

REVIEW

by Prof. Romyana Marinova-Christidi

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on the scientific works of Associate Professor Kiril Plamen Kartalov, PhD,

participant in the competition for the academic position of "professor"

in the professional field 2. 3. Philosophy (Philosophical Anthropology – The Vatican's Policy during World War II and its Attitude towards the Jewish Question),

announced by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

in the State Gazette, No. 61, July 29, 2025, for the needs of the Anthropology Section

Information about the competition:

The competition for the academic position of "professor" has been announced by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences for the needs of the "Anthropological Studies" section. The statutory deadlines and procedural requirements have been met. The only participant in the competition is Assoc. Prof. Kiril Plamen Kartalov, PhD, and the scientific jury has been appointed by order of the Director of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences No. RD-09-366.1 of September 24, 2025.

Brief information about the candidate:

Kiril Kartalov is a graduate of the prestigious Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan, where he received his master's degree in political science, specializing in international politics, in 2007. He specialized at the renowned ASERI School of Economics and International Relations. Under the guidance of leading political science expert Prof. Massimo De Leonardis, in 2013 he defended his doctoral dissertation on "The Diplomatic Mission of Monsignor Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, Apostolic Visitor and Delegate to Bulgaria (1925-1934)". The following year, his monograph "La sollecitudine ecclesiale di monsignor Roncalli in Bulgaria (1925-1934)" was published by the prestigious Vatican publishing house LEV and was selected from among nearly 200 European titles as a finalist in the "Historical Science" category of the 47th edition of the European Premio Acqui Stori award. In 2015, Kiril Kartalov qualified as an associate professor at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences with his monograph *Paradigms of Political Science* (Academic Publishing House "Za Bukvite–O pismenah," Sofia, 2010). In 2024, after successfully defending his impressive interdisciplinary dissertation "The Flowers of

Nations: The Essence, History, and Significance of Pilgrimage" (Siela, Sofia, 2025) at the Institute of Philosophy at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, he earned his doctorate.

Fulfilment of requirements for the academic position:

According to Article 2(b) of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB) and the requirements of the Institute of Physics, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (IFS-BAS) for the conditions and procedures for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions, candidates for the academic position of "professor" must meet a set of minimum national requirements for their scientific and teaching activities. Assoc. Prof. Kiril Kartalov has submitted a report on the fulfillment of these requirements, which shows that he fully meets and even exceeds the required number of points (he participates in the competition with 870 points, while 550 points are required).

Assoc. Prof. Kiril Kartalov, PhD, also fully meets the conditions set out in Article 29 of the Higher Education Act and the conditions and procedures for acquiring academic degrees and occupying academic positions for candidates for the academic position of "professor": he holds a doctoral degree in the scientific field in which the competition is announced; he has held the academic position of "associate professor" since 2016 (i.e., for more than five years); he participates in the competition with an independently published work – "The Sound of Silence: Pius XII and the Jewish Question in the Light of the Vatican Archives" (Sofia, 2025), which does not repeat the topic of his doctoral dissertation and his habilitation thesis for the academic position of "associate professor" and corresponds to the subject and scope of the announced competition. In addition, Kiril Kartalov presents 15 more scientific publications: 12 articles and studies published abroad in Italian, French, and English; 3 articles and studies in English published in Bulgaria in collections from international conferences or other international publications. None of them contain any evidence of plagiarism or inaccuracy of scientific data. The complete and accurate documentation submitted by the candidate shows that his scientific and teaching activities fall within the scope of the announced competition.

Assessment of the candidate's teaching and lecturing activities:

Kiril Kartalov has extensive teaching experience. In the master's program "Israel: History and Geopolitics" at the Faculty of History of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski," he teaches a course on the history and basic principles of diplomacy and conflict resolution. At the New Bulgarian University, he has taught several courses at various times: Traditional Religions and Counterterrorism, Contemporary International Conflicts, Evolution of International Peacekeeping, International Relations and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, and EU Foreign Policy. At the ASERI School of Economics and International Relations in Milan, he teaches Cultural Diplomacy to master's students from around the world (Cultural diplomacy: comparative approaches, actors and genres, Master in Advanced Public and Cultural Diplomacy for International Relations). He is a long-standing lecturer in Papal Diplomacy at the Diplomatic Institute of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and for eight years he has been lecturing and conducting seminars in Political Science at the University of Library Science and Information Technologies. He is a scientific reviewer of master's theses in Bulgaria and abroad.

The above-mentioned lecture courses reflect a large part of Kiril Kartalov's scientific activities, the broad scope of his interests, as well as his excellent professional and language training (he

is fluent in Italian and English, and writes and teaches in both languages). They have allowed him to realize his teaching potential outside the country. Kiril Kartalov's impressive teaching activity and commitment are an excellent testament to his competence and fully correspond to the specifics of the announced competition for the academic position of "professor." . The high regard for his professional expertise is also evidenced by the fact that it is sought at the highest level and that he has been an advisor to the Apostolic Nuncio in Bulgaria and North Macedonia and to the President of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (in the period 2013-2016).

Opinion on the candidate's research activity:

An important part of the candidate's scientific output is related to the subject of the announced competition, with the work presented by Assoc. Prof. Kiril Kartalov, PhD, for participation in the competition for the position of "professor" being the most notable example *The Sound of Silence: Pius XII and the Jewish Question in the Light of the Vatican Archives* (Sofia: Iztok-Zapad Publishing House, 2025, 557 pp.). In terms of volume, content, and layout, it meets the requirements for a scientific monograph, which can be assessed as a comprehensive academic study of Pope Pius XII's policy and attitude toward the plight of the European Jewish population during World War II. Until now, Bulgarian historiography has lacked such a comprehensive presentation of the topic, and with its publication, the book fills this significant gap. The scientific challenges facing the author stem from the need to situate the specific dimensions of the relations between the Vatican, the Catholic Church, the Third Reich, and the Jews against the backdrop of the complex events of World War II, and insofar as the narrative about them is strongly influenced by the course of the Cold War, All these processes must be viewed in the context of the main trends in international relations over a long period of time. And here I can express my opinion that the author has successfully coped with these challenges, achieved the goals he set for himself, and the result is a serious scientific work of great value.

The topic of the Holocaust is, in principle, one of the most difficult in historical, philosophical, moral-ethical, and every other aspect. It is a huge challenge for researchers to tackle it, but Kiril Kartalov did not hesitate to boldly dive into the deep waters of the Jewish question, relying firmly on documents from the Vatican archives and extensive foreign-language literature. Particularly sensitive is the question of the personal conduct of Pope Pius XII, who was praised as a friend of the Jews but later discredited and accused of being a silent witness to their extermination. This issue is sensitive for the Vatican, the State of Israel, the Catholic Church, and religious and secular Jews alike. It is a very difficult task for a researcher to maintain balance and a professional historical perspective and not succumb to the many and varied emotions that the subject provokes. However, Kiril Kartalov has done an excellent job of this and has managed to remain impartial, consistently referring to archives and historical sources, maintaining an equal distance from extreme opinions on the subject, and recreating his view of Pius XII and his behavior in a calm and objective tone.

The structure of the book appears classic, but is actually unusual. The introduction is divided into two parts and in practice constitutes a separate first chapter. This is followed by chapters two and three, with six and four paragraphs respectively, and an epilogue that serves as a conclusion. An undeniably modern contribution of the book is its three-dimensional narrative—text, images, and video documents that can be accessed via barcodes. This innovative approach in scientific literature not only helps the curious reader, but also supports the narrative with

documents and can successfully serve educational purposes. The book is also a kind of guide to the secret paths of the Vatican and papal politics.

The introduction raises powerful philosophical and moral-ethical questions, examining the Holocaust as a phenomenon. The goals and objectives of the study are set out, emphasizing that it is based on documents from the Vatican archives, including some previously unknown, and that it relies primarily on archival sources. The various historiographical perspectives on the issue are correctly presented. The life and professional career of Pope Pius XII are traced. The second part of the introduction traces the debates about the pontiff and his behavior that took place after the end of World War II. Many sources and documents are cited here, revealing in detail the opposing opinions and assessments, as well as the arguments and reasons behind them. This is skilfully placed in the context of the changed international situation, the complex relationships and bloc confrontation during the Cold War, and the search for those responsible for the Holocaust.

The second chapter of the study is extremely useful and has a strong philosophical and religious character. It is devoted to papal diplomacy and the Jewish question (1933-1945), to the complex correlation between Catholicism and anti-Semitism in historical retrospect. This is the first time this topic has been studied in Bulgarian, filling a very important gap in historiography. The problem of papal diplomacy and relations with Mussolini, the consequences of Nazi anti-Semitism, and public anti-Semitism in Europe are also addressed. The section entitled "We Are All Spiritual Semites" also deserves high praise. In it, Kiril Kartalov examines the racial question, anti-Jewish legislation, and the Pope's disapproval of it, despite the Catholic Church's centuries-long history of anti-Judaism. In the next paragraph, the author examines in detail one of the principles of papal diplomacy, namely the "doctrine of impartiality," and this is a valuable contribution, as it helps to explain the Vatican's policy on many issues—on full-scale wars, on anti-Semitism, on the Holocaust. The author analyzes this principle of the Vatican and defines it not simply as neutrality, which implies alienation, but as equal distance from all sides, which helps to achieve complete impartiality and justice. The highlighting and explanation of this mechanism of Vatican policy deserves high praise. The second chapter also covers the rumors of the extermination of the Jews (at that time still hints of what was happening, the scale and veracity of which few believed) and the reactions of the Holy See. The paragraph aptly titled "The New Avignon" reveals unknown and important information about the Germans' attitude towards the Pope and the Vatican, or as they call it, "a state in agony." They view it and Italy as an appendage to Germany and behave in an offensive and arrogant manner. This picture helps to better understand the difficult and delicate position of the head of the Vatican and the Roman Catholic Church and his limited room for maneuver.

The third chapter, entitled "Forms of Silence," is philosophical and historical in nature. It reveals the different forms of resistance, the different "sounds" of silence, the nuances in every word or gesture of a figure such as the head of the Holy See, and the consequences they could have for millions of Christians in Europe and around the world. The author emphasizes the delicacy of the position, the responsibilities it carries and requires, as well as the ambiguous decisions that a person ultimately makes based on their character. The pope is also a person, with his qualities and shortcomings, with his strengths and weaknesses of character. This complexity and multi-layered nature of Pope Pius XII's personality is successfully captured and presented by the author in the context of World War II and specifically the Jewish question.

In the conclusion (epilogue), Kiril Kartalov summarizes the different points of view on Pius XII's "silence" and presents his own view in the form of an in-depth moral, philosophical, and

ethical reflection. He does not seek to present a black-and-white version, to accuse or exonerate, to judge or justify. With a mature and balanced tone, he leaves it to the reader to put themselves "in the shoes" of the personality, the era, the complexity of factors and events, the dynamics of multidirectional relationships, responsibilities, and challenges, and to reflect on the behavior of the pope, but also of the man Pius XII, in light of the facts. Throughout the book, philosophy, history, politics, ethics, and religion are intertwined, making the study interdisciplinary, rich, and multi-layered. The author masterfully guides the reader through the labyrinth of archival documents, speeches, statements, letters, etc., without ever losing the logical thread and chronology of the narrative. He does not attempt to make suggestions or manipulate either in defense of papal diplomacy on the Jewish question or in support of the later organized "smear campaign" against Pius XII. This professional integrity and approach of the author deserve to be highlighted and highly appreciated. With the help of new documents from the Vatican archives, Kiril Kartalov corrects a historical falsification and to some extent rehabilitates Pius XII on the issues of the Holocaust, without, however, glorifying or glorifying him. On the basis of solid documentation, he proves that the attack against Pius XII, which came long after the events described, was the result of the Cold War and part of the arsenal of the Soviet Union and its allies (including Jewish circles) to compromise their long-standing enemy, the Vatican, by attributing to the pope moral guilt and behavior that are greatly exaggerated and distorted. The smear campaign is also taken up by other factors interested in accusing the Vatican of a lack of moral resistance to the Holocaust in order to cover up their own moral sins or behavior, their collaboration with the Nazis, their short-sightedness in preventing the extermination, or their own silence. They exploit the complex position of the pope, who, as head of the Roman Catholic Church (itself also in the Nazis' sights), is responsible for millions of Catholics in Europe and cannot risk worsening their situation. At the same time, the pontiff faced conflicting positions and reactions within his own clergy, among the cardinals, pressure from Hitler, from the heads of the national Catholic churches, and many other factors. Some of the cardinals collaborated with the Nazis, others resisted. And in this complex mosaic, another contribution by Kiril Kartalov stands out: in his vivid logical narrative, he convincingly argues that it was precisely Pius XII's vacillating policy that enabled individual Catholic leaders to help the Jews. Although he remained silent about the Holocaust, he repeatedly called for restraint in the war, and Kiril Kartalov cites many speeches, documents, and pieces of evidence to support this. The author defends his conclusion in a well-argued and convincing manner, stating that the pope pursued as hesitant a policy as possible and that this is precisely what enabled Catholic clergy who were willing to take risks to help Jews, knowing that the head of the church would not reprimand them for doing so.

One of the most important contributions of the book is that, for the first time, a Bulgarian author, writing in Bulgarian, interprets the issues of the Holocaust in a way that is unfamiliar to Bulgarian historiography. He places the problem in a broader context and scale, going beyond each country's contribution or guilt and revealing the broader picture in Europe. A particularly valuable philosophical and historical contribution by the author is that he interprets the Holocaust as a phenomenon that is beyond the capacity of human consciousness to comprehend, beyond the consciousness of his contemporaries and researchers, an unprecedented genocide, the exact nature, significance, and consequences of which hardly anyone could have imagined. Kiril Kartalov's argument draws on a wealth of source material from the Vatican archives, and the author reveals his analytical skills by reconstructing and interpreting the specifics of the Jewish question, papal diplomacy, and Pope Pius XII's personal attitude toward this phenomenon.

A particularly valuable contribution of this monograph is that, without even touching on the Bulgarian case, it inevitably puts the Bulgarian reader in a position to rethink and appreciate even more deeply the behavior of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church during the Holocaust. Kiril Kartalov's work not only provides new knowledge to Bulgarian researchers, but also helps us to rethink our own history in a new way. It allows us to look at the phenomenon of the Holocaust not only through Bulgarian eyes, but on a larger scale and in the context of the broader question of the behavior of the Vatican and the Catholic Church.

My overall assessment of Kiril Kartalov's academic work on Pope Pius XII and the Jewish question is that it makes a significant contribution, fills a substantial gap in Bulgarian historiography, and fully meets the criteria for a monograph participating in a competition for the academic position of "professor." Last but not least, the book is distinguished by its excellent style and calm, scholarly tone of presentation.

For participation in the competition for the academic position of "professor," Kiril Kartalov also presents 15 articles and studies. With these publications, he proves his competence on the issues of papal diplomacy, peace, and international relations, which are also within the scope of the subject of this competition.

The candidate supplements his research in the field of the Vatican and the Jewish question, which is also the subject of this competition, with seven more publications: Kartaloff K., *Papal Diplomacy and The Jewish Question Between Old and New Paradigms*, in *Vatican Diplomacy and the Shaping of the West during the Pontificate of Pius XII*, edited by R. Regoli, P. Valvo, and N. J. Doublet, Edizioni Studium, Rome 2025, pp. 47-62; Kartaloff K. *Il salvataggio degli Ebrei bulgari durante lo Shoah*, in Napolitano M.L. (ed.), *Diplomazia, Religione, Nazioni. La missione di pace delle Chiese Cristiane nel XX secolo*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2023, pp. 239-254; Kartaloff K., *Il salvataggio degli Ebrei bulgari durante lo Shoah*, in Napolitano M.L. (ed.), *Diplomazia, Religione, Nazioni. La missione di pace delle Chiese Cristiane nel XX secolo*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2023, pp. 239-254. Kartaloff, K., *Diplomatic Pontifical*, in *Dictionary of Church History*, edited by B. Ardura, Éditions du Cerf, Paris 2022, pp. 332-338; Kartaloff K., *The Rescue of Bulgarian Jews: The Action of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and Angelo Roncalli during the Shoah*, "Nuova storia contemporanea," Vol. 2 (2019), pp. 199-209. Kartaloff K., *Pacem in terris: il sogno di San Giovanni XXIII*, in Kartaloff K., (ed.), *Visita Apostolica di Sua Santità Francesco in Bulgaria e Macedonia del Nord (5-7 maggio 2019)*, Apostolic Nunciature in Bulgaria and North Macedonia, Sofia 2019, pp. 132-151; Kartaloff K., *The role of papal diplomacy in saving the Bulgarian Jews: preliminary research*, in Preshlenova R. Il. (ed.), *Bulgarian civil society against the Holocaust during the Second World War*, Institute of Balkan Studies & Centre of Thracology, Sofia 2023, pp. 197-210. Five of the articles are devoted to the role of the Catholic Church in saving Bulgarian Jews, the contacts between Tsar Boris III and the Pope, and the influence they had on the Bulgarian monarch. The high scientific value of these articles is also evidenced by the fact that most of them have been published in Rome by prestigious Vatican publishing houses.

Closely related to the topic of Vatican diplomacy are the publications related to Angelo Roncalli and his views on peace. Kiril Kartaloff is a leading expert on this subject, the only one in Bulgaria who is recognised as such internationally. Kartaloff K. *Peace in the reflections of Mons. Angelo Roncalli before Pacem in Terris*, in Kartaloff K. (ed.), *The Quest for Peace. Celebrating Pacem in terris and its legacy, Sixty years later*, Studium, Rome 2024, pp. 21-29. The same applies to publications devoted to the role of papal diplomacy in international

relations and peacemaking, the activities of Pope John Paul II and his visit to Bulgaria, on which issues Kiril Kartalov has also established himself as a leading expert: Kartaloff K., *La Chiesa cattolica e la guerra*, in Berrettini M., Borsani D., Pastori G., Castagnino Berlinghieri U. (eds.), *Storia e politica internazionale. Studi in onore a Massimo de Leonardis*, Le Lettere, Florence 2022, pp. 189-236. Kartaloff K., *Un bulgaro a Costantinopoli. Il Patriarca Giuseppe II e il dialogo con Roma*, in Burigana R., Piatti P. (eds.), *Un Concilio di oggi. Memoria, recezione e presente del Concilio di Firenze (1439-2019)*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2022; Kartaloff K., "Europe: a symphony of nations." Some fundamental themes of the teaching of St. John Paul II, in Kartaloff K. (ed.), *European Identity and Christian Roots*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2021, pp. 95-103; Kartaloff K., *The Apostolic Visit of John Paul II to Bulgaria (May 23-26, 2002)*, in Mikrut J. (ed.), "Blood of Your Blood, Bones of Your Bones." *The Pontificate of John Paul II (1978-2005) and the Churches in Central and Eastern Europe. Nel centenario della nascita di Karol Wojtyła*, Gabrielli Editori, Verona 2020, pp. 119-140; Kartaloff K., *Diplomazia pontificia*, in *Lessico di storia della Chiesa*, edited by B. Ardura, Lateran University Press, Rome 2020, pp. 252-256.; Kartaloff K., *The Holy See and the Balkans (1991-1999)*, "Nuova Storia Contemporanea," Vol. 3 (2019), pp. 233-246;

A serious range of scientific interests shape Kiril Kartalov's publications related to the role of diplomacy in interreligious dialogue and strengthening trust between religious communities with the aim of achieving peace, unity, and building a sustainable society: Kartaloff K., *Papal Diplomacy*, in *Accessibility and Transparency in Diplomacy. The Right of Access to Information in Confidence-Building and Democratic Process*, Academic Publisher "Zabukvite - O pismeneh," Sofia 2024, pp. 154-157; Kartaloff K., *Dialogue between Religions: A Path to Inner and Outer Peace*, in *Togetherness of Religions and Communities in Bulgaria: Dimensions of Publicity and Diplomacy with Universal Applicability*, Bulgarian Diplomatic Institute, Sofia, 2024, pp. 44-49.

In addition to the areas covered in the publications submitted for the competition, such as the history of international relations, papal and cultural diplomacy, the Catholic Church, and issues of peace and justice, Kiril Kartalov's scientific interests also include topics such as European identity and the Christian roots of Europe, as well as the new scientific field of pilgrimology. With his fundamental work "The Flowers of Nations: The Essence, History, and Significance of Pilgrimage," defended as a major doctoral thesis at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Kiril Kartalov lays the foundations for this new discipline, which I hope will find its place in the educational process in the future. This addition to the publications directly participating in the competition is necessary to show the author's broad scientific interests in the field of humanities, his dedicated, in-depth, and professional approach to science, as well as his interdisciplinary knowledge and skills, which are an excellent example for the development of future scholars in the humanities in Bulgaria.

My overall impression of the scientific research of Assoc. Prof. Kiril Kartalov, submitted for participation in the competition, is that it is of the highest professional level. This is also evidenced by the fact that it has been widely reported and reviewed abroad, where it has received very high praise.

Significance of contributions to science and practice:

Academic growth requires good recognition of candidates' scientific publications within the scientific community. The documents submitted show that the recognition of Assoc. Prof. Kiril Kartalov, PhD, is sufficiently high – there are about 30 selected citations of his scientific works, mainly abroad, including in refereed and indexed publications. He is the compiler and editor of over 12 authoritative scientific collections, mainly abroad. He has translated significant works from Italian into Bulgarian, such as Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* and Cardinal Mazarin's *Handbook for Politicians*.

The significance of scientific research in terms of its practical application is an important criterion for the quality of candidates for the academic position of "professor." Therefore, participation in scientific research projects is a mandatory criterion for their evaluation. For the past three years, Assoc. Prof. Kiril Kartalov has been the head of a major international project on papal diplomacy at the Catholic University of Milan and is a member of several other international projects. His authority as a scholar is also evidenced by his appointment as a corresponding member of the Pontifical Historical Commission in 2012. He is also a member of the International Commission for the History and Study of Christianity (CIHEC), the Italian Association of International History (Italiana di Storia Internazionale), the International Council of Museums (ICOM), and the International Wagner Society (RWVI).

Assoc. Prof. Kiril Kartalov is not only a sought-after lecturer at numerous prestigious international forums in Bulgaria and abroad, but also an organizer of many high-profile scientific events at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, thereby contributing significantly to raising the Academy's prestige. The candidate's scientific and practical experience, gained in Bulgaria and abroad, deserves high praise and will undoubtedly be of great benefit to the authority and future development of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Assoc. Prof. Kiril Kartalov, PhD, is a consummate scholar with broad interdisciplinary interests in the humanities. He is a recognized professional in Bulgaria and abroad, established as a researcher and lecturer with high scientific standards and expertise and internationally recognized authority. The quantity and quality of his scientific publications, together with his scientific and teaching commitment, give me reason to confidently recommend that he be awarded the academic position of "professor" in the professional field 2.3 Philosophy (Philosophical Anthropology – Vatican Policy during World War II and its Relationship to the Jewish Question), for which I myself vote in favor.

October 24, 2025.

Prof. Dr. Romyana Christidi