

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Nikolay Atanasov Popov, PhD, South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Blagoevgrad

regarding a doctoral dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in:

Field of higher education: 3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences

Professional field: 3.3. Political Sciences

Doctoral program: "Political Sciences."

Author: Vladimir Bonov Slavenski

Topic: Bulgaria's Foreign Policy toward North Macedonia, the Treaty of August 1, 2017

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Daniela Dobрева Pastarmadzhieva, PhD, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"

1. General Presentation of the Procedure and the Doctoral Candidate

By Order No. RD-22-2394 dated November 26, 2025, issued by the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU), I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury for the dissertation defense procedure on the topic "Bulgaria's Foreign Policy toward North Macedonia, the Treaty of August 1, 2017". The candidate is Vladimir Bonov Slavenski, a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Political Science and National Security.

The set of materials submitted by Vladimir Bonov Slavenski complies with Art. 36 (1) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of PU. The candidate has submitted four publications. Currently, Vladimir Bonov Slavenski serves as a city councilor in the Plovdiv City Council. He possesses significant experience in project management, implementation, and teamwork. He holds a Bachelor's degree in "Political Science" and a Master's degree in "Business Administration".

2. Relevance of the Topic

The dissertation topic is highly relevant and significant. It addresses events and processes directly linked to regional security and bilateral relations between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia within the context of the new geopolitical reality.

3. Knowledge of the Problem

The developed dissertation clearly demonstrates that the doctoral student has an excellent command of the research problem and the relevant bibliography.

4. Research Methodology

The research methodology employed by Vladimir Bonov Slavenski has enabled him to fulfill the research tasks and achieve the set objectives.

5. Characteristics and Evaluation of the Dissertation and its Contributions

The dissertation comprises 277 standard pages. Its structure includes an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography, and appendices.

The Introduction presents the relevance, research problem, main goal, object, subject, primary tasks, hypothesis, limitations, and methodology.

Chapter One, titled “Negotiations as Part of the Theory of International Relations,” outlines the main theories regarding international relations, foreign policy, and diplomacy.

Chapter Two, “Bulgaria, the Balkans, and Macedonia at the Beginning of the 21st Century,” examines the relations between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia leading up to the 2017 Treaty.

Chapter Three is titled “The Treaty of August 1, 2017” and presents the methodology and results of the empirical study. The scientific contributions identified by Vladimir Bonov Slavenski are well-founded and can be accepted.

6. Assessment of Publications and Personal Contribution

The dissertation and the four submitted publications meet the regulatory and scientific requirements, demonstrating the candidate's ability to develop and defend scientific theses.

7. Dissertation Abstract (Autoreferat) The abstract meets the requirements, accurately reflecting the content, structure, contributions, and publications related to the dissertation.

8. Recommendations for Future Use of Results

My recommendation is to publish the dissertation to ensure wider dissemination of its findings, which would contribute to a better understanding of the issues addressed.

Conclusion

Vladimir Bonov Slavenski possesses the necessary theoretical knowledge and the ability to conduct and defend scientific research. In accordance with the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act, the Implementation Regulations of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and the Internal regulations of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski,” I express a positive assessment for awarding the educational and scientific degree of “Doctor” (PhD) in Political Sciences to Vladimir Bonov Slavenski.

Date: December 19, 2025

Prepared by:

(Assoc. Prof. Nikolay Popov, PhD)