

OPINION

by Prof. Todor Georgiev Galunov, VTU "St. Cyril and Methodius"

on a dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "doctor"

in: field of higher education: 2. Humanities.

Professional field: 2.2. History and archaeology,

Doctoral program: Historical studies.

Author: Nikolay Valentinov Karamihov

Topic: "MODERNIZATION THROUGH ARCHAIZATION, POLITICAL IDEAS IN IRAN IN THE 20th CENTURY"

Scientific advisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Valentin Petrusenko, Paisiy Hilendarski University.

1. General description of the procedure and the doctoral student

The set of materials on paper submitted by Nikolay Valentinov Karamihov is in accordance with Art. 36 (1) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University and includes the following documents:

- application to the Rector of the University for the opening of the procedure for the defense of a dissertation;
- CV in European format;
- minutes of the departmental council, related to reporting the readiness to open the procedure and with a preliminary discussion of the dissertation;
- dissertation;
- abstract;
- list of scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation;
- copies of scientific publications;
- declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents.

Nikolay Valentinov Karamihov was born in 1977. In 1996 he graduated from Secondary Education at the 18th William Gladstone Secondary School, Sofia. Since 2001 he has been a Master in Modern History at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". He was enrolled as a doctoral student in independent preparation at the Paisii Hilendarski University, with Order No. RD-21-1196/11.06.2024. He was dismissed with the right to defend his thesis on 12.06.2025.

2. Relevance of the topic

At its core, the topic of Iran is poorly known to Bulgarian historical and political science. The goal of the work set by the author is – "to provide qualitatively new knowledge about the processes and phenomena related to the recent history of Iran, by placing them in the context of modernization through archaization". The title of the doctoral thesis is sharply provocative and poses the seemingly absurd thesis of modernization and democratization through archaization. Here we come to the interesting theoretical question, which is not unknown in history: how is democracy sometimes defended with force, bordering on dictatorship, and will this be democracy if it is achieved in this way? In addition, the events in Iran in the last few months show that the accumulated problems of the 20th century have been transferred to be solved in the 21st century.

3. Knowing the problem

The author knows the problem very well. However, in developing the topic, there is also something different, which is a plus – the doctoral student, speaking about the realities of today's Iran, uses personal impressions, which gives the work a specific flavor. It can be said that in this aspect he goes from practice to theory and current historical generalizations. The technical layout of the text corresponds to generally accepted norms.

4. Research methodology

The doctoral student sets himself the task of bringing out both the positive and negative aspects of the studied processes in the course of the research. Various methods were used in the development: historical description, comparative-historical, historical summary, historical reconstruction, comparative approach. The applied methodology allows achieving the set goals and objectives.

5. Characterization and evaluation of the dissertation work and contributions

Structurally, the dissertation consists of an Introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion. It is presented in a total volume of 214 pages, of which 185 pages are active text, an extremely detailed bibliography in Bulgarian, Russian, and English, documents and digital sources used, and four appendices. The sources used testify to the good scientific awareness of the doctoral student on the topic of the study. It provides a historical analysis of the chosen topic - from antiquity to the present day. It is also supplemented by political science assessments, which enriches the work and allows for more theoretical generalizations.

Advantages of the thesis:

1. The study bears all the hallmarks of classical historicism – a rich historical part, adherence to the principles of chronology, sufficient empirical material.
2. A high degree of informativeness has been achieved and a rich set of source material has been used, studied, summarized and analyzed for the purposes of the study, which is insufficiently known or used by Bulgarian historical science.
3. Excellent skills and precision have been demonstrated in working with a large volume of documents, which are a prerequisite for convincing conclusions. In the near future, every Bulgarian scientist working on a topic related to the study will have to use a large part of the information presented here. A systematization of significant source material – poorly used by Bulgarian science – has been carried out.
4. “White spots” in Bulgarian historiography have been filled in,
5. The contradictory development of Iran and the pendulum effect in its evolution have been shown.

Notes and recommendations

1. The dissertation would benefit even more if, at a theoretical level, larger generalizations and conclusions about the future development of Iran were made.
2. Questions can be asked: Is a Western-style democracy possible in Iran?
3. To what extent does Islam correspond to the idea of democracy?
4. Is the Western world doomed to be in confrontation with countries like Iran or are there paths for cooperation, but while maintaining relatively large dividing lines?
5. A more extensive and reasoned answer to the main question in the dissertation – how does archaization turn out to be a path to the modernization of Iran?
6. Could the eventual restoration of the “archaic” monarchical institution of the Shah and the Pahlavi dynasty turn out to be a path to the democratization and modernization of Iran?

6. Assessment of the doctoral student's publications and personal contribution

The doctoral student has attached: 1 article published in a scientific journal, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information and two articles published in peer-reviewed volumes. It fully meets the scientometric requirements.

The author brings out 5 main contributions. I accept the contributions and highlight three of them:

1. The idea of modernization through archaization.
2. The use of a large number of sources and historiographical studies that are not in academic circulation in Bulgarian science and can be the basis for future research.
3. A model is proposed for the study of contemporary processes and phenomena in the countries of the region.

7. Autor's abstract

The abstract is 28 pages of active text and in a synthesized form presents the most important guidelines, conclusions and contributions achieved in the dissertation. The author's contributions are indicated. It meets the requirements of the internal regulatory framework of the “Paisiy Hilendarski” University, the “Act on the Development of the Academic Staff” and the “Regulations on the Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Holding Academic Positions”. A translation of the abstract into English is also presented.

8. Recommendations for future use of the dissertation contributions and results

I recommend that the doctoral thesis be published as a monograph. The notes made during the procedure should be used to refine the text. The collected material and conclusions should be used in teaching modern history and political science. The text would also be useful reading for politicians working with Iran..

9. Conclusion:

Dear colleagues,

The originality of the dissertation, the way it was developed, the source material used and the conclusions drawn fully comply with the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act. All this gives me the right to reasonably propose to the esteemed scientific jury to vote without hesitation to award doctoral student Nikolay Karamihov the educational and scientific degree of “Philosophy Doctor”.

08/1/2025

Prepared the opinion:

(signature)

Prof. Todor Galunov, PhD.