

Opinion

For the PhD thesis "Energy Geostrategies within the Conflict in Syria",

Of Dimitar Nikolaev Ivanov, PhD student at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski",

By Prof. DSc Vladimir Chukov, Ruse University, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences,

In aim for obtaining the educational and scientific degree PhD,

Professional field, 3.3 Political sciences - Political science (International relations)

My opinion has been implemented in accordance with the requirements of the ŽRASRB, PPZRASRB and according to the Order of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". It was assigned to me according to the decision of the selected members of the scientific jury for conducting the dissertation defense procedure. I declare that I am not a related person within the meaning of § 1, item 5 of the Supplementary Regulations of the ZRASRB with the dissertation, and that I have no private interest that could influence the impartial and objective performance of my work as a member of the jury on this procedure.

I. Biographical data about the dissertation candidate

PhD student Dimitar Ivanov was born on 31.07.1992 in Sofia. He graduated from Second English High School in Sofia and the B.A and M.A. "International relations" at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". He accumulated serious practical experience in various companies and after he started working at the Diplomatic Institute at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He is currently a senior expert in this department. His strong desire for accelerated professional development and a rich language culture is impressive.

II. Importance of the topic

Undoubtedly the topic of energy in the Middle East, regardless of which country in the region is in question has a reliable character. It pushes significant scientific potential forward, both in theoretical depth and in practically inexhaustible empirical realization. It is as if the geopolitical and military strategic dimensions of the post-2011 crisis in Syria should prevail over geoeconomics in order to obtain the obligatory relevance of the dissertation. The debate, or rather the dispute is whether the politics /ethno-religious specifics of the statist establishment/ or the economics /running the Qatar-Turkey pipeline through the territory of Syria/ set up the main causes of the civil war that broke out in 2011. The question is "whether internal or external factors prevailed in turning Syria into a "failed" state". This is directly related to the view / biases - value system / of the analyst himself.

III. General data for the dissertation

The study adopts an exceptional structure within the formula of an introduction, eight chapters, conclusion, scientific contributions, publications and bibliography with a total volume of 335 pages. The bibliographical sources used are 231 in Bulgarian and English.

The author applies the logical principle of following from the general to the particular when constructing the analysis, as a more pronounced balance between the two approaches should have been sought. The first chapter is introductory and illuminates the theoretical concepts in the study, whose methodological approach is part of that of the political sciences. All the other seven are empirical, referring to the energy profile and strategy of seven countries – leading factors in the region and the world, namely the USA, Russia, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Israel.

IV. Scientific and scientific-applied contributions

PhD student Dimitar Ivanov has mentioned five contributions, as I believe

purely pragmatically, they could be summarized in three. These are the following:

1. Attempt to define a concept of "energy geostrategy" within a purely theoretical plan. It is a bold attempt to outline the various ingredients (composition, hierarchy and function) of this complexly directed and manageable process in the hands of the foreign policy apparatuses of the leading international legal entities.

2. Attempt to define specific main factors geostrategies' /a mixture of economics, politics and security/ in relation to the Syrian conflict as a casual regional case. It is mostly about the USA, Russia, Turkey and Iran.

3. Detailed tracking of foreign economic agents' intervention /mainly in the field of energy / in the Syrian energy market.

V. Notes, Criticisms and Recommendations

Dissertation analysis has too many vices, of all kinds nature. The structure should have been lightened, many of the hypotheses are controversial, in the references there are too many of those that have a popular science character. I think it would be better if the European Union, of which Bulgaria has been a member since 2007, was added as main external factor influencing the political and economic process in Syria.

VI. Abstract and publications

These two components of the review items correspond of legal requirements. I especially appreciate those that are published by the Diplomatic Institute and are in English.

VII. Conclusion

The PhD thesis of Dimitar Ivanov corresponds to the requirements for acquiring an educational and scientific degree PhD. The text testifies to proven and verified scientific knowledge, conscious theoretical preparation, innovative

methodological skills and sufficient language expertise. Moreover, the presented work convinces of the presence of intellectual potential and accumulated research skills. I would also like to give credit to the supervisor Prof. Maria Pirgova. Based on everything written up to this point, I want to clearly express my positive opinion about Dimitar Ivanov's PhD work. In this regard, I declare that I will vote "for" the awarding of the educational and scientific degree PhD in professional field 3.3. Political science - Political science (International relations)

Sofia, 6.03.2024

Prof. DSc

Vladimir Chukov