

REVIEW

By Prof. Georgi Yankov, Ph.D

For the candidature of Assoc. Prof. Maria Pirgova, DrSc (Doctor of political sciences)

*Participant in the competition for occupying the academic position of “Professor”,
Professional field 3.3. “Political sciences”*

I. Information about the competition

The competition for occupying the academic position “Professor”- 3.3. Political sciences (Political science- Political systems and institutions) has been announced by Sofia University “ Saint Kliment Ohridski” for the needs of the Faculty of Philosophy (State Gazette, issue 25 of 26th March 2019).

The only candidate in this competition is Assoc. Prof. Maria Pirgova, Doctor of Political Sciences.

II. Evaluation of the scientific researches of the candidate.

Assoc. Prof. Maria Pirgova is an author of dozens of scientific researches: 3 monographs, a collection of authored articles, one university textbook, over 40 scientific studies and articles in Bulgarian, Russian, French and English languages. Among the presented for the competition publications there are some that stand out with their theoretical, practical and applied relevance and namely: the monograph “*Problematic fields in political science*” (2018), as well as the following scientific studies and articles : “*The liberal context and liberal disbalance of the political ideologies*” (“Politics and security” journal, issue 2/ 2017; “*The parliament as a subject to the contemporary foreign policy. Constitutional and institutional*

framework” (collection “Decades of transition and changes”, Publishing complex-University of National and World Economy, 2013)

“*The parliamentarism and the left wing during the Bulgarian transition*” (In: “Historical research of the socialism in Bulgaria. The transition, 2011); „*Problems of the legal state in Bulgaria*” (magazine “Political researches, issue 1-2/2010); “*The national idea and national interest in the global age*” (In: Pirgova, M. “The national interest in Bulgarian policy”, 2009; “*Methodological approaches to globalization*” (In “ 20 years of Bulgarian political science”, 2006); etc.

The publications are in the field of political sciences and completely correspond to the subjects and requirements of the announced competition.

In the following review I am going to outline some basic scientific merits and contributions of Assoc. Prof. Maria Pirgova’s publications (without retelling their content), and also I am going to make some recommendations regarding mainly the candidate’s future scientific research work.

In her research work qualifying for Associate Professor “ Problematic fields in political science” the author develops her own vision on the content of the notion “**reduction democracy**”. For the first time she introduces this term in the article “ *Two theses on the problem of **reduction democracy** in Bulgaria*” (in the collection “Political sciences in University of National and World Economy with a view to business”, 2010). According to Assoc. Prof. Pirgova, the main characteristics of the so called **reduction democracy** are the following:

- Limited to formal procedures democracy;
- Parties impose their own principles of government, not the generally accepted as democratic ones;
- Most often it is connected with the crisis of the political representation, with the weakness of the state authorities and the dependency of the state authority, with the predominance of the private interests over public ones, with the liquidation of the ideological foundation of the political process...

The reduction democracy finds expression in the closure of the state decisions in the dialogue *government- trade unions- employers*. If the main decisions of the state government are taken by this “triangle”, the parties can be isolated from the

government process which can undermine the representation character of the state government. Besides this the author correctly notes that not all citizens are members of the trade unions or employers and even being such, the citizens are much more than their work goals.

And one more important feature of **reduction democracy**- the concentration of excessive power in one of the following: executive, legislative or presidential. For example turning the parliament into addition to government (some authors speak about “prime-minister republic”).

I evaluate entirely positively the characteristic that was made of **reduction democracy**. However, with a few exceptions, this analysis concerns mostly the political and formal legal aspects of the problem. The analysis may be enriched with the social and economic manifestation of **reduction democracy**. I mean most of all the increasing global inequalities and the concentration of real power in a limited circle of rich social layers. This turns democracy into formal one (procedural). A number of authors are even more explicit, defining it as “ demagogic plutocracy” or “demagogic oligarchy”. Thus Aristotle himself 2500 years ago defines oligarchy as “*power of the rich to the detriment of the poor*”. These recommendations of course concern the future scientific research work of Associate Professor Pirgova, especially in case she focuses on the problems of **reduction democracy** in a new separate monograph.

The analysis of the national ideal and national interest in global conditions should be specially distinguished. Associate Professor Pirgova reviews this matter in the book “*The national interest in Bulgarian policy*” and develops it furthermore in “*Problematic fields in political science*”. She presents a broad interpretation of the national ideal which is connected with the “ *pursuit of peace and well-being of a national community in spite of the functions’ changes of the national state which participates in political and economic institutions above national level*”.

According to the author, the national interest is also manifested in the possibility and ability of the nation’s representatives to participate in the formation of the mutual interest of the institutions above national level, in the synchronization of the mutual and specific interests. I find the conclusion is well-grounded according to which the national state is still the carrying construction of democracy and instead of destroying it, it is

necessary to reinforce it, so that it continues to be foundation of the institutions above national level.

In my opinion the matter of the national ideal and national interest is constantly connected with the preservation and development of the national identity and culture. If they are lost, there will be no point in the discussion of the national ideal and national interest. I have analyzed these points in a number of publications: “*The nation and national identity in the conditions of globalization*” (In: Yankov, G. “Political science. State public power”, 2011); “National and global” (In: Yankov, G. “Political science analyses”, 2010); „*The Bulgarian system of state after the Liberation (1878) and in the beginning of XXI century: comparative analysis*” (2008) etc.

In the conditions of corporate globalization the national state and identity are exposed to great trials. We are eagerly trying to protect extinguishing kind of animals and plants, but ignore the levelling of the national cultures. Where did we leave our affection to pluralism? (By the way the lack of pluralism is one of the features of **reduction democracy**).

The analysis of the relation between law and power in Bulgaria during the transition period is also interesting (after 1989). Assoc. Prof. Pirgova reviews these problematic aspects in the article “*Problems of the legal state in Bulgaria*” and the monograph “*Problematic fields in political science*”. According to the author the agricultural reforms and the privatization during the transition period are not performed “*on a just legal basis*”. By the way Milton Friedman- orthodox follower of monetarism admits in 2001 that a decade earlier he would turn with three words to the countries in transition from state socialism to democracy of the western type: “*Privatize, privatize, privatize. But this was a mistake ...It turned out that the supremacy of law is probably more fundamental than privatization*”.

However, according to Assoc. Prof. Pirgova the relation between power and law in contemporary Bulgaria is not in favour of law. What is more “**Main regulator in the Bulgarian conditions is not the law but power.**”

Assoc. Prof. Maria Pirgova always seeks to express her objective opinion, to present her own interpretation when reviewing the theoretic, practical and applicable problems. It refers to the methodological approaches of the research of globalization, to

neoliberalism, to the parliament as a subject to foreign policy, to the parliamentarism and the left wing during the Bulgarian transition period etc.

III. Evaluation of the academic development and teaching work.

The fact that in this case it is about the academic title “professor” makes the teaching work of the candidate especially important. Quite often only the research work of the candidate is defined as creative, as if the teaching is not such.

For 39 years now, the academic career of Assoc. prof. Maria Pirgova is connected with the Faculty of Philosophy within Sofia university “Saint Kliment Ohridski”. She passed the main steps of academic development: assistant (1980), PhD in political sciences (1990), Associate Professor (1998), DrSc /Political sciences/ (2018).

Assoc. Prof. Pirgova’s teaching work is more than impressive. Only in the academic 2018-2019 year she taught the following university courses in Sofia university for the academic degree “Bachelor”- *Fundamentals of political science, Modern political systems and institutions in the Bulgarian political system after 1989*; for the academic degree “Master” – *Theory of politics, Technology of the political decision, Lobbyism and pressure groups, Foreign policy of Germany after the Cold war and Political counseling*. She was Head of the Master degree programme of “Political technologies and globalization” (in the period from 2007 to 2013) and during the last six years of the Master degree programme “ Political counseling”.

She taught university courses in New Bulgarian University, Plovdiv university “Paisiy Hilendarski” and Varna Free University “Chernorizets Hrabar”.

Assoc. Prof. Pirgova deserves high evaluation for her active participation in social activities and the political agenda. She was ahead of the department for parliamentary researches and analyses with the National Assembly (2006-2009); parliament secretary and Director of Relations centre to the Council of Ministers (1993-1994); President’s counselor on political problems and constitutional issues regarding the project of new constitution development (1990-1991).

Assoc. Prof. Pirgova is the author of hundreds of publications and political analyses in periodicals after 1983 and more actively after 1989. She participated as an

expert in political discussions on BNT, BNR, bTV, Nova TV, Channel3, Bulgaria on Air and many others.

Conclusion: On the basis of the above mentioned facts with deep conviction I suggest the Scientific jury to give **positive evaluation** for the candidature of Assoc. Prof. Maria Pirgova to take up the academic position “Professor” in the field of “Political sciences”. In such a way a capable and established in the professional college scientist will acquire deserved recognition.

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