



## OPINION<sup>1</sup>

on the submitted works for participation in a competition for the academic position of ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR / PROFESSOR in professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (International Journalism), announced by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in SJ, issue 99/20.11.2020.

**Reviewer:** Prof. DrSc Petranka Fileva

**Candidate (s):** Ch Ass. Dr Ralitsa Tsvetanova Kovacheva

### **I. Evaluation of the scientific and practical results and contributions of the scientific and educational production submitted for participation in the competition**

For her participation in the competition, the candidate has presented 13 publications, including two monographs, two chapters from a co-authored book and 9 scientific articles in authoritative publications and collections. All works submitted for participation in the competition are located in the scientific field of international journalism. Referring to established theories and knowledge regarding international journalism and international news, the candidate formulates current issues and analyzes them in a broad context with the help of interdisciplinary techniques.

First of all, Ralitsa Kovacheva outlines new boundaries in the scientific field of international journalism, both territorial and thematic. The distinction is not on "here and there", "near and far", but on the role of "approaching and reducing the great threatening world to the ideas and scale of the "traditional", "immobile" man; for the transformation of the value opposition from a source of permanent anxiety and sharp conflicts into a long and socially useful conversation". Precisely with the intention of constructing such a useful conversation for society, she chooses to analyze five factors that she believes determine the state of international journalism today - the post-truth dictate, political polarization, identity politics, populism and the replacement of journalism by propaganda. She considers them to be interconnected social processes, manifesting themselves on a global scale, but of great importance for international journalism and with the potential to reveal the Bulgarian context.

The topics that Ralitsa Kovacheva chooses to analyze in the publications presented for the competition and in the large number of scientific reports and journalistic publications are new to the field of international journalism and are studied throughout their development. I would note the well-defined link between political polarization, identity politics and populism. Post-truth and propaganda seem to be positioned as the first and last link in a chain, as a "source" and "echo" in a communication channel that must be observed in its entirety and coherence. And in it, social media finds its place as an engine or transmission, with new audience roles and growing risks for journalism and publicity. All this is interesting and new in the work of Ralitsa Kovacheva in recent years, which formed the core of her habilitation work and its main messages.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: Recommended volume of the opinion - 2-3 standard pages.



In my opinion, Ralitsa Kovacheva can boast of the formulation of new and convincingly proven through empirical research theoretical formulations. The dissertation "Center and Periphery of the Europeanised Public Spheres" published as a monograph is the first study in the Bulgarian scientific literature, which examines the European public sphere through the theory of the center and the periphery. The monograph interprets the European public sphere as a network of communicating Europeanized public spheres, where the center is active and discursively influential, and the periphery - passive, reactive and distant. With the help of data from a large and precise empirical study (3356 registered and analyzed information units), she offers a definition of the process of peripheralization as the opposite of Europeanization and describes this process with well-formulated indicators.

The relatively new topic of hybrid wars and hybrid threats is presented with a lot of data and various methods of empirical analysis. The publication "Hybrid Warfare: Political Use and Media Representation" provides a comparative analysis of the definitions used in EU and NATO policy documents and in Bulgarian political documents. The analysis of policy documents for the development of hypotheses is a relatively new method, which the author uses in several of her publications and successfully combines with content analysis and case analysis. Thanks to the empirical data collected, Kovacheva defines a discrepancy between the meaning by definition and the meaning attributed to one or another concept in the Bulgarian public space. Thanks to the rich empirical data, she also illustrates the "war" between the two major media groups on the Bulgarian market by analyzing the meanings attributed to the term "hybrid war".

In the works of Ralitsa Kovacheva there is a key word that marked the places with contributions and that is the word value, values. First of all, I would like to mention the author's professional attitude towards the understanding of informational values that influence the selection of international news - they have become classics because of the famous classification model of Johan Galtung and Marie Ruge. She not only presents and critically evaluates them, but marks them as suitable for analysis in the following sections in terms of the psychology of perceptions or in terms of the influence of culture and ideologies on international journalism. Secondly, we can put the topic of the value opposition present in the texts on political polarization or ethnocentrism, even more so in the analyzes of the opposition between European and traditional values, especially related to the Bulgarian situation and Bulgarian cases.

Ralitsa Kovacheva is able to synthesize a large amount of theoretical knowledge in clear theses and conclusions. Impressive is the result of short but dense references to authoritative sources, which quickly spill over into extended explanations and conclusions, so as to reveal the most important for the problem under consideration. Many examples can be given, mainly in the two independent monographs presented in this competition. The candidate's contributions are made visible thanks to this style.. She is able to interpret and formulate a theoretical thesis, and then illustrate it very richly with well-chosen current empirical studies, her own original research or the most illustrative cases.

It is the rich in data original empirical studies of Ralitsa Kovacheva that are a prerequisite for real scientific contributions. In some cases, she builds on current theoretical studies and research and adds the Bulgarian context to the global or European one. In other cases, she formulates her own new theses and proves them with the help of her own empirical research, adding the method of analysis of political documents to the media content analysis or the case analysis.



## II. Notes and recommendations

I have no remarks on the submitted works. The articles are published in authoritative publications, the monographs are clearly positioned in the field of international journalism, which is developing as an interdisciplinary science and as a system open to dynamic changes in the social, political and economic environment of the modern globalized world. The active journalistic, teaching and public activity of the candidate outlines her strong presence in the academic community.

I would recommend that the candidate includes in her future research the so-called global journalism, which by definition does not contradict international or local journalism, but has the mission to unite foreign and local context, placing greater emphasis on issues affecting equally all countries - such as migration, climate change, industrial pollution, tax evasion and many others that cannot be understood and analyzed through a narrower national or international perspective.

## III. Conclusion

I give the highest praise to the publications presented for the competition, as well as the teaching and journalistic activity of Ralitsa Kovacheva. I accept the report on the contributions submitted by the candidate.

I declare most firmly that I will vote in favour of Ch. Ass. Dr. Ralitsa Tsvetanova Kovacheva taking the academic position of "Associate Professor" at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in the professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (International Journalism).

Jury member:

Prof. DrSc. Petranka Fileva

Date: 10.03.2021