



## REVIEW

from Associate Professor Dr. Plamen Marinov Ralchev, Department of International Relations, University of National and World Economy

*(scientific position, academic degree, name, surname, educational / scientific institution)*

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences.

with a dissertation on the topic: MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION PARADIGM OF TURKISH CIVILIZATIONAL DISCOURSE (LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES),

presented by Nihal Fehmieva Özergan, independent doctoral student in the Department of Communication and Audiovisual Production of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

with supervisor: Prof. Dr. Simeon Ignatov Vasilev

### **I. Presentation of the doctoral (PhD) student / applicant on the basis of the submitted documentation**

Nihal Özergan has an extremely rich and complex professional training and experience both in the field of journalism and mass communication, as well as in the field of applied and comparative linguistics and translation from and into modern Turkish. She skillfully combines long-term journalistic activity as a correspondent, reporter, editor, translator and teacher, as well as independent research activity in recent years. She has been enrolled in a free doctoral program at the Department of "Communication and Audiovisual Production" of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" since 1.10.2022. She was given the right to defend a dissertation work for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" after fulfilling all obligations under the individual plan, internal discussion and referral of the dissertation work to a scientific jury and public defense.

### **II. Assessment of the qualities of the text of the dissertation**

The dissertation researches an actual and significant problem that relates to the dynamic processes in the geopolitical and domestic political scene of Turkey. In recent decades, the



Turkish civilizational discourse has acquired new dimensions and strategies in line with the changing global order and the growing influence of the country in the international context. Analyzing media and communication paradigms in this context is of particular importance for understanding how leaders in Turkey create and maintain certain narratives in order to strengthen political and cultural identity.

The dissertation offers a comprehensive analysis of contemporary communication strategies used by leading political figures in Turkey. By examining the rhetorical approaches and mechanisms used in the media space, the research helps to deepen the understanding of the relationship between power and media interpretation. This relationship is key to revealing the methods by which Turkish leaders seek to legitimize their policies and impose a kind of civilizational narrative aimed at national and international validation.

The dissertation submitted for review is 274 pages long. It consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, appendices, bibliography and sources used. The first chapter analyzes the phenomenon of "civilization" in the Turkish language, communication and cultural space. The foundations of the concepts "civilization" and "culture" are examined. The civilizational discourse is analyzed. The conceptual vision of Islamic, Ottoman and Turkish thinkers on the concept of "civilization" is studied. The Turkish civilizational discourse is interpreted as a scientific construct. Of particular importance for the purposes of the study is the analysis of the media and communication paradigm. The dissertation student pays in-depth attention to the pragmatics and semiotics of the language, especially in the transfer of meaning in the translation from Turkish to Bulgarian. Another important focus of the first chapter is leadership communication strategies through which dominant discourses are created and enforced.

The second chapter specifically examines the genesis, characteristics and peculiarities of the Turkish civilizational discourse. It has been interpreted in the intermediate field of political linguistics, sociolinguistics, media linguistics, intercultural communication and political communication. The phenomenon of "imagology" is also analyzed in historical, cultural and lexicological aspects. The Turkish civilizational discourse from the establishment of the Republic of Turkey by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk to the rule of Recep Tayyip Erdogan is studied. Major Turkish daily print publications for the period from 2010 to 2020 were also analysed,



paying special attention to two columnists representing the pro-government and pro-opposition viewpoints, respectively. A time limit has been set until the end of 2022.

The third chapter of the dissertation has a highly pronounced contribution character, as it presents the empirical results of the author's independent research on the Turkish civilizational discourse. The speeches of Turkish President Erdogan were analyzed, his speech portrait was studied, and the so-called "linguistic personality Erdoğan". Persistent phrases and concepts in its operational code were explored, such as "heart geography", "heart borders", the idea of the cultural identity of the so-called "New Turkey" and others. At the end of each of the chapters, there are conclusions and summaries, which are logically built on by the Conclusion of the dissertation work.

The dissertation has a clearly defined research topic, precisely formulated goal and tasks, a research hypothesis, a clarified conceptual apparatus and a complex methodology. In the course of the research, all scientific, applied and practical tasks were completed, through which the main goal of the dissertation was realized. The author was able to confirm and prove her main research hypothesis. The work has a very good information base and rich empirical material. In terms of structure and language and style, the established norms and requirements for a dissertation text were observed and no deviations were found.

The presented abstract in a volume of 40 pages correctly and to a significant extent reflects the content and all important highlights, findings, conclusions and summaries of the dissertation work.

### **III. Contributions of the dissertation research**

The dissertation has a highly pronounced interdisciplinary character, connecting different scientific fields and research areas. From the theory of social change and social constructivism through public communications, cognitive linguistics, critical discourse analysis, semiotics and pragmatics of language, to cultural concepts such as civilizational discourse, imagology, civilizational code. All this makes the research original, innovative and holistic, integrating



contributions from the fields of communication sciences, social and political sciences, and also from the field of comparative and cognitive linguistics.

Nihal Özergan's dissertation is undoubtedly a contribution. Four claims for scientific contributions are formulated. The first contribution is cognitively linguistic in nature. The second contribution relates more to the field of public communications and political linguistics. The third contribution concerns the socio-political understanding of the transformation of the civilizational identity of the New Turkey. The fourth contribution has the most pronounced interdisciplinary character and confirms the overall synthetic conception and implementation of the study. In general, claims for contributions are reasonable and can be accepted as valid. The research has a wide field of application. It enriches and critically analyzes existing knowledge and approves a model for studying and deconstructing various leadership strategies through their communication and media projections. This model can be applied and used in other cases as well, including in different civilizational and linguistic contexts.

#### **IV. Notes and recommendations**

The dissertation makes a contribution through an integrative approach that brings together theories from the fields of media studies, political communication, cognitive linguistics, and sociology of culture. Particularly valuable is tracing the use of the media as a tool for creating and maintaining cultural hegemony.

The author of the work demonstrates skills for systematically analyzing complex topics and approaches, carefully evaluating both the historical foundations of the Turkish civilizational discourse, as well as its development and adaptation in the conditions of modern media practices and channels. One of the strongest qualities of the study is the skillful combination of



content analysis, critical discourse analysis and the study of representations (imagology) to achieve completeness in the research perspective.

Despite the multi-layered structure of the research, it is possible to look more deeply at the possible shortcomings of these communication strategies, paying attention to potential resistance movements in society and alternative narratives that contradict the official discourse.

Various remarks and recommendations can be made to each dissertation research. Ultimately, however, this is an individual author's work, not a collective edited monograph, and it is the author's right to judge which comments and observations to consider and which to ignore.

For the purposes of discussing the dissertation, I would formulate several questions for the doctoral student:

- What is the role of the military in Turkey in maintaining the Turkish civilizational discourse and how is it changing under President Erdogan?
- How does the concept of rule of law and law-based order correspond with the concept of power and authority in the Turkish civilizational discourse in a highly stratified society such as Turkey?
- Is Erdogan's expression "We are all in the same boat" a conceptual metaphor or an allusion to Noah's Ark and Erdogan's messianic role, which is a central argument in his communication strategy?

## **V. Publications and participation in scientific forums**

The PhD student has four independent publications and one co-authored publication related to her dissertation topic, which demonstrates the focus and consistency of her research interests. She participated in five scientific projects and presented scientific reports at eleven conferences. This fulfills the requirements of the Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for approving and disclosing the results of the research according to Art. 5, item 5 and the



minimum national requirements for publications under Art. 63, para. 1, item 4 and art. 69, para. 3. to obtain the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

## **VI. Conclusion**

A completed independent dissertation research is submitted for review, which demonstrates the doctoral student's skills in formulating and thoroughly researching scientific problems.

In my opinion, the dissertation work has been sufficiently developed and meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules for its Implementation. Based on the above mentioned in the review, I give a positive opinion for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Nihal Fehmieva Özergan in the professional field: 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications - International Communication).

Reviewer:

Assoc. Professor Dr. Plamen

Ralchev

Date: 19.11.2024