conflict Resolution),

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Dr. Iskren Ivanov is the sole candidate for the announced position of Associate Professor in 3.3. Political Science (International Politics and Conflict Resolution). The full-time faculty is advertised by the Department of Political Science under the Order of the President of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, in accordance with the Regulations 4 and 25 from the Law for the Development of the Bulgarian Academic Staff and under the Bulgarian Regulations for obtaining academic degrees and positions.

About the candidate

Dr. Iskren Ivanov was born on November 11, 1984. He holds a BA in Political Science and MA in European Studies from Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. Iskren has an impressive academic background. In 2013 he defended his doctoral dissertation, then he is appointed as a full-time Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science. Iskren has numerous specializations in several American and French academic institutions. He has also chaired and participated in a few academic projects. I highly appreciate his civic engagement as a lecturer and participant in different initiatives, related to his professional activity. His fluency in four languages (English, French, Russian) is a wonderful precondition for a serious academic career. My personal impressions from our professional contacts are also excellent. He is an excellent team worker – qualities, that are highly relevant to the academic community.

Minimum national requirements

Book of habilitation

The work of Dr. Ivanov is impressive. In every competition, the habilitation book is a leading requirement. Iskren’s works is entitled “The Orthodox Geopolitics of Russia.” The topic is highly relevant. The majority of Kremlin’s political moves could be interpreted and understood only after a detailed analysis of the Russian political leadership. Dr. Ivanov explores Eurasianism as a political formula of contemporary Russia. By making analogues with the Neosmanist paradigm of Turkey, his theory could be defines as “Neo-Rusism.” In fact, his theory is a bout the hiberbolization of Orthodoxy (such thesis is correct after its almost 70 years of denouncing or at least marginalization during the Soviet era), and the supremacy of the

Russian ethnos. Dr. Ivanov is correct in choosing to examine the philosophy of Lev Gumilev and Alexander Dugin. The latter's name is related to the so-called Neo-Eurasianism, which has its roots in the Orthodox culture of Russia. It is not only about the competition between Moscow, Rome, and Constantinople. I deeply appreciate his comparison of Orthodoxy to Islam, Judaism and Buddhism, including as analyzed through the lenses of Dugin. In exploring the philosophical aspects of Neo-Eurasianism, Iskren comes to conclusions that are justified by the new history of Russia, and more particularly – by Moscow's aggression against Ukraine. The majority of authors who Iskren analyzes in his book are: Danilevski, Leontiev, Novgorotsev, Solovyov, Trubetskoy, Suvchinsky, Savitsky, Arapov, Bicilli, etc.

The Neo-Eurasianism transforms into a radical Russia nationalism that composes the ideological vacuum of the Russian state under the Putin administration. Putin's speeches that are deeply inspired by Dugin could be interpreted as a mixture of nationalism, historical nihilism, and hard anti-westernism. The final conclusions of the book for the anti-European nature of Eurasianism are justified by the foreign policy of the Russian President. Thus, the main arguments of Iskren, although destructible for the region, approve his thesis.

The last chapter of Iskren's book has a special contribution. Dr. Ivanov applies a systematic approach of deduction, induction, quantitative analysis, etc. He proves the inconsistency of the argument that the old Logos, the Sea, Europe and the Atlantic, all concepts that are used by the Eurasianism to indicate the New Logos (Eurasia), which is the good Chaos. The author is correct to seek the roots of the Eurasian paradigm in European scholars like Aristotle, Rene Guenon, Gil Deluse, Martin Heidegger and so on. Dr. Ivanov should have also reviewed the book of Oswald Shpengler "The decline of the West." The authors also makes a profound analysis of the Russian Orthodox Church and its behavior. His conclusion provoke a lot of discussions which paves the way for other works on that topic.

The second book of Dr. Ivanov is "The United States and Global Terrorism after September 11." In his work, based on his dissertation, the author shows very deep knowledge of American politics and international security. His greatest contributions are the comparative analysis of the U.S. Foreign Policy doctrines and his theory of global terrorism. Iskren's theoretical conclusions demonstrate his empirical approach, innovative nature, and academic instinct, important and required for every young-career scholar in that field.

Book chapters and Articles

Dr. Ivanov meets the academic requirements, required by the Bulgarian Center for Information and Documentation, regarding the published book chapters and indexed articles. The author has presented 15 works, including a chapter from a monography. The articles, written by Iskren show a solid theoretical knowledge, empirical robustness, and good language skills. With his published works, Dr. Ivanov acts as one of the youngest experts in the field of international relations and security.

Citations

Dr. Ivanov meets the academic requirements for citations and h-index. He has a total of 10 cited articles in Bulgarian and foreign works. It is essential to emphasize that the priority field for the author is international security.

Academic contributions

Dr. Ivanov has already left a trail in the IR studies despite his young age, which is proven by his works. He has serious contributions in geopolitics as a subfield of IR studies. After all, his two books are a comparison between the foreign policy of the two most powerful nations on the earth – the United States and Russia.

Recommendations and critical review

Despite all contributions, I believe that Dr. Ivanov faces a long academic path. The documents and the works, he presented for this competition prove his knowledge of IR studies. However, Iskren is primarily a political scientist, which deprives him from some empirical sources about IR and security. I suggest that the author should focus also on economy as it drives the resources of all nations and shapes geopolitics.

My personal impression is that our young scholar theoretically fits to the profile of the academic universalist. However, such cases in Bulgaria are rare. I believe that the young scholar should specialize in a particular topic in order to become more convincing and useful to our society.

Conclusion

On the basis of my review, by acknowledging the undisputed contributions of the candidate, I suggest that we should unanimously support Dr. Iskren Ivanov for the position of Associate Profession in 3.3. Political Science (International Politics and Conflict Resolution), advertised by Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski.

София, 10.06.2022

С уважение:

/проф. дин Влидимир Чуков/