

БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ ИНСТИТУТ ЗА ИСТОРИЧЕСКИ ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ	
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REVIEW

on a competition for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor" in Professional Field 2.2 History and Archaeology, Scientific Specialty "History of Bulgaria" for the needs of the Institute of Historical Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (IHS-BAS), Section "Contemporary Bulgarian History," announced in the State Gazette, No. 46 of May 19, 2026, p. 161

This review is prepared by: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Evgeni Gerchev Kandilarov, in his capacity as a member of the scientific jury for the competition pursuant to the Order of the Director of the Institute of Historical Studies, BAS.

Only one candidate has submitted documents for participation in the announced competition: Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Irina Georgieva Grigorova, Section "Contemporary Bulgarian History," IHS-BAS.

1. Compliance of the Procedure and Submitted Documentation with the Current Regulatory Framework

The procedure for conducting the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in Professional Field 2.2 History and Archaeology, Scientific Specialty "History of Bulgaria," for the needs of the IHS-BAS, Section "Contemporary Bulgarian History," announced in the State Gazette, No. 46 of May 19, 2026, p. 161, was conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulation for its Implementation (RILDASRB), as well as the Regulations of the IHS-BAS on the conditions and procedure for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions.

One candidate was admitted to the competition – Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Irina Georgieva Grigorova. In the submitted set of documents for participation in the competition, the candidate provided all the necessary documentation according to the requirements of the LDASRB, the regulation for its implementation, and the regulations for the conditions and procedure for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions at the IHS-BAS.

The documents and materials submitted by the candidate are in compliance with the announced criteria for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the respective professional field. No violations of the competition procedure were found.

2. Data about the candidate

The only candidate in the competition for a regular "Associate Professor" is Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Irina Georgieva Grigorova. In 2002, she graduated with a Bachelor's degree in History from the Faculty of History at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski." In 2003, she obtained a Master's degree in "Contemporary World History (20th Century)" at the Faculty of History of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski," and in 2008 – an Educational

and Scientific Degree of "Doctor" in Scientific Specialty 05.03.06 "History of Bulgaria," Diploma No. 32762 of the Higher Attestation Commission. Her doctoral studies were conducted at the Institute of Historical Studies of the BAS. Since 2009, Dr. Irina Georgieva Grigorova has been an Assistant Professor in the Section "History of Bulgaria after the Second World War" at the IHS-BAS, and since 2011 she has held the academic position of "Chief Assistant Professor" at the same institute. Throughout her professional development to date, Dr. Grigorova has participated in numerous scientific conferences in Bulgaria and abroad, has been a member of research teams of several research projects, and has published extensively in national and international journals. The documents submitted for the competition show that Dr. Irina Grigorova is fluent in three foreign languages (English, French, and Russian).

3. Assessment of Compliance with the Minimum National Requirements and the Requirements of the Institute of Historical Studies, BAS

The minimum national scientometric requirements for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor" in Field 2. Humanities (which includes Professional Field 2.2 History and Archaeology) according to the Regulation for the Implementation of the LDASRB are distributed across groups of indicators, with a total required minimum of 400 points. According to the candidate's submitted statement of points, it is clearly visible that Dr. Irina Grigorova not only met the minimum national requirements but also exceeded them several times over in two of the main groups of indicators (Group G and Group D).

In Group G (publications in refereed and indexed journals), Dr. Grigorova scores 760 points against a minimum requirement of 200 points. This demonstrates extremely high scientific productivity and activity in publishing the results of her research in prestigious scientific journals. In Group D (other scientific contributions), Dr. Grigorova scores 810 points against a minimum requirement of 50 points, which attests to a large number of citations in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world-renowned scientific information databases or in monographs and collective volumes. This in itself is a very important attestation of the high scientific value of Dr. Grigorova's research and publications, which are obviously valued and highly respected by the academic community in Bulgaria and abroad. The total number of points that Dr. Irina Grigorova has is 1720, which is 1320 points above the required minimum. This undoubtedly shows the candidate's extremely high scientific productivity. The analysis of the individual indicators shows that Dr. Irina Grigorova fully meets all the formal criteria for the competition position for which she is applying.

In conclusion, I must emphasize that the scientometric indicators of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Irina Grigorova demonstrate sustainable scientific activity, high quality of research, and a significant contribution to Bulgarian and international historiography on the topics and problems she studies.

4. Evaluation of the Candidate's Scientific Achievements

- Quantitative and Structural Characteristics of the Submitted Works

Since the beginning of her academic career, Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Irina Grigorova has demonstrated active research activity. The total number of publications by Dr. Grigorova to

date is 53, including 2 monographs. One of these monographs is a book based on her defended dissertation, and the other is a monograph study with which the candidate participates in the present competition. In addition, according to the register of the academic staff of NACID, Dr. Grigorova has participated in 4 research projects, both international and national.

A significant part of Dr. Irina Grigorova's research activity is her regular participation with papers at numerous international and national scientific conferences, seminars, round tables, and other academic forums.

For participation in the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor," Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Irina Grigorova has submitted one habilitation thesis entitled *"Bulgaria in France's Foreign Policy during The Cold War."* Sofia: AI "Prof. Marin Drinov," 2026, 292 p. ISBN 978-619-245-624-5, and 36 additional articles and studies.

From the point of view of research topics, the scientific output of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Irina Grigorova can be structured into several main research thematic fields.

The first and most strongly represented research field is related to French diplomacy and cultural policy in Eastern Europe. Nine of the publications submitted for the competition relate to this thematic circle. In these publications, Dr. Grigorova thoroughly examines (based on a wide source base consisting of Bulgarian and French documents) French cultural diplomacy in the Balkans after the Second World War, the policy of cultural "opening" of Eastern European countries after the Helsinki process, as well as issues of French national security during the Cold War. The scientific contribution of these publications by Dr. Grigorova consists in revealing the specific methods and goals of French foreign policy toward the socialist countries, as well as in situating Bulgaria in the broader context of regional processes during the Cold War.

The second research field covered by Dr. Grigorova's publications encompasses Bulgarian-French economic and scientific-technical relations. Six of the publications submitted for the competition relate to such issues. These studies examine France's foreign economic policy toward Bulgaria (1944–1980), industrial cooperation, the introduction of Renault automobile production, technical contacts with the EEC, and the foreign construction activities of "Technoexportstroy." In these publications, Dr. Grigorova meticulously traces specific economic and technical interactions between the two countries. This in itself contributes to a better understanding of the economic history of Bulgaria during the Cold War period, as well as the country's foreign economic relations as part of the Eastern Bloc with capitalist states in Western Europe. Overall, this type of research is an important part of understanding the dynamics of East-West relations during the Cold War and is of exceptional importance for both Bulgarian and world historiography.

The third research field on which Dr. Grigorova works is devoted to Bulgaria's place in international politics and international organizations during the Cold War. Four of the publications submitted in this competition are dedicated to the documentary analysis of topics such as: Bulgaria's diplomatic role in the Helsinki process, Bulgaria's position in the dispute with Yugoslavia in the 1970s, and the country's participation in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Although smaller in number, these publications are very valuable, as they represent an in-depth documentary analysis revealing the balance between Soviet geopolitical

strategy and Bulgaria's striving to defend its national interests within the framework of international politics and multilateral diplomacy during the years of global bipolar bloc confrontation.

The last, fourth research field that can be distinguished in Dr. Grigorova's publications is more limited than the previous ones, but still of considerable scientific significance. It includes studies on the economy, entrepreneurship, and the cultural and sports history of Bulgaria in the 20th century. Here, topics such as Bulgarian entrepreneurship (the factories "Aroma," "Alen Mak," "Anton Papazov"), state policy in sports, tourism, and decolonization are examined. The scientific contribution of these publications by Dr. Grigorova is also indisputable and consists in revealing specific aspects of the economic and cultural history of Bulgaria, which contributes to a fuller understanding of the country's socio-economic development in the 20th century.

In conclusion, it can be pointed out that the main topics and problems on which Dr. Irina Grigorova works are the French view of Bulgaria and the Balkans during the Cold War, cultural diplomacy as an instrument of foreign policy, Bulgaria's economic relations with the West during socialism, the Helsinki process and its consequences for Eastern Europe, regional economic development and technological transfer, as well as national identity and cultural representation abroad.

It is clear that Dr. Grigorova uses an interdisciplinary approach, combining diplomatic history, economic analysis, and cultural studies.

As already mentioned above, the most strongly represented research field in the work of Dr. Irina Grigorova relates to French diplomacy and cultural policy in Eastern Europe. This research sphere also includes the monograph submitted as a habilitation thesis: *'Bulgaria in France's Foreign Policy during The Cold War.'* Sofia: AI "Prof. Marin Drinov," 2026, 292 p. ISBN 978-619-245-624-5.

Therefore, I will focus more closely on this study.

Dr. Irina Grigorova's monograph tries to answer the fundamental question of how France, which had ambitions for an independent foreign policy during the Cold War, managed to correct the bloc positions of the superpowers in this period and achieved active dialogue with the countries of Eastern Europe. Dr. Grigorova uses Bulgaria as a specific and indicative case to trace the dynamics of the processes under study, as well as the specifics of the diplomatic approaches and instruments used by French diplomacy. Dr. Grigorova sets herself the goal of rethinking the dualistic scheme established in the scientific literature, which views international relations during the Cold War solely through the prism of the confrontation between the USSR and the USA. Through this analysis, she seeks to answer the question of how Paris managed to balance between American alliance obligations and its own national interests. At the same time, a comparison is made with the other Eastern Bloc countries to determine whether the Bulgarian case is unique or typical of French diplomatic strategy during the Cold War. This research approach makes it possible to analyze East-West relations, highlighting the dynamics outlining peaks and troughs, stagnation and activation, which also corresponds to the theory of cyclicity in historical development, mentioned in the introduction to the work.

The study follows a problem-chronological approach, with the first chapter devoted to the years of the Fourth Republic (until 1958), the second covering the period of the warming of East-West relations in the 1960s, the third examining the deepening of the process with the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and the fourth analyzing the last decade of the Cold War.

The introduction considers the Cold War period as a complex phenomenon, including hostile relations, an arms race, the building of military-political blocs, but also periods of *détente*, which remain insufficiently studied in Bulgarian historiography. This approach is particularly important because it allows for a fuller picture of international relations between capitalist and socialist states during the Cold War to be revealed.

The structure of the monograph is built logically and consistently, covering the entire period of the Cold War, from the end of the Second World War to the beginning of the 1990s. The book consists of four main chapters, each divided into several sub-sections detailing specific aspects of the relations under study.

The first chapter, entitled "The Adaptation of French Foreign Policy in Response to the New International Conditions after the Second World War," examines the initial stage of the normalization of diplomatic relations, the strategy for restoring France's positions in Eastern Europe, the regulation of bilateral trade, and the actual place of France within the new system of international relations during the Cold War, including the conditions of de-Stalinization. In this part of the study, the adaptation of French foreign policy after the Second World War is traced. Irina Grigorova concludes that France sought to defend its national interests in the context of growing Soviet-American tension, while at the same time trying to restore its positions in Central and Eastern Europe. In this period, the foundations were laid for French economic and cultural diplomacy, which would develop in the following decades.

The second chapter, "The Ambitious Plans of Gaullist France for Maintaining Leading Western Influence," focuses on diplomatic techniques, the gradation of mutual gestures, efforts to activate economic diplomacy, and the rise of cultural diplomacy. In this part of the study, Dr. Grigorova analyzes the ambitious plans of Gaullist France to maintain leading Western influence. It is emphasized that Paris actively used diplomatic techniques, cultural and economic diplomacy to consolidate its positions. Irina Grigorova concludes that in this period there was a rise in French cultural diplomacy, which became a key instrument of influence.

The third chapter, "The Reaffirmation of French National Interests in the Context of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe," analyzes high-level political contacts, the recession of the 1970s, new factors in Bulgarian policy, and the successes of cultural diplomacy. Irina Grigorova examines the reaffirmation of French national interests in the context of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and the subsequent U.S.-Soviet tension. This part of the study concludes that the recession of the 1970s had a negative impact on French economic diplomacy, but cultural diplomacy continued to be successful, albeit with some limitations.

The fourth chapter, "The Challenges to the Traditional Diplomacy of Paris during the Last Decade of the Cold War," summarizes the changes in economic diplomacy, the decline in the

cultural sphere, the corrections in foreign policy, and the "readjustment" after the re-election of François Mitterrand. In this final chapter of the study, the challenges to the traditional diplomacy of Paris during the last decade of the Cold War are analyzed. Irina Grigorova comes to the well-founded conclusion that changes occurred in economic diplomacy, a decline was observed in cultural diplomacy, but subsequently it again showed an upswing. At the end of the period, corrections were made in French foreign policy, which prepared the country for the new realities after the end of the Cold War.

In addition to the four main chapters, the monograph includes an Introduction, Appendix, Conclusion, Epilogue, and Bibliography. The total number of pages is 290, which makes it a comprehensive and in-depth study. At the end of the text, an Appendix is included, which complements the main narrative with additional documents and tables, and the Epilogue provides a summarized view of the contemporary development of the relations under study, highlighting the long-term influence of French culture in Bulgaria.

The bibliography of the study is extensive and covers 290 titles. The bibliography presents sources and literature in Bulgarian, English, French, Russian, Romanian, Serbian, Turkish, Greek, Czech, Slovak, Polish, and Hungarian. This diversity of sources allows Irina Grigorova to use a wide spectrum of perspectives and to compare the Bulgarian case with that of other countries in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The presence of foreign-language literature is essential for examining French policy from the point of view of the French sources themselves, as well as for comparative analysis with other socialist states. Particular attention is paid to French literature, which provides access to internal debates in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as to contemporary studies by American and European historians who view the Cold War as a global phenomenon.

The source base of the study is extremely rich and consists of documents from Bulgarian and French archives. In Bulgaria, the funds of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Central State Archives have been used. Specifically, documents from the Politburo of the CC of the BCP, the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Foreign Trade, the Committee for Art and Culture, as well as the personal funds of Todor Zhivkov and Lyudmila Zhivkova have been examined. From the French side, the source base includes archival documents from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reports on the implementation of programs, discussions in the French Senate and National Assembly. This bilateral approach ensures objectivity and allows us to see how the policy was perceived from both sides of the "Iron Curtain." The use of personal funds of key political figures adds a personal element to political decisions and reveals informal channels of influence. The archival data are juxtaposed with contemporary publications and memoirs, which enriches the study and makes it possible to trace the evolution of positions over time. Overall, it can be concluded that Irina Grigorova's study is based on a rich and diverse documentary base, including both published and unpublished archival documents. Dr. Grigorova uses a wide range of Bulgarian and foreign archives, scientific publications, periodicals, and other materials to build a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of Bulgaria's place in French foreign policy during the Cold War. I would particularly emphasize the introduction into scientific use of a number of unpublished documents, which Dr. Irina Grigorova studied during her work with the funds of the archive of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs containing reports, correspondence,

telegrams, circular notes, and correspondence between the ministry and the French embassy in Sofia.

The main methodology used in conducting the study is based on a critical analysis of archival documents and contemporary scientific literature. Dr. Irina Grigorova applies a comparative method, which makes it possible to search for similarities and differences between Bulgaria and other countries in the region. The method of historical analysis is also used, which places events in the context of broader international processes, such as de-Stalinization, détente, and the subsequent new tensions in international relations at the end of the 1970s. Particular attention is paid to the rethinking of the terms and concepts used in the scientific discussion, as the author tries to avoid the clichés of the Cold War. The methodological approach also includes an analysis of so-called “soft power” and cultural diplomacy, considered as instruments of foreign policy that complement traditional political and economic levers. Irina Grigorova relies on the theoretical developments of prominent French specialists, synchronizing them with Bulgarian historical facts. This approach makes it possible to consider cultural diplomacy not only as an addition but as an independent instrument of influence, which acts at both the official and unofficial levels, including through non-governmental organizations such as the Alliance Française.

In my opinion, the scientific contributions of this study can be summarized in three main points.

The first contribution is the rethinking of the role of the so-called “middle powers” in the Cold War. From the point of view of international relations in this historical period, France could be characterized as a “global middle power,” which occupies a key place in East-West relations, especially within the European continent. Irina Grigorova’s monograph proves that France was not a passive player but an active subject defending its national interests, even in conditions of bloc discipline, during the Cold War. This expands the horizon of studying the era beyond the bipolar scheme and shows the complexity of international relations.

The second contribution of the study consists in the specific focus on Bulgaria. While a number of studies are devoted to France and the USSR or France and Yugoslavia, this work fills a missing link in the Paris–Sofia connection, providing a detailed analysis of bilateral relations throughout the studied period. This is essential for understanding Bulgarian foreign policy not simply as following directives from Moscow, but also as seeking alternatives and pursuing its own Bulgarian national interests.

As a third contribution of the study, the analysis of cultural and economic diplomacy as independent and significant instruments of French foreign policy during this period can be highlighted. Irina Grigorova shows how cultural exchanges and trade agreements served to maintain relations in periods of political tension, a topic often neglected in traditional diplomatic history.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Irina Grigorova’s study represents a significant contribution to Bulgarian historiography on the topics it addresses. The monograph fills a substantial gap in research on Bulgarian foreign policy, which is often considered only in the context of relations with Moscow or Washington. By including the French factor, the book enriches the understanding of the multipolar tendencies in the socialist bloc and the attempts at

“opening” to the West. The use of newly discovered archival funds, especially from the French side, which are inaccessible to many Bulgarian researchers, increases the scientific contribution value of the study. Moreover, the book offers a new reading of the period, which is not limited to official propaganda, but examines the real mechanisms of interaction. This makes the work a valuable resource for historians, political scientists, and students interested in the international relations of the Balkans during the Cold War. Last but not least, Irina Grigorova’s monograph establishes Bulgaria as an important object of French foreign policy and demonstrates the complexity of diplomatic games in an era of global confrontation.

The work was published in 2026 by the BAS Publishing House “Prof. Marin Drinov,” which is another guarantee of the high academic quality of the publication. The book has been reviewed by leading specialists in the field.

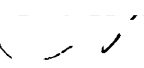
5. Conclusion regarding the application

Based on the submitted documentation and scientific research, as well as my personal impressions of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Irina Grigorova and her work in her capacity as a researcher with long and rich research experience, I believe that she is a promising young scholar with significant potential in the field of contemporary Bulgarian history and, more specifically, that related to Bulgaria’s foreign policy and international relations during the Cold War.

From this point of view, I believe that Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Irina Grigorova fully meets the requirements for holding the academic position of “Associate Professor,” formulated in the LDASRB, in the Regulation for its Implementation (RILDASRB), and accordingly in the Regulations for the conditions and procedure for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions at the IHS-BAS.

As a member of the scientific jury in this competition, I strongly recommend to the esteemed members of the Scientific Council of the IHS-BAS to elect Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Irina Georgieva Grigorova to the position of “Associate Professor” in Professional Field 2.2 History and Archaeology, Scientific Specialty “History of Bulgaria,” for the needs of the IHS-BAS, Section “Contemporary Bulgarian History.”

September 21, 2026

Se /  p y Kandilarov,
IHS-BAS) Bulgarian History,