

TO

THE PRESIDENT OF THE SCIENTIFIC JURY
conducting a Contest for awarding the Academic Position "Professor" at the Social Theories,
Strategies and Forecasts Section of the ISSK –BAS

OPINION

Regarding the Scientific Production and the Teaching Activity of Assoc. Prof. Dr.S. Bogdana
Todorova, Participant in a Contest for awarding the Academic Position "Professor" in
Professional Field 2.3. "Philosophy",
announced in Official Journal no. 5 / 15.01.2019

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The opinion was drafted in accordance with the requirements of the LDASRB, RALDASRB and according to the Order of the Director of ISSK-BAS № ПД 09-231 / 25.03.2019. The opinion was assigned by a decision of the members of the scientific jury for conducting the procedure - Protocol No. 1 /29.03.2019 I declare that I am not a person within the meaning of § 1 (5) of the Supplementary Provisions of LDASRB with the candidate participating in the Professor's Contest and that I have no private interest which could affect the impartial and objective performance of my work as a member of the jury in this contest.

I. General characteristic of the candidate's work.

The scientific papers proposed by the only candidate Assoc. Prof. Dr.S. Bogdana Todorova reflect the thematic direction of the contest: philosophy (philosophy of politics, with a profile of contemporary political Islam, fundamentalism and terrorism) and therefore can be accepted for review. The works include: 33 publications, of which 4 monographs – 2 individual (one in English, published in Romania), 1 in co-authorship and 1 collective monograph (in English) with the author's authorship. Other publications include studios, articles, and collection compilations. Most of them are published in English in authoritative publishers, incl. reflected in the international databases with scientific information Web of Science and Scopus, or are the result of the candidate's participation in significant international forums.

The publications presented do not repeat the publications for the acquisition of the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" and for acquisition of the academic position "Assoc. Prof.", and meet the requirements for occupying the academic position "Professor".

II. Brief biographical data and scientific development of the candidate.

The candidate graduated from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in 1994, obtaining a degree in philosophy. She then made specializations in Iran and Slovenia. Her professional career is related to the Institute of Philosophy and later to the ISSK at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. In 2003, she became Assistant Professor; in 2010, she became an Associate Professor; in 2002, she obtained a PhD Degree; and in 2015, she obtained the title Doctor of Sciences.

The realization of Assoc. Prof. Bogdana Todorova, in spite of its diversity, focuses mainly on the philosophy of politics, and in particular on political Islam. In addition to her immediate duties as a researcher, she is active in teaching doctoral students at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and at universities in the Republic of Bulgaria, and participates in national and international projects.

Assoc. Prof. Todorova performs successful administrative and managerial activities. She was Head of Section "Anthropology and Religious Studies", is currently Head of Section "Social Theories, Strategies and Forecasts", and Head of the RG "Religion and Security" at the ISSK-BAS. The candidate is actively involved in various scientific, organizational, expert and humanitarian activities, she is a member of editorial boards of scientific journals and non-governmental organizations. She is the supervisor of three PhD and Master's degree students at home and abroad.

III. Key moments in the candidate's scientific work.

The publications proposed by the candidate are on issues that fully meet the requirements of the contest. The bulk of them deals with topics and problems related to the philosophy and history of political Islam. The monographs of Assoc. Prof. Todorova deal with the same subjects. The last monograph, „Objectifying of Islam“, specifically explores this problem.

The candidate's research is characterized by a "unification" of the theoretical approach (through the exploration of sources and analytical literature, very often unknown or scarcely known in Bulgaria) with the carrying out of empirical research, including "on the ground" research (in the Eastern Rhodopes, Romania, Turkey) and the conducting of biographical interviews with leaders of Muslim communities that become an "empirical basis" for theoretical summaries.

The main scientific and practical achievements of the candidate's work with particular significance, both theoretical and historical (without underestimating others, including those mentioned in the candidate's self-assessment), may, in my opinion, be boiled down to the following important results:

a) From the philosophical point of view, the process of "objectification of Islam", which is presented as a distance from the classical tradition and a change of the attitude towards religious authority, has been analyzed. Here, an innovative way of interpreting the "New Middle East" construct of Islamic political activism may be observed. Todorova argues that the Shiite-Sunni opposition is of fundamental importance for Islam. It is justified by two new strategies - Red Islam (the construction of a new Sunni identity) and "black Islam" (constructing a new Salafian identity). The candidate formulates, justifies and develops in a series of publications and participation in scientific forums and research projects this theoretical thesis, which finds a complete presentation in the already mentioned monograph, „ Objectifying of Islam“.

b) The author rethinks a number of basic political-philosophical ideas through the prism of their interpretation from Islamic ideology and practice - regarding the modes of compatibility or incompatibility between democracy and Islam, the factors leading to Islamic political activism, etc. The formulation of the concept of a new "social contract" in the philosophical and political views of Ayatollah Khomeini, which is presented as an alternative to the ideas of Hobbes, Rousseau and Kant, is of particular value. Assoc. Prof. Todorova finds the reasons for this thesis in the religious-philosophical theory of the unity of God and the polity - "Velayat e-Fakih", which also led to substantial transformations in the Iranian state and society („The concept of “unity” in the Philosophical Thoughts of Imam Khomeini“).

c) The third important moment is related to the development of an original ontological-

epistemological model which analyzes the intersection points of an Islamic clash with the West. The basis of the mechanisms and the degree of realization of the contemporary reformist tendencies in Islam, which are reflected in the Bulgarian spiritual-religious reality, are revealed. Thus, B. Todorova deepens the knowledge of Islam and Muslims - their history in Europe and Bulgaria ("The Islamic Factor in Bulgaria and Europe. Trends and Challenges").

d) In this regard, a further essential aspect of the research work of the candidate in the presented publications is their relevance to real processes in Bulgaria and the Balkans. Associate Professor Todorova is one of the few who are studying from a philosophical point of view the model of cohabitation between Christians and Muslims (Sunnis and Alevites) on the territory of the Eastern Rhodopes, applying for the first time the method of Oral History. From the point of view of the philosophical approach, Turkey's "neo-Ottoman" strategy is also analyzed in relation to minorities sharing a common cultural and historical identity within the boundaries of the former Ottoman Empire ("The Bulgarian Ethnic Model-Myth or Reality", "Risks to Bulgaria from Radical Islam", etc.).

e) Relatively independent direction in the reviewed works is their deep theoretical analysis, offering new theoretical models, policies and approaches for the prevention of radical Islam. A significant success here is the study of the issues of the early identification of threats and dangers in connection with the formation of religious fundamentalism, religious fanaticism and terrorism, the local centers of terrorism on the territory of Europe and Bulgaria, the traditional notions of "zones of insecurity" and the expansion of Islam in European political elites. The candidate discloses the specificity and functionality of the dialectic between integration and identity, integration and acculturation or assimilation, identity authenticity and autonomy. Prognostic analysis of the state and trends of Islam, with a view to demographic projections up to 2050 and its increasing radicalization, is of special interest. ("The Future of Religion, Global Christianity and Islam", etc.).

In this regard, I have a question to Associate Professor Todorova, namely: What is her position on the increasingly clear outlines of xenophobic and Islamophobic attitudes and actions, including actions of political parties and governments in the European Union ("EU", "Union")? Are they "Self-threatening" for EU member states and the Union as a whole, or are they a way of defending and preserving the collective identity of "Christian" Europe?

IV. Conclusion.

The outlined outcomes in the research papers proposed by the candidate reveal a serious research approach combined with the quest for "self-perception". They present Professor Todorova as an independent thinker, offering theoretical solutions, and "practical projections" used by the European Commission on Human Rights, Natolin Center, Robert Shuman Center and CIPI. These results give me compelling reasons to propose to the honorable scientific jury to vote unanimously for the awarding of the academic position "Professor" in the professional field

V. Declaration.

I, the undersigned Prof. Dr. Boris Manov, declare that I meet the minimum national requirements for occupying the academic position "Professor".

25.04.2019

Sofia

Signature: _____

Prof. Dr. Boris Manov