

OPINION

by Prof. Dr. Anna Slavcheva Krasteva

By competition for the occupation of an academic position "docent" in professional direction 3. Political Sciences (International Relations)

Basis for drawing up the opinion : order RD – 38 – 486 of 08/05/22 of the Rector of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" for a competition for associate professor in professional field 3. Political Sciences (International Relations) on the basis of Art. 4 and Art. 25 of the Law on the Development of Scientific Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, Art. 57 para. 1 and para. 2 of the Regulations for the implementation of the ZRASRB and the Regulations of the SU "St. Kliment Ohridski"

"The borders of the nations are barely distinguishable, as if they are wavering - to be or not" ('Map' Vislava Szymborska). To begin a book with a quote on the liquefaction of borders at a time when they are increasingly hardening is bold and challenging. The quote points to one of the main messages of the book, namely – how changeable, dynamic, unpredictable the money market is today. To what extent the monograph and the publication activity of the chief assistant Dr. Mira Kaneva have succeeded in conceptualizing, theorizing and researching the dynamics of making borders and the contradictory tendencies of politicization of these phenomena is the subject of analysis of the present opinion.

Fulfillment of the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position "docent"

One candidate took part in the competition - Ch. assistant Dr. Mira Kaneva.

The reference shows that Dr. Kaneva meets the minimum national requirements for Area 3. Political Science (International Relations). All required indicators have been met - 150 points for the doctoral dissertation and habilitation work according to indicators from groups

A and B, 220 points for articles and studies in Bulgarian and English languages out of the required 200 points, as well as 60 points for citations out of the required 50.

Publications

The corpus of publications is convincing. Its center is the monograph "Boundaries in international relations", published by the Gutenberg publishing house this year.

More publications are attached, including studies and articles in journals, collective works, proceedings of scientific conferences and summer universities. The publications were published in Bulgaria, as well as some abroad.

The publications are on the topic of the competition and are based on well-researched and correctly used modern scientific literature.

Scientific results and contributions

The monograph "Borders in International Relations" is a significant contribution to the development of border studies. Among its many merits, I would single out a few:

- *The exceptional political dynamics of border management* , which are being reshaped, contested, transformed, changed by numerous factors and actors, among them – the simultaneous processes of removing and creating new borders in specific euro-areas such as Schengen and the euro-zone, the enlargement of the EU , the collapse of federations such as the USSR and Yugoslavia and overproduction of new national borders and many others unfolded in the study. Borders play a key role in transforming the new post-Westphalian order.
- *The exceptional theoretical relevance of the studies of the gnats*. Border studies , border studies, is a relatively new disciplinary field. When it emerged a few decades ago, it was incomparably more modest than the vast field of publications on globalization. The studies of borders and those of globalization a quarter of a century ago could be compared to David and Goliath - the giant of the huge flow of books, articles, conferences, etc. on globalization, which radically weakens borders, and the incomparably smaller, but brave and inventive David on the border studies , which manages to convincingly make its

way to assert the importance of new approaches and concepts to the management and understanding of borders. In Western studies border studies are institutionalized with all the attributes of a new discipline – university departments, an international journal, an international association, research, projects, etc. In our country, border research is still a relatively new interdisciplinary field, hence Dr. Kaneva's pioneering self-confidence and confidence in his role and contribution in its constitution.

- *Persuasive Concept Cluster* . Borders are analyzed adequately in a broad constellation of adequate and key concepts such as sovereignty, (post)Westphalian international order, state, security, securitization, geopolitics, nationalism, citizenship, etc.
- *Relationships and border-crisis interferences* is one of the convincing lines in the research: '... borders do not follow the predictable direction of global trends because of sudden crises and permanent crises posed by new threats, specifically migration and pandemic' (p. 19).
- *Bordering , Othering , Ordering* – the overproduction of borders, otherness and order – is one of the most powerful conceptual triads in border studies. It is curious that Dr. Kaneva does not draw it from its classic formulation by H. van Houtum, H. and T. van Naerssen in 'Bordering, ordering and othering' , 2002) - one of the most cited articles in the study of gerbils, but pays well-deserved theoretical attention to the processes of alienation, to the figures of the foreigner and the citizen.
- Anathetic interest and emphasis on *new frontiers – biometric, immunological* , etc.

There is no research without theoretical deficits. I would like to point out a few guidelines that are not sufficiently convincingly developed in the monograph:

- *Conceptual innovations, but without sufficient analysis of conceptual innovations in the literature* . This is how I would paradoxically characterize some proposals for new concepts. A characteristic example is the new concept of *alter-sovereignty*, with which Dr. Kaneva problematizes 'the exclusivity of power exercised over the territory according to the state-centric paradigm, through alternative practices of inclusion/exclusion, transfusion, revision...' (p. 149). The 'state-centric' paradigm itself has for years been convincingly

problematized in border studies – both conceptually, theoretically and empirically – through new concepts and empirical analysis of a vast amount of empirical cases of the most diverse types of borders, practices, policies and actors.

- *Over-representing the ethical and under-representing the political* . The book carries a strong normative pathos, which is an autonomous choice of the author and is positive in itself. At the same time, however, there is a conceptual imbalance and political concepts and problems are presented as ethical: 'From a normative point of view, it is found that new ethical dilemmas are being posed in the current era, resulting from the closing of borders and the implications for rights, freedoms and legality' (p. 19). Border closures, rights, freedoms and legality are classic governance and political issues.
- *Conceptual, analytical, stylistic and editorial deficiencies and inaccuracies*. In this heterogenous group I would note a few examples of a ralic order. The first are insufficiently explained concepts such as 'the post-modern empires of the USSR and Yugoslavia' (p. 23) or defined in the unclear border between conceptual and essayistic as 'the state as a living organism, fighting for survival, in an anarchic system of self-help' (p. 38). The second deficiency is the lack of extensive empirical research, which reduces the analytical density of the study. The third example is the unreasonable number of foreigners like 'caesura' and many others. Another problem is imperfections in the book such as a table with empty, unfilled columns and no title (Table 2 on p. 37).

There is no research without inevitable deficits and imperfections. The important thing is that the results are more numerous.

The Contributions Reference is more of a list of abstracts of major publications and conference papers. It applies an overly broad and insufficiently scientifically based understanding that in every publication and report there is a contribution.

Citations and circulation of scientific publications in the academic community

Dr. Kaneva's publications are cited mainly in our country (one citation abroad is indicated). The citations testify that the scientific production of Ch. As. Kaneva is in scientific

circulation, that the ideas and results of research are validated and used in the Bulgarian scientific community.

Teaching activity

The report on the teaching activity of the assistant principal. Kaneva convincingly illustrates that:

- The workload is adequate for the habilitation competition;
- The subject of the lectures - on international relations, foreign policy, security - is directly related to the subject of the competition.

The teaching career of Ch. Associate Professor Kaneva is working in the Department of International Law and International Relations at the Faculty of Law at the University of St. Kliment Ohridski. The habilitation competition represents an upgrade, a logical stage in the development of both Dr. Kaneva and the department.

Evaluation of the candidate

Dr. Kaneva has teaching and research activities relevant to the competition for associate professor, materialized in lecture courses, publications - books, studies, articles, participation in projects, specialization in a prestigious foreign scientific institute, reports at national and international conferences.

Conclusion

Ch. Dr. Mira Kaneva, assistant professor, meets the requirements of the RSASR, the regulations for its implementation both in the country and in SU 'St. Kliment Ohridski' .

The triple expertise and experience – teaching, research, project – testify to scientific maturity and achievements worthy of growth in the academic career.

As a result of the positive assessment of the scientific and teaching activities of ch. assistant professor Dr. Mira Kaneva, I support her election as an "associate professor" in professional direction 3. Political Sciences (International Relations).

28.12.2022

Member of the Scientific Jury:

(Prof. Dr. Anna Krasteva)