

## **REVIEW**

**by Prof. Blagoy Nikitov Vidin, Doctor of Law,**  
 professor in international law and international relations  
 at the Faculty of Law at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”,  
 member of the scientific jury under Order No. RD–21–670 of 24.03.2023  
 by the Rector of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv,

of the dissertation thesis by **Desislava Nikolaeva Dukova**, PhD student  
 at the Public Law Science Department of the Faculty of Law  
 of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv,  
 under the heading: **“International Legal Aspects of the Crisis in Ukraine”**

for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”  
 in the field of higher education: 3. Social Science, Economic Science and Law,  
 professional field: 3.6 Law,  
 doctoral program “International Law and International Relations”  
**Scientific Supervisor: Prof. D. Sc. Nadia Georgieva Boyadjieva**

### **1. Description of the submitted documents**

The set of materials submitted by Desislava Nikolaeva Dukova includes:

- Application to the Rector of the University of Plovdiv to initiate a procedure for defending a dissertation thesis;
- application to the scientific supervisor;
- opinion by the scientific supervisor;
- curriculum vitae in European format;
- dissertation thesis;
- dissertation abstract in Bulgarian and in English;
- list of the scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation;
- copies of five scientific publications;
- declaration of originality and authenticity of the enclosed documents;
- record of proceedings of the preliminary discussion at the council of the department;
- reference issued by the Faculty of Law that the minimum national requirements have been fulfilled.

I have no critical remarks as regards the submitted set of documents. No plagiarism reports have been filed related to the presented scientific works. The procedure is in compliance with the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA) and the Rules for its implementation, as well as with the Rules for the development of the academic staff of the University of Plovdiv

## **2. Information on the dissertation work**

The dissertation is 258 pages long including a table of contents and bibliography. The literature, which has been referred to, comprises 351 sources. The dissertation work consists of an introduction, three bulleted chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography. The used scholarly apparatus includes 511 footnotes.

The introduction indicates the topicality of the theme, the purpose and subject of the research, the research methods. The research tasks are listed in nine points. The stated tasks are ambitious and have been fulfilled in the course of the research. In my opinion, the ninth task is off topic, or at least part of the eight task.

The thesis defended in the research is that “the crisis in Ukraine puts the international community in an unprecedented situation, in which reaching an agreement on an adequate response to violations of international law committed by Russia is impossible (p.11). Therefore, the only possible responses of the international community are: the imposition of sanctions, support (economic, political and military) for Ukraine, expressing support for Kyiv’s membership in the EU and NATO”. The first chapter is dedicated to the concept of crisis in international law and international relations. In its four sections, the definitions of crisis, the distinction of related concepts, the main types of crises and conflicts and approaches to their resolution are successively examined. The chapter content is logically structured and comprehensive. It is appropriate to refer to the Doctrine of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria, which is consistent with the Constitution (p. 53). The work would benefit from a comparison with the terms used in international law. In section four, the work of Associate Professor D. Berchev on peacekeeping operations has been omitted, and, without it, the research is incomplete.

Chapter two is entitled “Genesis and Evolution of the Crisis in Ukraine”. Strictly speaking, the first two sections thereof tracing the reasons for the emergence and development of the crisis in Ukraine and the legal acts regulating the relations between the Russian Federation and Ukraine suffice to prove the point in the chapter. The next two items examine

the impact of this crisis on international relations and international law, including reflections on the restructuring of international relations. Special attention has been paid to international sanctions.

In the third section, there is a rarely cited piece of information about vetoing in the UN Security Council. Here, the author deserves support in her attempt to dwell on the complex and on-going topic of the UN reform. The issue of humanitarian intervention is also covered in this section and is later transferred to the beginning of chapter three. The exposition of sanctions in international law is fragmented. Sanctions imposed by the European Union, sanctions imposed under international law and unilateral sanctions by individual countries have been mixed.

Chapter three is the essential part of the dissertation work. It also reveals the greatest potential for future scientific development. The first section gets into the big topic of humanitarian intervention, which, taken alone, may serve a subject of a monographic study. The second section deals with the issue of referendums – also a big topic in itself. In international law, there is a long series of examples and decisions of international bodies on this issue, as well as ambiguous practice of states.

The fourth section dedicated to the International Criminal Court is a strong feature of the dissertation thesis. In a future academic work or in case the dissertation is published, the issue of universal jurisdiction could be developed.

By means of a summary assessment – the work constitutes a bona fide research study of current issues, which was carried out independently. The widest possible range of sources has been correctly cited and directly referred to in the text. The work is a combination of theory and history of international relations, international law and, to a lesser extent, constitutional law. I recommend that Desislava Dukova prepare her dissertation work for publication and continue her research activities.

### **3. Author's summary of the dissertation**

The abstract presented by doctoral student duly covers the content of the dissertation work.

### **4. Publications on the topic of the dissertation**

The doctoral student has submitted 5 publications, all of them falling under the topic of the dissertation work without repeating their content. The articles correctly present essential

parts of the dissertation to the scientific community in publications included in the National Reference List of the National Centre for Information and Documentation (NACID).

### **5. Scientific and scientific-applied contributions**

The scientific contributions of the dissertation are indicated at the end of the abstract and they are entitled “Main Contributions of the Dissertation Work”. They are listed in eight points. I accept the validity of the mentioned scientific contributions, with the exception of those pointed out in item 3 and in item 7. My considerations for the latter are as follows: this is not the first time when the analysis of the Ukrainian crisis is a subject of research; the problems of territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs and the right to self-determination are not new to international law and have by no means been thoroughly addressed in the work. As for the analysis of the reaction of the Bulgarian public to the crisis in Ukraine in item six of chapter three, it remains outside the scope of the study and represents a follow-up of the events in Bulgaria.

### **Conclusion**

In my opinion, the dissertation thesis entitled “International Legal Aspects of the Crisis in Ukraine” fulfills the requirements set out in the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and the Rules for its implementation.

Therefore, I present a positive assessment for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” to Desislava Nikolaeva Dukova in the field of higher education: 3. Social Science, Economic Science and Law, professional field: 3.6 Law, scientific specialty: International Law and International Relations.

Sofia,  
9 May 2023

Reviewer:  
(Prof. Blagoy Vidin, Doctor of Law)