

REVIEW

by **Ivan Dimitrov Stanchev, PhD - associate professor at Plovdiv University Paisiy Hilendarski**

of the materials submitted for participation in a competition
for the academic position of “associate professor”
at the Plovdiv University “Paisiy Hilendarski”
in the field of higher education 9. Security and Defense, professional direction 9.1. National
Security (Security in the Balkans, Foreign Policy and Diplomacy)

In the “associate professor” competition, announced in the State Gazette, no. 32 of 09.04.2024 and on the website of Plovdiv University “Paisiy Hilendarski” for the needs of the Department of “Political Sciences and National Security” at the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, participate as candidates Plamen Atanasov Atanasov, DSc, from “Oliva” JSC – Knezha and chief assistant professor Goran Vladimirov Stoykovski, PhD, from Plovdiv University “Paisiy Hilendarski”.

1. General presentation of the procedure and the candidates

By order No. RD-21-1184 dated 07.06.2024 of the Rector of Plovdiv University “Paisiy Hilendarski” (PU), I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury of a competition for the academic position of “associate professor” in the PU in the field of higher education 9. Security and Defense, professional direction 9.1 National Security (Security in the Balkans, Foreign Policy and Diplomacy), announced for the needs of the Department of “Political Sciences and National Security” at the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences.

The following candidates have submitted documents to participate in the announced competition:

1. Plamen Atanasov Atanasov, DSc, from “Oliva” JSC – Knezha;
2. Chief Assistant Goran Vladimirov Stoykovski, PhD, from Plovdiv University “Paisiy Hilendarski”.

The paper set of materials presented by **Plamen Atanasov Atanasov** is in accordance with the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff of the PU (RDASPU), and includes the following documents: a sample application to the rector for admission to participate in the competition; CV in European format; diplomas for the educational and qualification degree 'master' - original with attachment or notarized copy and for acquired additional qualifications; diploma for educational and scientific degree (ESD) "doctor" - original or notarized copy; diploma for scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" - notarized copy; list of scientific works; scientific works (copies of publications); separation protocols; list of citations; certificate of compliance with the minimum national requirements; certificate of compliance with additional faculty requirements; annotations of the materials under Article 65 of the RDASPU in Bulgarian; annotations of the materials under Article 65 of the

RDASPU in English; self-assessment of contributions; declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents; certificates of work experience; transcripts of protocols from the department council, faculty council and academic council in connection with the competition; state newspaper with the competition announcement (copy); documents for academic work; documents for research work; documents according to additional requirements of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences (FESS).

The candidate Plamen Atanasov submitted a total of 30 scientific papers, of which 2 monographs, 11 reports (one of which was not published as of August 9 of this year), 15 studies and articles, two separate chapters of a collective monograph, which was presented simultaneously both for a textbook and for a research project. Most of the publications are independent, two articles are co-authored.

The scientific works of Plamen Atanasov are in the thematic directions presented in the table:

Direction	Number of publications
Public diplomacy, security in the Balkans	1
Crisis communications	3
Hybrid threats, Internet threats and the role of communications in them	12
Media and public communications	10
Intelligence analysis	1
State and public security	1
Total by direction "Security in the Balkans, foreign policy, diplomacy"	1
Total by "Public Communications and Information Sciences"	27
Total by "Security"	2

From the submitted publications, I accept for review three scientific papers in the specialty of the announced competition "Security in the Balkans, foreign policy and diplomacy". They are outside the dissertations for obtaining the ESD "Doctor" and "Doctor of Science" and are counted in the final assessment. The research project "Stigma of Mental Illnesses among Medical Students in Five South-East European Countries" is outside the scientific field, scientific direction and specialty of the competition.

27 scientific papers outside of the contest's issues are not reviewed.

In the attached service note from the "2024 International Conference on Information Technologies (InfoTech-2024)" for the report "Persuasion potential: assessment through differences between the complexity of texts, generated with ChatGPT 3.5, and texts from traditional media", in-

dexed in Scopus, no the person representing the institution can be identified and verified - "Co-Chairman of the Organizing Committee of InfoTech-2024".

The set of paper and electronic materials presented by the candidate Goran Vladimirov Stoykovski is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the PU, and includes the following documents: a sample application to the Rector for admission to participate in the competition; resume in European format; diplomas for the educational and qualification degree 'master' - original with attachment or notarized copy and for acquired additional qualifications; diploma for educational and scientific degree "doctor" - original or notarized copy; list of scientific works; scientific works (copies of publications); separation protocol; list of citations; certificate of compliance with the minimum national requirements; certificate of compliance with additional faculty requirements; annotations of the materials under Article 65 of the RDASPU in Bulgarian and English; self-assessment of contributions in Bulgarian and English; declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents; certificates of work experience; reference for academic work; research paper reference; documents according to additional requirements of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences.

Candidate Goran Stoykovski submitted a total of 15 scientific works, of which 2 monographs, 8 reports (one of which was not published as of August 9 of this year), 5 studies and articles. Most of the publications are independent, one report is co-authored.

Goran Stoykovski's scientific works are in the following areas:

Direction	Number of publications
Security of the Balkan countries	7
International relations, diplomacy	6
Academic training	1
Political parties	1
Total by direction "Security in the Balkans, foreign policy, diplomacy"	14

From the publications presented by Goran Stoykovski, I accept for review 14 scientific papers in the specialty of the announced competition "Security in the Balkans, foreign policy and diplomacy". I do not accept for review "The crisis of democratic parliamentarism as a consequence of the crisis of neoliberalism", 2022, Reports from the Annual National Conference of the Bulgarian Association of Political Sciences and New Bulgarian University "Parliamentary Governance and Crises", Sofia, June 4, 2022, t.c. is on a topic outside the specialty of the contest.

2. Brief biographical data of the candidates

The candidate **Plamen Atanasov Atanasov** was born in 1970 in Pleven. Acquired the specialty "Journalism" in 1994 at the Free Faculty of the Higher Mechanical and Electrical Engineering Institute - Sofia. In the following year, he acquired the qualification "Biotechnical Engineer" at the Faculty of Automation of the Technical University - Sofia. In 2017, he obtained a doctorate from the National Academy of Sciences at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" by defending a dissertation on the topic: "Role of computer-mediated communication in causing and controlling reputational and management crises. In 2023, he successfully defended his dissertation on the topic: "Security and Communication" he acquired the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" in professional direction 9.1. "National Security" at the Department of National and International Security of the New Bulgarian University, Sofia.

His research work is mainly in the field of public communications and information technology. In the current year, 2024, his scientific interests are directed towards public diplomacy and international relations with a focus on the Republic of North Macedonia.

His professional development includes holding various expert, administrative and research positions in private and government structures, including: "engineer" with responsibilities for planning, maintenance, repair, etc. of machinery and equipment in an enterprise from the food industry; "research associate" at the Institute of Viticulture and winemaking; "procurator" with responsibilities for trade, repair and maintenance of dental equipment; computer network hardware support "engineer"; IT specialist; "system administrator"; Information Security Officer; PR expert; "chief mechanic" in a light industrial enterprise.

The candidate periodically carried out teaching activities on a fee basis. Initially at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Sofia, and at the Medical University - Pleven, in courses with subjects in the field of public communications and information sciences.

Plamen Atanasov acquires extensive educational and professional experience, but there is no such experience in connection with the announced competition. His scientific work in this direction was carried out in the current year 2024.

The candidate chief assistant **Goran Vladimirov Stoykovski**, PhD was born in 1969 in the town of Kumanovo, Republic of North Macedonia. In 2002, he obtained a Master's degree, majoring in "Political Science" at the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". In 2008, he obtained a doctorate from the National Academy of Sciences in the scientific specialty "Political Science" after a defended doctoral dissertation on the topic: "The perspective of inter-ethnic relations and the state system in the Republic of Macedonia".

His work experience in the period 2003-2009 includes work as: "associate" at the Protocol and Ceremonial Office at the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, Skopje; "consultant" at the "National Center for Public Opinion Research" at the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria;

"expert" at the Institute for Social and Humanistic Studies "Euro-Balkan" in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia; "associate" and "expert-consultant" at the Institute for Social Values and Structures "Ivan Hadjiyski", Sofia, and at the Institute for Regional and International Studies, Sofia, Bulgaria, and at the Open Society Institute Foundation - Macedonia. Since 2010, he has been working at the Institute for Economic Strategies and International Relations "Ohrid" in the Republic of Macedonia and the Institute for Regional and International Studies, Sofia. In the period 2014-2017, he was an "advisor" to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria.

The scientific and teaching activity of Goran Stoykovski began in 2012 as an "assistant" in the "Political Sciences" department of "Paisii Hilendarski" PU. In 2016, he was elected as an "associate professor" in the professional field of "Political Sciences", scientific specialty international relations, national security, which he holds until 2021. In 2012, he was also elected as a "principal assistant" at the University of Veliko Tarnovo "St. St. Cyril and Methodius", Faculty of Philosophy, Department of "Political Sciences" ("Political Science, Sociology and Cultural Studies"), Veliko Tarnovo, where he taught until 2024. From the same year, he was appointed "Main Assistant" in the Department of "Political Sciences and National security" at the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski", so called the regulation does not allow the occupation of the academic position "associate professor", due to a break of three years. He teaches the disciplines "Theory of International Security", "Foreign Policy and Diplomacy" and "History of International Relations". The scientific research of the chief assistant Dr. Goran Stoykovski are in the direction of international and regional security, international relations, foreign policy and diplomacy. His work experience, in the state administration between 2014 and 2017, as an advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria and a member of the Political Cabinet. includes practical work in international relations and diplomacy.

Ch. assistant professor Dr. Stoykovski has experience in managing projects with a multi-ethnic profile. Born and raised in the city of Kumanovo, Republic of Macedonia, he subsequently worked in the multi-ethnic environment of the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Gains real experience on issues related to security in ethnic and international relations. Goran Stoykovski's scientific and practical experience in the field of international relations and national and regional security enable the effective training of specialists in these fields.

3. General characteristics of the candidates' activities

Assessment of educational and pedagogical activity and preparation of candidates.

The educational and pedagogical activity of the candidate, **Plamen Atanasov Atanasov** is as doctoral student and a part-time lecturer. At the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communications at Sofia University "Kliment Ohridski" he conducts courses on "Institutional Transmedia Image and Brand", "Persuasive Communication" with a total schedule of 45 hours. At the Medical University -

Pleven, he leads courses on the topics: "Publicity of the 21st century - the doctor as a communicator"; "Doctor and society facing the challenges of the 21st century"; "Thinking about security in the context of public health" with a total schedule of 10 hours.

Participates in the development of study programs in the MA "G. S. Rakovski on the topics: "Information security and cyber protection", "Basics of information-analytical activity", "Technology of information-analytical activity". These curricula are not attached to the set of documents and there is no evidence of the degree of participation in their development.

Presented as a teaching aid is the collective monograph "Management of Reputational Crises". (Sofia: FZHMK, SU "St. Kl. Ohridski", 2017), in which the candidate is a co-author, but there is no information about the university, major and discipline in which the publication was accepted as a teaching aid.

There is no information on P. Atanasov's work with students, graduates and doctoral students.

In general, Mr. Atanasov's educational and pedagogical activity and training is outside the scientific specialty of the competition and does not meet the additional requirement and evaluation criteria of the candidates participating in the competition for the academic position "associate professor" of the FESS faculty (accepted by the Faculty Council with protocol No. 143 of 29.05.2020).

The educational and pedagogical work and preparation of the candidate - Ch. Assistant Professor Goran Stoykovski, Ph.D., is in the academic positions of "assistant", "principal assistant", "associate professor" at the University of Plovdiv "Paisiy Hilendarski" (12 years in total) and the University of Veliko Tarnovo "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" (11 years in total).

G. Stoykovski is the author of 9 lecture courses and curricula, which are relevant to the scientific specialty of the competition (for OCS "Bachelor" and "Master" majors from the professional fields of "National Security" and "Political Sciences"). They are in the following academic disciplines: "International Security" (60 hours of classroom work); "Foreign policy, diplomacy and national security" (75 hours of classroom work); "History of international relations" (60 hours of classroom work); "Theory of International Relations" (60 hours of classroom work); "Ethno-religious relations in the Balkans" (45 hours of classroom use); "Systems and organizations for international security" (45 hours of classroom work); "State policies and strategies in South-Eastern Europe" (30 hours of classroom time); "Strategic analysis of regional security" (30 hours of classroom time); "The Asia-Pacific region. Geostrategic analysis and geostrategic rivalry. Regional coalitions and unions" (30 hours of classroom use).

The following publications by **Goran Stoykovski** have been accepted as teaching aids in the nine curricula indicated:

- "The Great Change of the Macedonian Republic", UI "Paisii Hilendarski", Plovdiv, 2021; ISBN 978-619-202-683-7

- The rise of the white crescent - prospects for a new Turkish century in the Balkans. IRMI, 2015, Sofia, ISBN 978-9-5498582-7-3.

- Macedonia at a crossroads/Macedonia at a crossroads. East-West, 2008, Sofia, ISBN 978-954-321-511-9 (co-authored).

Ch. assistant professor Dr. G. Stoykovski actively works with students, graduates and doctoral students within the framework of his teaching activities. Appointed scientific supervisor of four doctoral students, more than twenty graduate students, as well as supervisor of more than 200 student developments (coursework and projects).

In conclusion, the educational and teaching work and preparation of the candidate ch. assistant professor Dr. G. Stoykovski meets the requirements of FISN and is in accordance with the scientific specialty of the competition.

Evaluation of the scientific and scientific-applied activity of the candidates.

The candidate Plamen Atanasov has 3 (three) scientific papers, which are on the issues of the competition and the scientific direction "National Security".

The habilitation thesis of **Plamen Atanasov** "Issues of public diplomacy and security. A look at Bulgarian-Macedonian relations in 1991–2024." examines the development of society and its growing role in international relations. They are explored through the subject of diplomacy, with an emphasis on public diplomacy, new public diplomacy and digital diplomacy. The object and subject of the work are examined in the aspects of security. The conditions of the modern, information-dominated world of the 21st century are taken into account, in which communication on foreign policy issues takes place not only between the authorities of different countries, but also between the societies of the countries and their individual members.

The scientific problem is examined in the light of the relations between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia, within which there are contradictions because of the attempts to artificially create a nation based on the principle that people inhabit a historical-geographical area; and negative effects such as hate speech, replacement of the historical past and physical violence against the right to national self-awareness.

The author formulates that "The aim of the work is not to highlight the object of scientific research as a unique challenge to security or as a precedent in international relations, but rather it is aimed at the idea of presenting the relations in question in the convergent-divergent whole of the context of current diplomatic practice. To achieve the goal thus formulated, the focus is placed on mass communication."

The theoretical basis of the research is Niklas Luhmann's theory of communication of social systems. States and corresponding societies are studied as a social system that people create in the

context of security. The research is oriented to the communication aspects of diplomacy, understood as a basic tool both in foreign policy and in socio-political relations.

By using the phenomenological approach, the author combines knowledge from diplomacy, communication and social systems theory, which leads to argue the complexity of interactions between states. This approach provides the research with a basis for analyzing socio-political relations in the complex conditions of the environment in which the interests of many geopolitical players are intertwined.

The author demonstrates in-depth knowledge, both in the research area and in the application of the research toolkit. The results of the research are of particular interest for the practice in the field of public and digital diplomacy. They can assist the structures responsible for protecting national security and foreign policy in choosing the right strategy for the development of international relations, and in particular those with the Republic of North Macedonia. This proves the scientific and applied significance of the work of Dr. Plamen Atanasov. The short period after the publication of the work until the present moment does not allow to account for the effect of the use of the research results.

Publications related to the problems of a professional direction 9.1. "National security" are the reports "Practical-applied approaches to using Big data (big data) for intelligence purposes" and "The security of the state and the security of society in conditions of advanced globality". The reports are not directly related to the scientific specialty of the competition, but are considered to be related to the national security system, including in the two content elements - security of the state and society. Both papers have been presented at national scientific conferences. One is co-authored.

The report "Practical-applied approaches to using big data for intelligence purposes" is the result of joint research with Assoc. Dr. Marian Ninov. The activity of intelligence structures on the processing of Big Data is considered. The specific features and the software products used for the purpose were investigated. Practical-applied approaches in the information-analytical activity of the intelligence organizations are proposed.

The report, State Security and Public Security in Advanced Globality, examines the intensive communications in today's world, facilitated by expanded travel opportunities and information connectivity. The author states that an information society is being created and developed, which contradicts its association with the state. This changes the state of security, and society, and makes it relevant for scientific research.

Contributions (scientific, scientific-applied, applied) and citations

The scientific contributions of the candidate Plamen Atanasov complement the knowledge in the field of communications and security, and more specifically:

- basic theories and concepts were critically rethought and the development on this basis of an original point of view, according to which security is diversified as ideal, sought and achieved (III item 1; IV item 22 of the List of scientific works);

- theoretical knowledge in the field of security has been developed, by linking the concept of security with the natural complication of social systems, which leads to the complication of communication within them and between them (III item 1; IV item 22 of the List of scientific works) ;

- the category called "speakers" is defined and its defining role in public communication developed in relation to security in the state and society is proven (III item 1 of the List of scientific works);

The scientific and applied contributions of P. Atanasov:

- A Model was created, based on Niklas Luhmann's Theory of Communication and modern, socially oriented security theories, in which recurring dependencies are presented, showing a connection between security, public diplomacy and public communication. (III item 1; IV item 22 of the List of scientific works);

- it has been proven that public diplomacy as a result of the complexity of social systems (including societies) and the requirements for communication between them (III item 1 of the List of scientific works);

- a dependence was established between the conditions (the population of a historical-geographical area) and the prerequisites that provoke the occurrence of negative effects in the creation of nations (III item 1 of the List of scientific works);

- it has been proven that the new public diplomacy and digital diplomacy are essential tools for eliminating negative effects in the construction and development of nations and in advancing interests in foreign policy relations (III item 1 of the List of scientific works).

In summary, it can be stated that the mentioned contributions can be defined as enriching the existing knowledge in public diplomacy and security.

In the presented Report on the implementation of the national requirements of the DASRB in area 9. Security and defense, PD 9.1. "National security" (Appendix 7.5) in group D, 8 citations are entered. Of these, 1 is in a scientific publication, referenced and indexed in world-renowned scientific information databases SCOPUS/WoS, 6 in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review, and 1 in non-refereed publications with scientific review. Out of 8 citations, 7 are by Bulgarian scientists, in Bulgarian, 1 – by foreign researchers in English. 4 of the citations are from 2020 to 2023. All citations are independent publications of the applicant.

No citations were found for the applicant's three peer-reviewed publications, preventing the impact of the results on other researchers from being assessed. The applicant's other publications with a thematic focus on reputational crises, Internet threats, hybrid threats are cited in national and

scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information in monographs and collective volumes, but are not relevant to the scientific specialty of the competition. From these citations, a conclusion can be drawn about the relevance and significance of the scientific publications of Plamen Atanasov for the theory and practice and his fame among our and foreign researchers in the field of public communications and information sciences, as well as insufficient presence of such in the field of security in the Balkans, foreign policy and diplomacy.

In the competition materials submitted for review, the candidate has attached a Certificate of compliance with the minimum national requirements (Appendix 8.1). in which he declares 780 items with a minimum of 400 items specified in the Report on the implementation of the national requirements of the RDASRB in area 9. Security and Defense.

With the necessary 105 items from the additional requirements of FESS, the author declares that there are 401.5 items (Appendix 8.3). It should be noted that substantial additional requirements for the academic position "associate professor" of a content nature have not been met, namely: to participate in the competition with publications in specialized scientific publications in the scientific specialty of the competition, namely Security in the Balkans, foreign policy and diplomacy: studies or scientific articles and scientific reports and including with at least one publication in scientific publications, including referenced and indexed in the world-famous databases of scientific information. These requirements are not met. In addition, as was commented above, no evidence was presented for the acceptance of the declared publication (collective monograph) as a teaching aid and its relevance to curricula in the scientific specialty of the competition.

The conclusion is that the minimum requirements of LDASRB (SG No. 56/6.07.2018) for the indicators for the position of "associate professor" in area 9. Security and Defense have been formally met, and have been exceeded many times over (Appendix 7). In terms of structure and content, some indicators of the criteria for occupying the academic position under the announced competition for "Security in the Balkans, foreign policy and diplomacy" have not been met, as they do not meet the additional faculty requirements of FESS (adopted by decision of FC Protocol No. 144/19.06.2020).

The analysis and assessment of Plamen Atanasov's research work show that he is a quality researcher, theoretically prepared and able to apply appropriate tools for research and problem solving in the field of public communications and information sciences. His research in the area of security in the Balkans, international relations and diplomacy is insufficient.

The candidate Ch. assistant professor Goran Stoykovski, PhD, has 14 scientific papers, which are on the issues of the competition - Security in the Balkans, foreign policy and diplomacy. Of the scientific works accepted for review, 13 are independent, one has three co-authors. Of these: 2 monographs, 3 studies, 9 scientific articles and reports, of which 4 are in English. Two works have

been published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information (including one - in Scopus and Web of Science).

The scientific results of the conducted research have been presented at a total of 6 scientific conferences in Bulgaria, 3 of which with international participation.

Scientific works for participation in the competition are in the scientific specialty for which the competition was announced and are the result of in-depth research and the application of modern scientific methodology in security and international relations.

Dr. Stoykovski's habilitation thesis "The Great Change of the Macedonian Republic" analyzes the beginning of a change that still has an impact on the security of the Macedonian society and state, and from there on the security of the Balkans. The study was conducted in the Republic of Macedonia (from 2018, the Republic of North Macedonia). The monograph covers separate studies that examine three periods related to three key events that took place in 2001, 2005 and 2008 respectively. These are three periods of fundamental importance for the understanding of security in Macedonian issues: the armed conflict in 2001 and the subsequent Ohrid Framework Agreement, then the referendum on a new administrative division and local elections in 2005, and finally - the early parliamentary elections held in 2008.

The author dissociates himself from ethnocentrism, bias and preconceived views. He tries to be objective, largely arguing with indisputable facts that arise and develop in the political process in the Republic of Macedonia. An interdisciplinary approach is applied: comparative political science and theoretical international political analysis. The research is based on the premise that at the basis of the great change, on the one hand, there is a complex of narrow ethno-political interests of the political elites, i.e. the ethno-confessional factor, and on the other - the interests of the "big players" in the context of an international geopolitical and geostrategic situation.

The work reveals the complexity of the ethno-political conflict in the Republic of Macedonia, the subsequent complex diplomatic relations in international politics, external intervention and inter-party compromises.

The author, bearing in mind the foreign political situation in the Balkans and the internal political situation in the Balkan countries during the period of the study, formulates a recommendation to the Balkan politicians to look for the formula for the positioning of their countries in the context of American-Russian relations, instead of repeating the political path of Yugoslavia. The results of Dr. Stoykovski's research are of particular interest to practice in the field of international relations in the Balkans and security protection. They support the state administration in choosing a strategic alternative in relations with the Republic of Macedonia and with the other "players" in the region. This also proves the scientific-applied significance of the work of Chief Assistant. Dr. Goran Stoykovski.

Another work by G. Stoykovski accepted for review is "The Rise of the White Crescent - Prospects for a New Turkish Century in the Balkans". The current problem of Turkish strategic thinking, tactics, the essence of foreign policy goals and the general geopolitical vision of the Republic of Turkey are investigated. The author's goals are to reveal: the essence of the main goals of the foreign policy of the Republic of Turkey after the end of the Cold War; the views of the Turkish political elite enshrined in Turkey's new national doctrine; the features of the geostrategic vision based on a new ideology: the Turkish consensus for the realization of a Muslim-Islamic synthesis, which would realize a general-Muslim unification. The work is structured in eight parts: a preface with an afterword, an introduction, and six chapters. Each chapter examines the development of geopolitical processes and analyzes the global and regional situation, as well as the implications and practical results of the implementation of the Turkish foreign policy doctrine at the beginning of the new 21st century.

At the time of conducting the research, the author predicted three possible scenarios for the development of society and orientation of the Turkish state in international relations. According to the first, "Euro-Atlantic scenario", Turkey maintains the current geopolitical course. The forecast for the second "Neo-Imperial" scenario outlines an independent foreign policy in which Turkey considers the neo-Imperial idea to be more important and more promising than the "outdated Kemalist nationalism", which, if it is to be preserved, will have to find its place as combined with Islamism, Ottomanism and Turanism. The author predicts a third scenario, in which Ankara negotiates with Russia for spheres of influence and support for the "Eurasian Project". In all three scenarios, Dr. Stoykovski reveals factors that affect the Turkish society and state: ideological division of the Turkish population and elite according to beliefs about the choice of civilizational and geopolitical orientation of the state, the ethnic origin of the Turks as a people; the Kurdish issue, which holds the potential to weaken and fragment the Turkish state; the chronic instability of the party and political system periodically pushes Turkey towards authoritarian rule.

10 years after the publication of the study, it can be argued that Dr. Stoykovski correctly predicted the scenarios for the development of Turkey. In recent years, in particular, we have seen the realization of the third, naturally influenced by the current internal and external political situation in the country.

The remaining publications presented in the competition are subsequent development of theoretical statements and practical-applied solutions of modern aspects related to processes in international relations and regional security, with an emphasis on the Balkans. They are the result of in-depth research, the application of modern tools and show excellent knowledge of theory and practice in the field of security in the Balkans, foreign policy and diplomacy.

Contributing points stand out in the works of the candidate in the competition, which can be summarized as follows:

- a systematic and in-depth analysis of the development of the Republic of North Macedonia after the declaration of independence was carried out, which has not been sufficiently studied by political science and security science. (I.A. 1 from the List of scientific works);

- the internal conflict in Macedonia since 2001, which profoundly changed the ethno-religious and political relations in the country, is examined in detail (I.A. 1 from the List of scientific works);

- a systematic, in-depth study of the foreign policy strategy, tactics, foreign policy goals and geopolitical vision of the Republic of Turkey after the end of the Cold War in the regions: Balkans, South Caucasus and the Middle East (I.A. 1 from the List of scientific works) was made;

- strategic issues related to national, international and regional security in the countries of the Western Balkans were analyzed (I.A. 2 of the List of scientific works);

- an approach is proposed to compare different types of foreign policy moves and tactics from the collective West, some of the countries of the Balkans, Russia and China (I.B.1 from the List of scientific works);

- the state of diplomatic relations and the strategic moves carried out between countries from regions of key geopolitical importance, the interweaving of geopolitical strategies and ideologies in the context of the current international situation and the emerging multipolar world were analyzed (I.B.2, 3, 6, 8, 9);

- the interrelationships between the stability and security of Macedonia and the regional stability of the Balkans are revealed (I.B.5, 7, 10; II.B.1);

- the vision for the future of higher education has been supplemented, taking into account the opinion of current students, indicating the main factors that will influence the future, including digitalization and technological development (joint publication).

For the peer-reviewed joint publication, the author submits a separate protocol, from which it is clear that the contributions of the authors are equal.

In summary, it can be stated that the mentioned contributions can be defined as enriching the existing knowledge on the security of the Balkans, foreign policy and diplomacy.

In the attached List of citations (Appendix 7.1.), a total of 12 citations of Dr. Stoykovski's publications are indicated, 7 are by Bulgarian scientists, in Bulgarian, 5 - by foreign researchers, such as 2 in publications in English, 1 in Serbian and 2 in Ukrainian. 7 of the citations are from 2020 to 2023. All citations are independent publications of the candidate.

From these citations, a conclusion can be drawn about the relevance and significance of Dr. Stoykovski's scientific publications on theory and practice and his fame among our and foreign researchers in the field of security in the Balkans, foreign policy and diplomacy.

In the competition materials submitted for review, the candidate, Dr. Stoykovski, attached a Certificate of compliance with the minimum national requirements (Appendix 8). in which he declares 592.5 points (582.5 without the points of indicators E) with a minimum of 400 points, indicated in the Report on the implementation of the national requirements of the LDASRB in area 9. Security and defense.

With the necessary 105 items from the additional requirements of the FESS, the author declares that there are 488.5 items (Appendix 8.1).

The assessment is that the minimum national and additional faculty requirements for occupying the academic position "associate professor" have been met, both quantitatively and substantively.

The analysis and evaluation of Dr. Goran Stoykovski's research work show that he is a quality researcher, theoretically prepared in the field of security in the Balkans, international relations and diplomacy, and practically successfully applies the research methodology in the scientific specialty of the competition.

4. Evaluation of the personal contribution of the candidates

The two candidates in the competition have attached the declaration of originality of the obtained results, as required by the Regulations for the Application of the LDASRB (Appendix 11). They have also implemented separation protocols for joint publications, reflecting the personal contributions of the candidates. The published scientific works and the participation of P. Atanasov and G. Stoykovski in many Bulgarian and international scientific publications and forums give grounds for the conclusion that their contributions are their personal work and are the result of systematic, purposeful scientific activity. Until now, I have not received and am not aware of any plagiarism signals from the candidates in the competition.

5. Critical remarks and recommendations

Candidate Plamen AtanasovQ DS has presented publications with a certain scientific value, but for the most part, they are outside the professional direction and scientific specialty of the announced competition. The candidate has no teaching experience in the "National Security" professional field and in particular in the specialties accredited at the "Paisii Hilendarski" University of Plovdiv. There is a lack of textbooks, teaching aids and educational methodical developments in the disciplines related to the specialty. I recommend that in his future work, the candidate chooses a scientific specialty in which to develop, and it is close to his interests, related to either national security, or public communications and computer science.

The candidate Ch. assistant professor **Goran Stoykovski**, PhD must arrange in the appendices and references in the same sequence: the list of scientific works, the annotations of the publications offered for review, etc. references. I recommend that in the future he emphasizes the mutual depen-

dence between the security of the Balkan countries and the national security of the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as the development of textbooks and teaching aids on the diplomatic aspects of national security.

6. Personal impressions

I have no immediate impressions of the candidate P. Atanasov. On the basis of the materials provided for the competition for awarding the academic position of "associate professor", I can define him as a productive researcher who successfully combines knowledge from several scientific fields.

I have known G. Stoykovski since 2020, as an active and responsible teacher and scientist who knows in detail the internal political situation in the Balkan countries. Respected by colleagues in the department and faculty, as well as by students.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials presented by Plamen Atanasov Atanasov, DS do not meet all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of LDASRB and the relevant Regulations of PU "Paisiy Hilendarski". The additional requirements for occupying the academic position "associate professor", confirmed by protocol No. 144/19.06.2020 by the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences at the PU, have not been met. It is stated there that the candidate must participate in the competition with publications in specialized scientific publications in the scientific specialty of the competition, namely "Security in the Balkans, foreign policy and diplomacy". In this regard, a reduction of the candidate's scientific works was made, after which it was established that the candidate did not submit a sufficient number of scientific works in the competition, published after the materials used in the defense of the ESD "Doctor" and "Doctor of Sciences". The candidate's works contain scientific and applied contributions that have received recognition from other scientists, have been published at home and abroad, but the majority of them are in areas, professional directions and scientific specialties other than those for the competition. The achievements of the DS Plamen Atanasov Atanasov's academic and research results do not correspond to the minimum national and additional requirements of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, adopted in connection with the Regulations of the PU for the application of the DASRB. After getting acquainted with the information presented by the candidate, Ph.D. Plamen Atanasov Atanasov in the competition materials and scientific works, the performed analysis of their significance and the scientific, scientific-applied and applied contributions contained in them, I find it justified to give my negative assessment for the candidate in the competition.

The documents and materials presented by chap. Assistant Professor Goran Vladimirov Stoykovski, Ph.D., meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in

the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the Implementation of LDASRB and the relevant Regulations of PU "Paisiy Hilendarski". Despite the reduction of the candidate's scientific works, the presented scientific works are sufficient. Dr. Stoykovski has original scientific and applied contributions that have received international recognition, many of which have been published in journals and scientific proceedings issued by international academic publishers. The results achieved by Dr. Goran Vladimirov Stoykovski in the educational and research activities fully correspond to the minimum national and additional requirements of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, adopted in connection with the Regulations of the PU for the application of LDASRB.

After a careful review of the scientific works and other documents presented by the candidate . Goran Vladimirov Stoykovski PhD in the competition, the analysis of their significance and the scientific and scientific-applied contributions contained in them, I give my positive assessment of the candidate in the competition.

In this regard, I suggest the scientific jury to rank the candidate Ch. assistant Professor Goran Vladimirov Stoykovski, PhD and to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences for the election of Goran Vladimirov Stoykovski to the academic position of "associate professor" at PU "Paisiy Hilendarski" in the field of higher education 9. Security and defense, professional direction 9.1. National security (Security in the Balkans, foreign policy and diplomacy).

09.08.2024 г.

Review made by:

Assoc. Prof. Ivan Stanchev, PhD