

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Konstantin Vassilev Pehlivanov Ph.D., Faculty of Law of Plovdiv University
"Paisii Hilendarski"

For procedure for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction 3.6 Law, doctoral program "International law and International Relations", with candidate Desislava Nikolaeva Dukova; dissertation work "International Law Aspects of the Crisis in Ukraine" and supervisor Prof. Ph.D. Nadia Georgieva Boyadzhieva

Host unit Faculty of Law of Plovdiv University, primary unit Department of Public Law Sciences

I submit this opinion pursuant to Order No. RD-21-670/24.03.2023 of the Rector of Plovdiv University for the appointment of a scientific jury. By decision of the scientific jury from the first meeting, I have been assigned to prepare an opinion.

The doctoral student has submitted a properly formatted set of documents, the abstract is correctly formatted and reflects the structure and contributions of the dissertation work. Five publications by the PhD student are presented, which meets and exceeds the minimum national requirements. As a result of the above, I find the dissertation work admissible for substantive examination before a scientific jury.

The dissertation entitled "International Law Aspects of the Crisis in Ukraine" was prepared by the dissertation student Desislava Dukova in the period 1.3.2019 - 1.3.2022 and does not reflect the events that began with the military actions between the Russian Federation and Ukraine since 24.2.2022.

The dissertation is structured in an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion. A list of abbreviations used, tables and a bibliography are included with the content of the dissertation. The total volume of work is 258 pages. The dissertation maintains a balanced research between aspects of international law and international relations. The basis of the research are the methods of logical and legal dogmatic analysis, and legal-historical, systematic and comparative legal methods are also used.

In Chapter One, "The concept of crisis in international law and international relations", the concepts of "international crisis" and "conflicts" are analyzed. The different definitions proposed in the doctrine are examined and the common basis for them is the presence of a

stressful event that provokes an increase in the sense of threat, accompanied by a limited response time. I support the distinction made between the concepts of "dispute" and "crisis". A historical study of the types of crises and conflicts was conducted, summarizing the achievements of the discipline "International Law and International Relations". The chapter is the necessary methodological and historical-theoretical introduction to the problem under consideration.

The second chapter "Genesis and evolution of the crisis in Ukraine" traces the causes, prerequisites for the emergence of the Ukrainian crisis and examines the escalation of the crisis. I support the conclusions of the historical analysis that the main prerequisites and reasons for its origin and development are rooted in history and unresolved disputed areas in the relations between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, in the so-called the "geographic heritage of the USSR", as a result of which the borders of the newly emerging post-Soviet republics are preserved in the way formulated during the time of the USSR, which creates prerequisites for a number of latent "frozen" conflicts to intensify. The numerous bilateral agreements signed between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, which are related to clarifying the content of the 2014 crisis, are presented and analyzed in detail, due special attention is paid to the "Budapest Memorandum". The author's attention to the tendency to increase the use of economic sanctions, which replace military threats and interventions, as well as the stages of sanctions against the Russian Federation, as well as the views of both countries on their legitimacy, is worthy of approval.

I find the third chapter "International legal problems from the crisis in Ukraine" the strongest and the most important one, it completes the previous analysis, it analyses examines in detail the problems regarding territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs of an independent state, the right to self-determination and the legality of referendums; analyzes violations of bilateral agreements and international law and the possibility of protecting Ukraine's interests before international courts and arbitrations. A detailed study of the events surrounding the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the legal positions of both countries was conducted. It is useful to examine the acts of the Council of Europe and their applicability to this crisis. The reasoning for resorting to the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court is interesting.

Critical notes: when publishing the dissertation, I would suggest some stylistic editing, such as avoiding the use of "Russia" and resorting to the legally correct "Russian Federation" throughout the text. Of course, a study of the period after the start of open hostilities from the

beginning of 2022 will also be necessary, a goal not set when the dissertation was originally conceived.

The critical remarks do not diminish my overall positive assessment of the depth of the work and its contributions.

I have not found any data on plagiarism and use of other people's scientific contributions in a way not permitted by law.

In view of the above, I find that the scientific jury should award the educational and scientific degree "doctor" to Desislava Nikolaeva Dukova in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction 3.6 Law, doctoral program "International law and International relations" and at the open final meeting of the scientific jury I shall vote in this sense.

Assoc. Prof. Konstantin Pehlivanov Ph.D.

05.09.2023

Plovdiv