БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ
Институт по балканистика с център по тракология
"Проф. А. Фол"
Вх. № 65-НО-05-05, 01/0 23 г.

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Nadya Filipova, PhD, Institute for Historical Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

regarding the dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree PhD in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, Professional field 2.2. History and Archeology

Topic of the dissertation: "TURKEY'S FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST (2002 – 2011)"

Author of the dissertation: Mariyan Karagyozov

This Opinion has been prepared in accordance with:

1. Order No. 84 РД-16/07.07.2023 of the Director of the Institute of Balkan Studies and Centre of Thracology - BAS Prof. Dr. Rumyana Preshlenova for the appointment of the Scientific Jury for the defense of the dissertation of Mariyan Dimitrov Karagyozov - PhD student at the Department "Modern Balkans".

2. Minutes No. 1 of the meeting of the Scientific Jury for the defence of the dissertation prepared by Marian Dimitrov Karagyozov - PhD student at the Department "Contemporary Balkans".

The dissertation presented by the PhD student Mariyan Karagyozov is in a volume of 255 non-standard pages including the Bibliography section. It is dedicated to an important topic for the studies of the Middle Eastern, Balkan and World history, since, as Mariyan Karagyozov himself notes, Turkey's role in regional and global processes has been growing in recent decades. Structurally, the study complies with the standards required for a PhD thesis: it consists of Introduction, five Chapters, a Conclusion and a Bibliographic section. As a general impression, it should be noted that there are certain spelling mistakes, verb tense changes, grammatically incorrect sentences, and missing pages in some of the footnote references.

In the Introduction, the importance of the topic is underlined, the methodology is defended and the chronological and geographical scope chosen for the study is justified. However, the exclusion of leading countries and processes from the scope of the study such as Iran, Israel, Egypt and the Palestinian statehood issue raises the question of how far Turkish "Middle Eastern" policy is analyzed and whether the title of the dissertation is accurate. In the same section the aim of the research is defined and the specific purposes are formulated, albeit in a more general form. As a deficiency, I would note the absence of clarification of important terms and definitions such as "Islamist", "Sunni parties", "Political Islam", etc. There are

already enough ideas developed in scientific literature, including by Bulgarian authors. In accordance with the criteria for historical research, the sources of the study are presented - documents and scientific analyses, including in Turkish.

The analysis in Chapter One places the main emphasis on Turkish foreign policy in the period before the rule of the Justice and Development Party, with the aim the steady and innovative aspects in the years of the first decade of the 21st century to be highlighted. The main conclusions about Turkish foreign policy up to this period are well-grounded (p. 86), which is a way of "building a bridge" to the main part of the study. A particularly important and logically studied in depth element of this chapter are the widely popularized academic analyses developed by the Turkish foreign policy strategist Ahmed Davutoglu, including as regards the Middle East.

Mariyan Karagyozov analyzes the country's bilateral relations with Syria and Iraq in the Second Chapter in accordance with the defined in the study "circles" of Turkish foreign policy and in particular its Middle Eastern direction. The Kurdish "issue", which came to the fore in the Middle Eastern political architecture at the beginning of the 20th century, is well revealed. Data are provided on Ankara's political initiatives as well as on economic ties, both of which strongly influenced by the development of international relations. However, the statement noted on p. 106 about Syria and Iraq that "in recent decades they share another common feature - rule by regimes rooted in the ideology of the pan-Arab socialist party Ba'ath" does not take into account the deep differences and contradictions between the two the regimes.

Following the adopted approach, the Third Chapter presents Turkey's relations with Lebanon and Jordan. However, the analysis of these connections needs to be more profound taking into account the complexity of the regional political and economic environment. In this respect, evidence could be provided on the real results of the bilateral agreements, a more extensive study on the Turkish policy regarding the Turkmen population of Lebanon and other countries would also be of interest. The long and disproportionate presentation of the history of Lebanon in the twentieth century is redundant; The Taif Agreement, which put an end to the civil war in Lebanon, was reached and approved by the Lebanese parliament in 1989.

Emphasizing the ambition of the Turkish ruling circles to increase Turkey's engagement in all spheres of regional relations, the author analyzes in Chapter Four not only the bilateral relations with the countries of the Arabian Peninsula, but also gives some information about the foreign policy of these states. According to the accepted principle, data on political initiatives and economic cooperation are provided. Highlighting common features and differences in

Turkey's foreign policy towards these countries would increase the contribution of the dissertation.

Aiming to diversify the adopted model of research, namely the bilateral format of relations, in the last chapter Mariyan Karagyozov points out the main directions of Turkey's multilateral cooperation with the selected by him countries of the Middle East. This chapter proves the ambition of ruling circles to expand the scope and forms of Turkish foreign policy in the region. It is also evident from the text that despite Ankara's increased activity, the achieved results are partial and short-lived, because Turkey overestimates its diplomatic leverage and cannot overcome the influence of the other Middle Eastern states. However, the logic of dividing the last chapter into two paragraphs ("Multilateral formats between Turkey and the countries of the Middle East" and "Multilateral formats between Turkey and the Persian Gulf countries") remains unclear, provided that in territorial aspect the first paragraph includes the second one and that political and economic developments in the whole Middle East are mutually dependent.

Mariyan Karagyozov has provided three publications, which cover the requirements for publication activity. These are two articles in the following two periodicals: "Geopolitics and History", 10 pages (no bibliographic data provided), and "History", 15 pages, as well as one article in an edition of the Center for European and International Studies, 15 pages (it cannot be found in COBISS.BG and in the NATIONAL REFERENCE LIST OF CONTEMPORARY BULGARIAN SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS WITH SCIENTIFIC REVIEW - maintained by the National Centre for Information and Documentation).

As a part of the documentation for this procedure, an "Abstract", "Reference to the Scientific Contributions in the PhD dissertation" and "Declaration of Authenticity of the dissertation" are provided. The abstract presents the text of the dissertation in a synthesized form. As a deficiency of the abstract, I would point out the separation of the list with contributions. Weaving the assessment of the contributions into the main text of the author's abstract would allow for the highlighting of these contributions in the context of the already published studies.

The "Reference to the Scientific Contributions" is a kind of repetition of the mentioned last part of the abstract, and it is not clear why its numbering starts with 16 on the first page. Regarding this reference, I would point out that the claim that the dissertation is "the first comprehensive study of Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East during the period under review" is exaggerated. The statement needs clarification considering the huge volume of existing scientific literature and taking into account the evidence that the dissertation

emphasizes Turkey's bilateral relations with the countries of the region as well as the fact that "key" Middle Eastern issues, factors and countries are excluded from the analysis. Also exaggerated seems the claim that is mentioned in this document as item 4, namely: "An original methodology is applied that groups the countries" (this is noted in the abstract on page 15 as: "The work groups in a unique way the group of countries under study"). In fact, this grouping made only on the principle of "neighborhood and remoteness" is geographically obvious.

Given the fact that the positive elements in the dissertation prevail and taking into account the successful completion of the educational process, I believe that Marijan Dimitrov Karagyozov can be awarded the educational and scientific degree "doctor".

October 1, 2023

Assoc. Prof. Nadya Filipova, PhD