

OPINION

by **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hristo Ilkov Hristev**,
member of the scientific jury for the competition
for the academic position of Associate Professor
in professional field 3.3. Political Science (International Relations),
published in the State Gazette, issue 61, 2.08.2022.

In my capacity as an internal member of the scientific jury for the announced competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in the professional field 3.3. Political Science (International Relations), appointed by Order No. RD - 38-486/05.08.2022 of the Rector of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", having examined the documents and the scientific publications submitted for the competition, and taking into account the applicable legal framework for the development of academic staff, established in the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, promulgated in the State Gazette, issue 38 of 21 May 2010, last amended as promulgated in the State Gazette, issue 102 of 23 December 2022, the Regulation for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulation for the Conditions and the Procedure for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and the Nomination om Academic Positions at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", I hereby submit the present opinion.

I. General conditions for participation in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor

1. One candidacy has been submitted for participation in the competition – the candidacy of Dr. Mira Zdravkova Kaneva, Senior Assistant Professor of International Relations at the Department of International Law and International Relations of the Faculty of Law of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

2. Dr. Mira Kaneva meets the conditions set out in the law and the regulations associated with the necessary educational qualifications and professional experience for participation in the competition, insofar as she holds a Master's degree in International Relations, a Master's degree in Law and a Doctor's degree in Political Science (International Relations), as evidenced by the diplomas submitted for the respective academic degrees and for the academic and scientific degree "Doctor of Philosophy". She has worked as an academic assistant and senior assistant at the Faculty of Law of Sofia University "Kliment Ohridski" for more than two years, as evidenced by the submitted certificate for work experience.

3. According to the submitted pieces of evidence, she meets the applicable minimum national requirements under Article 2b of the Law on the Development of

Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, as laid down in the Regulation on its implementation and the Regulation for the Conditions and the Procedure for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and the Nomination of Academic Positions at Sofia University, in so far as she scores a total of 445 points - in the various relevant indicators.

4. There is no evidence of plagiarism or unreliability of the scientific data presented in the candidate's scientific work.

II. Substantive evaluation of the candidacy

1. For her participation in the competition, the candidate Dr. Mira Kaneva has submitted a monographic study on the topic "Borders in International Relations. Theoretical, normative and practical problems", published by the Gutenberg Publishing House, Sofia, 2022, 339 pages, ISBN: 978-619-176-210. Other scientific publications have also been submitted, although this is not a prerequisite for participation in the competition in the presence of a published monographic work.

2. The submitted monographic work focuses on a topical issue of significant importance, which has not been the subject of independent and in-depth scientific research in the Bulgarian doctrine of international relations, and on the other hand does not repeat the research carried out for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "PhD". The monographic work undoubtedly reveals an original nature, resting on a clearly distinct and logically developed structure. It is characterized by a rich scientific apparatus. The study shows the author's solid theoretical background as well as impressive qualities of a researcher capable of working with many complex categories of political science as well as other social sciences.

As a major merit of the monographic study, it should be acknowledged that it conceptualizes boundaries as a fundamental classifier of space with inherent characteristics, typologies, functions and manifestations, as well as the corresponding limitations that boundaries endure. An original contribution is the critical review of the sources of doctrine that address questions of boundaries, through which it emerges that boundaries do not remain monopolized by political geography and geopolitics, nor by political economy and sociology, nor by cultural studies and anthropology, but can be explored and understood most fully by taking into account the interdisciplinary nature of the issues to which they are related.

Another original contribution of the monographic study is the developed classification of borders in international relations, which includes numerous types of borders, and on the other hand serves to distinguish factors and subjects of importance for international relations. This classification allows the author to conclude that boundaries constitute a category in themselves, while being a tool for categorizing and indicating a scale of content or scope of action.

The analysis of the various ethical dilemmas posed by the structuring of space in relation to power, sovereignty and territory also constitute a valuable element in the study. A point of particular interest is the emphasis placed on the symbolic significance of borders and the potential they have, outlined in the work, to significantly influence social and political relations globally. The correlation outlined between emerging crises, such as the migration and pandemic crises, and the tendency of states to address such situations in a stereotyped manner, using borders as a factor of constraint and imposing easy and quick solutions, often inconsiderate of citizens and their rights, should also be taken as an original result of the research.

3. Among the other scientific publications submitted for participation in the competition, several other studies stand out, revealing particular relevance and importance for the Bulgarian doctrine of international relations, through which an original scientific contribution has undoubtedly been established. On the other hand, they confirm the assessment of the theoretical knowledge and the research capacity of the candidate.

3.1. Emphasis in this regard should be placed on the article "Some ethical dilemmas on the limits of sovereignty - offshore areas and outsourcing of military power", *Contemporary Law*, issue 1, 2022, pp. 19 - 31, ISSN (print): 0861-1815. It problematizes sovereignty and borders by looking successively at two cases of deterritorialization of sovereignty as one of the controversial trends within globalization - the so-called "tax havens" and the outsourcing of the use of force to private military companies. The author's contribution can be seen as the developed idea of an alternative sovereignty of taxation, which creates two new types of borders, and the idea that the outsourcing of military force raises issues of openness, accountability, responsibility and control over the activities of private military structures and questions the accountability of borders.

3.2. Next, the article "Revolution and Devolution in Contemporary European Territoriality. Federalism and Internal Conflicts Series. Palgrave Macmillan (Springer Nature Switzerland AG), 2021, pp. 59-77, ISBN: 978-3-030-64401-7 is also of particular interest. The analysis focuses on devolutionary processes that have not been studied in Bulgarian political science and international relations doctrine. The author ably defends the idea that devolution in territoriality represents a "new normal in the networks of interdependence" that European integration maintains, and this idea is justified in the context of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. The study also outlines the moral 'red lines' of devolution in European context, identifying as such extreme nationalist rhetoric aimed at 'reasserting control' and defending sovereignty.

3.3. Attention should also be paid to the study "Changes in Bulgaria's Foreign Policy Role after 1989 - Conceptual, Normative and Practical Problems", part of the collection "Changes in the Bulgarian Legal System through the Prism of International Relations, International Law and European Union Law (1989-2019)", ed. Prof. Vasil Pandov, Boryana Museva, University Publishing House "Sv. Kliment Ohridski", ISBN: 978-954-07-5234-1. Focusing on the development of Bulgarian foreign policy after the

1989 changes, the study achieves several significant results - first, it finds an evolution from an adjustment of Bulgaria's foreign policy role without sustainable strategic priorities to a radical restructuring after the mid-1990s with a consensus-driven Euro-Atlantic reorientation. Secondly, the importance of the lack of a unified strategic document for the country's foreign policy course, which is the fruit of consensus, is highlighted, and on this basis a conclusion is drawn about the contingency of foreign policy programmes and actions. Thirdly, it appears that the political consensus on the key direction of Bulgarian foreign policy after 1989 - the Europeanisation of Bulgaria, is proving to be a partially workable solution in the adoption of the *acquis* of European integration and in building the necessary institutional capacity for the country's adequate participation in the European process.

3.4. As a valuable achievement in the research work of Dr. Mira Kaneva should be defined the study "State, Territory and Borders through the Prism of Political Realism", published in the Yearbook of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Law, 2019, volume 86, pp. 512–550, ISSN: 0081-1866. The publication is the first in-depth study in Bulgarian doctrine that combines three fundamental categories of political science that are part of a foundational thought paradigm for international relations theory. The study analyses the transition over more than 250 years of classical geopolitical thought and the way in which space is normalized and influenced by the state and its defining elements: sovereignty, territory, and borders.

3.5. An original contribution to the research carried out by the candidate is undoubtedly revealed by the article "The Rule of Law from the English School Perspective. Cases of the Shifting Boundaries of Exclusion and Inclusion in Contemporary International Society", In: Belov, M. (ed.). *Rule of Law at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century*. Eleven International Publishing. The Hague, 2018, pp. 161-172, ISBN: 978-94-6236-858-3. This publication examines the conceptual framework of the English School in the context of issues of inclusion and exclusion in international relations, linking them to the rule of law as a fundamental legitimating criterion. A valuable contribution of the author is that for the first time in Bulgarian doctrine global practices of exclusion of failed and pariah states are examined. The main idea advocated is along the lines that the rule of law should not be enforced through practices of hegemonic engagement such as various sanction regimes but should be promoted through the diffusion of influence internationally.

4. With a view to the future work of the candidate and the use of the research developed by her for the purposes of the study of International Relations at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", as well as in other Bulgarian higher education institutions, I would share the understanding that achieving a lighter expression can only contribute to the realization of the maximum scientific and applied effect of the research.

5. Insofar as I have had the opportunity to observe the teaching work of Dr. Mira Kaneva, I would also like to emphasize that she has proven to be a dedicated and

conscientious lecturer who contributes significantly to the development of the Faculty of Law of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" as one of the main centers of International Relations studies in Bulgaria. Along with this, Dr. Kaneva actively and committedly participates in the scientific life of the Department of International Law and International Relations and the Faculty of Law, interacting fully with colleagues from the academic staff of the Department and the Faculty in the implementation of a wide range of research projects and initiatives.

III. Conclusion

Based on the above, I share my firm conviction that Dr. Mira Kaneva meets the statutory conditions for holding the academic position of Associate Professor in the professional field 3.3. Political Science (International Relations), published in the State Gazette, volume 61, 2.08.2022, and on the other hand has the scientific knowledge, research capacity and qualities of a lecturer, which would suggest the scientific jury to adopt a decision to propose to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Law to elect the candidate to the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field 3.3. Political Science (International Relations).

Assoc. Prof. Hristo Hristev