

STATEMENT

**for the competition announced in State Gazette, issue no. 5 of 15.01.2019,
for the academic position "Professor" in Professional field
2.3. Philosophy**

**Prof. DSc. Emilia Evgenieva Chengelova,
Member of the Scientific Jury according to Order RD 09-231 / 25.03.2019**

1. General description of the applicant and the documents provided

In the competition for the academic position "Professor" in Professional field 2.3. Philosophy, with a profile on the research of Islam, Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism, one candidate **Associate Professor, Doctor of Sciences in Philosophy Bogdana Todorova** has applied. The documents are submitted in due time and in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB). The review of the applicant's B. Todorova tables on the minimum national requirements for associate professor and doctor of science shows that B. Todorova not only meets the minimum requirements but also repeatedly exceeds them. Only under section G (indicators 4 to 11), the candidate B. Todorova collects 945 points, which indicates her extensive research activity and its successful verification in publications.

Here we are dealing with a candidate with original, extremely rich, profound and systematic scientific research of Islam, Islamic fundamentalism and its projections in terrorism. B. Todorova's interest in this subject dates back to her higher education - in 1994 she graduated from Sofia University (Philosophy and French Philology) and successfully defended her diploma thesis on "The problem of man in classical Islam ". This initial bold request for independent scientific research has been developed, enriched and filled with new content, with clear accents on contemporary Islamic fundamentalism and is the basis for awarding B. Todorova to the scientific and educational degree "Doctor" (Institute for Philosophical Research, 2002).

Two intensive and especially fruitful specializations followed: in 2009 in Slovenia and in 2011 in Iran, as a result of which B. Todorova was established as one of the leading Bulgarian specialists in the study of Islam and Islamic fundamentalism. Her in-depth interpretations of classical Islamic statements, scientifically provocative interpretations of new ideas and trends,

her ability to identify the challenges of Islam interpretation and her talent to offer her original views and reflections on the development of the role and function of Islam in today's globalizing world - all of these were the reasons for the habilitation of B. Todorova in 2010 and its positioning as a fast-growing Bulgarian researcher, skillfully combining the advantages of philosophical analysis with gender and the situational analysis and clear outline of the new "uses" of one of the world's religious platforms. B. Todorova sets ambitious and multi-dimensional tasks and, judging by her publications, manages to do with them in a convincing way.

To participate in the competition, the applicant has presented a total of 33 publications, including 4 monographs and 29 articles, some of them executed as studios. This is a very rich scientific presentation, indicating intense research activity and successful verification in the scientific world. Rarely in competitions of similar nature, candidates provide such a rich publication activity and this is what gives us reason to characterize the candidate for the current competition as highly productive, with the ability to objectify the results of her research and to present them in a relevant way to the scientific community.

Of the 4 monographs presented, two are entirely authored by B. Todorova as follows: 1) Todorova, B. (2018). The Objectifying of Islam, S, Avangard Prima, ISBN 978-619- 239-093-8, in a volume of 192 pages; 2) Todorova, B. (2017). The position of "unity" in the Political Thoughts of Imam Khomeini, Techno media, Sibiu, Romania, ISBN 978-606-616-279-1, in a volume of 198 pages. The third of the presented monographic works is in co-authorship: Todorova, B., Mizov, M. (2010). The Bulgarian ethnic model - myth or reality? S., Avangard Prima, ISBN 978-954-323-668-8, in a volume of 380 pages. The fourth monographic work is with collective authorship, published under the scientific editing of B. Todorova and being an author of an independent chapter of the monograph: Todorova, B (2018). Democracy, Religious Identity and Fundamentalism in Romania and Bulgaria, (ed.) B. Todorova, Sherban, H., Dimitrova, N., In: The Balkans as Reality, publishing house "St. Cyril and St. Methodious ", University Press Veliko Tarnovo, ISBN 978-619-208-158-4, chapter of collective monograph: Fundamentalism and Radicalism in Bulgaria and Romania - trends and challenges, p.111-142. The second and fourth monographic works are in English.

In terms of structure, the 29 articles and studies submitted for reviewing have the following publication features:

- ✓ **4 articles** have been published in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-renowned scientific information databases (**Web of Science and Scopus**);
- ✓ **5 articles** are published in reference and indexed in other world databases with scientific information (**EBSCO host, Philosopher's Index, CEEOL, DOAJ and ERIH PLUS**);
- ✓ **6 studies** are published in journals with scientific reviewing or in edited collective volumes;
- ✓ **14 articles are published in** journals without scientific reviewing and edited collective volumes.

An impressive number of publications (18) are in English, which speaks of the candidate's high ability to present successfully her research to one of the world's major languages. This ability undoubtedly contributes to its excellent positioning as a researcher of Islam and its contemporary projections in the field of economics and politics.

I accept to review each of the 33 publications presented, which in itself is a serious challenge.

2. General characteristics of the applicant's scientific, applied and pedagogical activities

The applicant's research activities are entirely in the field of Islam, Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism research. Systemic and deepening interest in Islam has led to the penetration of its spiritual and beatific essence, the outlining of stages in the development of views on Islam and the identification of the latest trends in its reflections.

Over the thirty years of her work on Islamic studies has allowed her to not only perceive its historical "happening," but to outline the new trends in his development and reveal its modern transformations, "mutations", "transformations". The research experience of B. Todorova helps her to capture the indications of a key new trend - the objectification of Islam: through the philosophical analysis of the new ideas of the world, of the struggle for systematization, of the specifics in the new forms of organization of state and societies, B. Todorova has proved that Islam begins to distance itself from the classical tradition which is accompanied by parallel processes of change of the attitude towards "religious authority". In the works of B. Todorova a new reading has been given to classical interpretations of Islamism and modernism, and special attention has been paid to the analysis of a specific management system - the Shiite "Velayat-e-fakih". Subject matter of the analysis is the historical

transformations of the different directions of Islam and their specific reflexes in the neo-liberalism, postmodernism and multiculturalism imposed worldwide. A special place in the B. Todorova' research has been given to the Islamic economic model. In this regard, the candidate pays special attention to the analysis and differentiation of two parallel strategies - "red Islam" ("as an attempt to construct a new Sunnit identity" and "Black Islam" (like "constructing a new Salafian identity"). The candidate has an extraordinary interest in portraying the conceptual worlds and behavioral impressions of iconic Islamic figures, thus reaching new depths and offering unique author interpretations of a number of classical Islamic theses.

One of the candidates' main concerns is Iran's governing system, interpreted and perceived in the context of the political history of Shiism and the Shiite clergy, one of the most important factors for the emergence of Islamic "political activism." B. Todorova's research is valuable with conducting in-depth and systematic analysis of the revolutionary technologies and logics used in Iran, focused on conscious transformations of the society.

The candidate has an indisputable sense of capturing the essence and highlighting the important, in identifying patterns and models, in outlining the links between the different aspects of the analyzed technologies and policies. All this allows her to penetrate under the superficial visibility of the obvious, to reach those deep connections and interactions that outline the systemic and the lawful.

B. Todorova's analyzes are written in a lively and persuasive language, and the use of specific terminology and a specific scientific apparatus is skillfully presented, without hindering the reader and without leaving him a sense of ambiguity. The candidate has devoted her research to rich, historically intrusive problems, subject to contradictory assessments and interpretations. However, the candidate has managed to build sustainable own evaluation matrix within which she interprets different points of view, creates her own interpretations and stands up for her positions. The reader learns new interesting things, sees some classic truths in a new and original reading, enters the latest metamorphoses of the different directions of Islam, realizes the activism of Islam and its new functions for the development of Islamic states. All this complex matter is elegantly presented with philosophical finesse, without burdening thinking and logic.

The review of B. Todorova's studies could leave a first impression of the scientifically theoretical nature of her activities. A closer look, however, shows that the candidate conducts her analyzes not because of the pursuit of complex mental speculations but in the search for

opportunities to formulate truths and messages about life and political practice. In this sense, I see the practical implementation of B. Todorova's scientific research. She employs a sophisticated scientific apparatus, handles skillfully with a rich palette of methods, but she still remains grounded and driven by the desire to explain what is happening, to offer explanations and interpretations that can be used in management practice and in political life. That is why B. Todorova's scientific studies could be classified as deep scientific reflections on Islam and its contemporary projections, with clear emphasis made on the practical aspects of Islamic application as a management platform as a basis for economic models, as a system of views and beliefs about world, as a value platform for life and spiritual realization.

The **pedagogical activity** of the candidate is entirely related to the research conducted by her. Besides the two lecture courses offered to the Center for PhD Students (Bulgarian Academy of Science| - Islam and Modernity; Fundamentalism, Islamic Fundamentalism, B. Todorova has a lecturing experience in English on the subject of International and National Security of Foreign Masters "EU Law and Security at VFU" Chernorizets Hrabar "- 2011, 2012, 2013, postgraduate program under the Operational Program Human Resources Development of MON, lectures on the project" Language and Thinking " (2011), lecturing course "Religion and National Security" - Center for National Security and Defense Studies-BAS (2007). Candidate B. Todorova has two successfully defended PhD students and one graduate - Desislava Damianova, Elvin Alibeily and Anton Shevchenko. This indicates a good level of transfer of candidate's scientific and applied knowledge.

3. Assessment of the candidate's publications' contributions

The publications presented for the competition reflect the models and the meaning matrices through which the candidate analyzes the subject of her research. It has to be noticed an in-depth analyses, systematizations made, outlining the models and regularities. The publications highlight a number of contributions which makes B. Todorova' research works an example of originality and heuristics.

First of all, let me note that I accept the self-assessment of scientific contributions made by the candidate herself- the self-assessment corresponds to the content of the scientific publications submitted for review.

In my opinion, among the applicant's contributions, the following should be highlighted:

- ✓ **A new research field has been developed**, at the heart of which is positioned the construct "Islam in Europe". The candidate has rethought and has interpreted

in a modern pattern the classical statements of Islam, and has outlined the role of the Islamic strands as an ideological platform for active participation in political life;

- ✓ Indisputable contribution is the **consideration of Islam as a kind of societal project, a system of values, beliefs and views on the structure and organization of society**. The candidate has an excellent knowledge of Islamic societies, and this has enabled it to carry out an in-depth analysis of political processes in Islamic-based societies. This analysis is not restricted with the statics only, but it tracks the dynamics and outlines the challenges on a global scale as a consequence of the "Arab Revolutions" and their reflection in the regional and global aspect;
- ✓ It is a contribution of great managerial importance to **identifying the tendency for Islam objectification** - and turning it into a separate subject of political practices. As the candidate has grasped intelligently, Islam draws strength and inspiration from its historical written sources but rediscovers it in the context of the new political realities and uses them to make Islam a spiritual and political ideology for public organization and active politics;
- ✓ Apart from a detailed analysis of political processes, a contributing point is the **identification of specific economic models typical of Islamic countries**. Again, the basis of the formation and existence of modern economic relations in Islamic countries is their religious system of beliefs, and depending on the Islam direction, different economic approaches and their incarnations in life are implemented. Another contributing point is the consideration of the Islamic economy as a factor of political change (analysis of the theory and ideology of the so-called "**Golden dinar**");
- ✓ The political point with great contribution is the analysis of Islamic political activism and the construction of a "**New Middle East**" concept. Special emphasis is made on the analysis of the Shiite- Sunnite opposition expressed through two new strategies - so called "Red Islam" and "Black Islam";
- ✓ Based on a socio-philosophical analysis of Khomeini's political reform and the promoted new project for the development of Iranian society, "**theocracy**" is **considered as contemporary alternative to Western democracy**;
- ✓ In the national context, **strong contribution is achieved by development of the fundamental work in which the model of cohabitation between Christians**

and Muslims in the Eastern Rhodopes is explored from a philosophical point of view. In regard to analysis made, for the first time in the Eastern Rhodopes the method of Oral History has been applied. Special attention is paid to Turkey's "Neo-Osman strategy" towards minorities with a common cultural identity within the framework of the former Ottoman Empire;

- ✓ The Candidate has made a **significant contribution to the study of threats, risks and challenges and from the phenomenological point of view investigates the probability of their occurrence and their projections** on the processes of the emergence of religious fundamentalism, religious fanaticism and terrorism. The candidate's special contribution is the analysis of the local terrorist centers in Europe and Bulgaria. Being a philosopher by education, the candidate presents a philosophical analysis of the zones of uncertainty.

Contributions mentioned are more than sufficient to highlight the specific place and role of the candidate in the study of Islam and its contemporary projections in political, economic, spiritual life, as well as for outlining the risks of threats to security on a national, regional and global scale.

4. Impact of the candidate's scientific publications in our and foreign literature

From the documents applied by B. Todorova it is clear that 25 citations from Bulgarian and foreign researchers of Islam have been established. The cited data on the quote show that B. Todorova is to a certain extent recognizable and accepted among scholars and researchers of Islam, not only at national, but also at European and regional level.

5. Verification of the candidate's research

For the period 2010-2018, B. Todorova has been presented of her theoretical ideas and research at **35 international conferences, and other 21 national conferences**. This is extremely high scientific activity demonstrating in a most convincing way both the willingness of the candidate to share and make the results of her research visible but it is also an indication of the fact that B. Todorova is a valuable and reputable researcher whose opinion is sought and respected. All mentioned is an excellent characteristic in the context of this competition, showing that the candidate has gained high authority in the scientific community as an experienced and reliable researcher of Islam and its projections in politics, economics and life.

6. Critical remarks

I have no critical comments. As recommendations for future research, I would offer the candidate to deepen the research of the patterns of cohabitation of Christians and Muslims in the Eastern Rhodopes by emphasizing the social psychological parameters of cohabitation and exploring the differences in cohabitation models that are internalized by the young generations, and on this basis forecasts to be made of the expected trends in the socio-economic and political development of these types of societies.

7. Personal impressions

I know the candidate from our joint work as scientists at the Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Extremely correct, creative, productive, original and high-moral person, she deservedly earned the respect of the scientific community. She is distinguished by an excellent scientific and human reputation, appreciated and sought both as a specialist in her subject area and as a colleague with a valuable knowledge in the field of organization of scientific activity.

8. Conclusion

Taking into account the requirements of the ZRASRB, the Regulations for its application and based on the above assessments and conclusions, I make the following **CONCLUSION: the candidate Associate Professor, Doctor of Sciences in Philosophy Bogdana Todorova meets all the requirements for occupying the academic position "Professor" in the Professional field 2.3. Philosophy.**

I vote with all my persuasion for the award to the candidate the academic position of PROFESSOR.

Sofia, 28.04. 2019 г.

Member of the Scientific Jury:

(Prof. DSc. Emilia Chengelova)