

SCIENTIFIC OPINION

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Professional field 3.3.

on dissertation of the following topic **“Energy geostrategies in the conflict in Syria”**
about acquiring the educational and science degree of “Ph.D.”

in the professional field 3.3. “Political Sciences”;
Major Area of Specialization: Political Science

by Dimitar Ivanov

In the presented dissertation on the applicant Dimitar Ivanov, a topic of indisputable significance from a scientific and applied science point of view has been investigated. This topic is of contemporary significance because the conflict in Syria is active for over a decade and has strong projections on the regional and global stability. Definitely original, as in the Bulgarian scientific research literature, there is no such thorough and versatile analysis of foreign factors interests and policies of the Syrian conflict through the focus of their energy strategies.

The practical and applied value of this dissertation is indisputable because the conflict in Syria has different interpretations in public fields and in political speaking. Political evaluations and poor knowledge of the specific energy nature of the policy in Syria, are predominant in this field in most of the cases.

The objectives, tasks and methodology of the study have been successfully deduced in accordance with the academic requirements. The purpose of the study is to show the degree to which the foreign and regional actors policy in the Syrian conflict: United States, Russia, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Israel, is motivated by their interests to push their own energy geostrategies in the Middle East. It has been successfully implemented. The sole wording of the purpose of the study, allows the Ph.D. candidate Dimitar Ivanov to conduct an in-depth and original one, consistent with processed and considerable factual evidence, and with convincing conclusion and summaries being made.

The chosen methodology is appropriate and enables the achievement of a convincing political science analysis. The methods used by Dimitar Ivanov are appropriate and have been successfully applied to achieve the goal set and solve the scientific research tasks. The political science approach has also been defended successfully, as the various chapters have been organized on a foreign history principle and they deduce consistent aspects for the thorough elucidation of the topic examined in the dissertation. By means of these aspects which have been organized in separate chapters, there is a convincing accumulation of arguments through detailed and comprehensive information about the processes and policies of the specific external factors. There is comparability in the internal structure of the separate chapters, made by the representation of three main aspects – the energy profile of the seven countries examined, their geopolitical interests in the Middle East and Syria and systematization of their energy geostrategies.

This multi-layered comparative perspective definitely makes the perception of the dissertation more profound as a compelling scientific research product of its author. The theoretical model of the study also stands out in the appropriately structured inferences in every chapter. On one hand, they are distinguishable in the text itself and on the other they are skillfully structured and emphasized. This approach is an argument to be pointed out to defend the assertion that a clearly-distinguishable, well-investigated and well-grounded theoretical model underpins the study of Dimitar Ivanov.

All three research hypotheses are quite successfully formulated and well developed in each chapter: First one – what are the prior motives in the policy of Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Qatar – the competitive cross border gas pipelines („Qatar-Turkey“ and „Islamic gas-mane”) or expansion and defense of the regional influence and force control of the Syrian territory – is nicely brought out and grounded in the foreign history analysis (in Chapter Four, Five, Six and Seven).

Second hypothesis is substantial as well and logically formulated through the dissertation's structure and content. The reasons for the occurrence of specific field unions has been successfully compared here. The analysis convincingly contemplates whether supporting or opposing the specific energy projects (Qatari or Iranian proposal) or the regional interests of the United States, Russia and Iran are positioning them in one or the other coalition.

Third hypothesis successfully compares two other dimensions of the foreign factors motivation in the conflict in Syria and the content gives answer to that. There is a thorough and justified evaluation in Dimitar Ivanov's analysis, whether the energy interests of the foreign factors and the aspiration for control over the oil fields are leading or not.

In his dissertation, Dimitar Ivanov has made a comprehensive overview of the studies tracing various aspects of the policies of the foreign factors in the conflict in Syria. The main authors on the topic examined have been mentioned on an analytical and differential basis. The number of authors used is convincing and representative as a sample. The main bibliography sources have been thoroughly examined, as well as a multitude of studies, reports and scientific papers of renowned

specialists in this field. The study contains a very well organized scientific apparatus. The authors used have been cited correctly and entirely compatibly with the academic requirements. The bibliography referenced has been drafted accurately and meets the requirements as well.

The structure of the dissertation of Dimitar Ivanov is well-balanced in eight chapters which have a logical connection with each other and consistently derive the various emphases of the study. There is an analytical first chapter which is focused on the specific definition. The arguments for asserting them have been accumulated through critical analysis of the studies of various authors (Bulgarian ones and foreign ones; historical ones and contemporary ones) with an emphasis on an evaluation component by the author of the dissertation.

The assessments made so far of the dissertation work of Dimitar Ivanov make it easier to appreciate the contributions made by him in the auto-reference – they are 5.

Yes, we can definitely state that the study has major contributions by virtue of examining a specific case – the energy geostrategies of the foreign factors in the Syrian conflict (United States, Russia, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Israel).

The term “energy geostrategy” has been convincingly derived in broad sense and successfully “imposed” on the regional geopolitics of the examined seven countries in the Middle East.

The precisely developed comparative approach of motifs, politics and consequences of the engagement of the foreign factors in the Syrian conflict is a definitive accomplishment for PhD student Dimitar Ivanov. Substantial and convincing conclusions and summaries, that increase the analytical level of the proposed text, has been formulated through it.

The specific cases, connected with the foreign companies ways of infiltration on the Syrian energy market and their binding with the military and political elite, are also a contribution.

The auto reference has been drafted in accordance with the academic requirement and is consistent with the necessary structure and volume. It presents in a convincing manner the dissertation work of the candidate and contains the contributions made by the author, which I already had the pleasure of assessing, as well as his publications on this topic. The publications themselves – four of them altogether – are sufficient as quantity, according to the academic requirement, are related to the topic of the dissertation and published in reputable publishing sources.

Conclusion: I very confidently give a favorable evaluation to the dissertation of Milen Jurnalov on the topic of “The energy geostrategies in the conflict in Syria” and I recommend to the Well-Respected Commission to award him the educational and scientific degree of PhD in the major area of specialization 3.3 “Political Science”.

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Signature:

Associate Professor Sonia Hinkova, Ph.D.