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REVIEW

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Simona Samuilova, Institute for Historical Studies at the
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences,
Member of the Scientific Jury, appointed by the order of the Director of the Institute for
Historical Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, no. 58/16.07.2026,
in connection with a procedure for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in
professional field 2.2 "History and Archaeology", scientific specialty "History of Bulgaria",
announced in the State Gazette no. 46 of 19 May, 2026

One candidate has submitted documents and been admitted to the competition: Senior Assistant Professor Irina Grigorova, PhD. She earned her Bachelor's degree in History at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (1998 – 2002), followed by a Master's degree (2002 – 2003). From 2004 to 2007, she was a full-time PhD student at the Institute for Historical Studies – BAS, where in 2008 she successfully defended her doctoral dissertation titled "Bulgarian-French Relations During the Presidency of Gen. de Gaulle (1958 – 1969)", under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Stoyan Pintev, PhD (**Group A of scientometric indicators 50 points**). Following her defense, Dr. Grigorova developed her academic career at the Institute for Historical Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences – first as a Research Fellow Class II (2009–2011), and subsequently as a Senior Assistant Professor (2011– present) in the Department of "Modern Bulgarian History".

For this competition, Senior Assistant Professor Irina Grigorova, PhD, submitted one published monograph (habilitation work) and 35 studies and articles. Her research interests focus primarily on modern Bulgarian history, Cold War relations between France and Bulgaria, and Bulgarian foreign policy within multilateral diplomacy. Beyond her high publication volume, Dr. Grigorova actively contributes to institutional life: between 2012 and 2013, she represented early-career researchers on the Institute's Scientific Council and recorded its minutes; since 2025, she has served as a member of the Accreditation Committee of the Institute for Historical Studies – BAS and as Secretary of the "Modern Bulgarian History" Department.

As her primary habilitation work, Dr. Grigorova presented the monograph *"Bulgaria in French Foreign Policy During the Cold War"*, published by the BAS Academic Publishing House "Prof. Marin Drinov" (**Group B of scientometric indicators 100 points**). Both in scope and focus, the monograph directly aligns with the subject and objectives of this

competition, fitting precisely within the research area for which the post was announced. The work represents a comprehensive study of bilateral relations between Bulgaria and France from the end of World War II to the collapse of the Socialist Bloc in the late 1980s. The author critically re-evaluates the traditional bipolar framework of the Cold War (typically framed around the US – USSR rivalry), highlighting France's role as an independent geopolitical actor with its own strategic vision. The study centers on two main instruments of French foreign policy: cultural and economic diplomacy. Structurally, the monograph comprises four chapters – each delivering a distinct analytical contribution – framed by an introduction and culminating in an appendix, conclusion, and epilogue. Methodologically, it effectively integrates traditional chronological narrative with thematic analysis.

In the introduction, the author examines the theoretical framework surrounding Cold War dynamics and traces the historical roots of French cultural diplomacy and presence in Bulgaria from the late 19th century through World War II. She thoroughly justifies her research focus, citing the need for a more granular understanding of the under-researched Bulgarian case. A major strength of the work is its extensive source base, which pairs primary archival records from Bulgaria and France with French media sources, notably *Le Monde*. Chapter One analyzes post-WWII French foreign policy (1945–1958), examining the normalization of bilateral diplomatic ties, Paris's attempts to re-establish its footing in Eastern Europe, commercial regulations, the onset of the Cold War, and adaptations during the post-De-Stalinization thaw. Chapter Two follows Gaullist France's ambitious strategy to sustain a leading Western footprint through the 1960s. The author investigates General Charles de Gaulle's vision of a "Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals," the intensification of economic diplomacy, and the rise of French cultural influence in Bulgaria. Chapter Three analyzes high-level political exchanges, the Helsinki Process (CSCE), the impact of the 1970s global economic recession on bilateral trade, and the emergence of new figures in Bulgarian cultural policy (including Lyudmila Zhivkova). Chapter Four examines the challenges facing traditional French diplomacy during the final decade of the Cold War (the 1980s). It traces the decline in economic ties, foreign policy realignments under President François Mitterrand, adjustments following his 1988 re-election, and the role of French diplomats in supporting emerging dissident movements and civic organizations in Bulgaria.

The study's core conclusions highlight France's distinct, independent policy toward Eastern Bloc nations during the Cold War, emphasizing Paris's efforts to move past the bipolar framework and assert its national interests. French cultural diplomacy in Bulgaria acted as a durable bridge; even during periods of strict bloc isolation, French language and culture

remained vital channels for dialogue between Sofia and Paris. Regarding economic diplomacy, the author concludes that commercial and technical agreements served as vehicles for political alignment, though their impact was ultimately constrained by systemic crises within the socialist planned economy towards the end of the period.

In addition to the monograph, Dr. Irina Grigorova has submitted 35 studies and articles for this competition (**Group G of scientometric indicators 645 points**). Notably, a significant portion of these publications (10 studies and articles, five of which are in French or English) are published in peer-reviewed academic journals indexed in international databases. The submitted works demonstrate a deep command of both primary sources and relevant historiography. Overall, her scholarly output reflects clear thematic coherence, independent research drive, and a consistent effort to articulate original academic theses.

Dr. Irina Grigorova is well-recognized within academic circles, as evidenced by the extensive citation of her work both in Bulgaria and internationally (**Group D of scientometric indicators 765 points**).

Based on the submitted materials and the analysis conducted, I consider Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Irina Grigorova to be an established scholar with a well-defined academic profile. Her research output delivers significant scientific contributions, and her habilitation work demonstrates a clear capacity for independent investigation of complex historical issues. The candidate meets all statutory and institutional requirements for the position of Associate Professor, far exceeding the minimum metric point thresholds across all categories.

She possesses all the qualifications required of a habilitated scholar. Therefore, I unreservedly vote "in favor" of awarding the academic position of Associate Professor to Senior Assistant Professor Irina Grigorova, PhD, and recommend that the Scientific Jury vote to appoint her to the position in Professional Field 2.2 History and Archaeology, in the scientific specialty "History of Bulgaria", as announced in the State Gazette, Issue 46 of 19 May 2026.

16 September 2026
Sofia

Assoc. Prof. Simona Samuilova, PhD