OPINION

on a doctoral dissertation (D.Sc. thesis) on the topic**:** "Transformation of the Management Cycle in Intelligence and Counterintelligence through the Integration of Modern Technological Solutions",

by PhD Teodora Kirilova Licheva, Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar", Faculty of Law, Department of "Public Order and Security",

aiming to obtain the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" (D.Sc.), in professional field 9.1. "National Security",

by Corresponding Member Vladimir Chukov, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS)

1. Assessment of the results, the main thesis, and the scientific contributions of the candidate

The presented dissertation demonstrates a large-scale study of a fundamental nature for the security sector. The academic analysis is based on a definitive and proven main thesis, namely that modern security management can no longer rely on analogue, traditional, and predominantly reactive models. It requires an entirely new paradigm and a comprehensive transformation of the management cycle based on data, automation, and predictive technologies, while strictly adhering to the rule of law, democratic control, and ethical standards. The conclusion of the work represents a profound synthesis of research achievements, formulating strategic guidelines and outlining three interconnected key findings (conclusions) that run like a red thread throughout the study:

First finding: The traditional management cycle in security is already functionally untenable in the digital era. The reactive, slow, and bureaucratized management model is being replaced by a dynamic, data-driven system. In this system, each of the seven management stages (information collection and analysis, forecasting, decision-making, planning, organizing, implementation,

and control) undergoes a qualitative transformation. Artificial intelligence, big data, cloud computing, blockchain, drones, nanotechnologies, geotechnologies, and space technologies are not merely tools for efficiency—they are architectural elements of a new management model.

Second finding: Technological superiority and the capacity for its systemic integration throughout the entire management cycle are emerging as a key and defining factor for national security in the 21st century. Intelligence structures that succeed in turning technological innovations into an organic part of their management model acquire a measurable informational and operational advantage.

Third finding: Technological transformation is sustainable only with the parallel development of the legal, ethical, and organizational frameworks. The concentration of vast amounts of sensitive data, reliance on complex algorithms, and automated decision-making give rise to new, specific vulnerabilities—ranging from cyber threats and algorithmic bias to the erosion of civil rights and the right to privacy.

Particularly valuable for our academic and practical community are the author's conclusions regarding the specific Bulgarian context. PhD Licheva notes a serious structural lag in the national security sector, which risks deepening. The work objectively points out that despite the positive institutional and regulatory reforms after 1989, the creation of the State Agency for National Security (SANS) and the State Intelligence Agency (SIA), the adoption of specialized legislation, and the introduction of mechanisms for democratic control, the Bulgarian security system remains faced with a complex set of challenges: limited resource and technological capacity; fragmented information infrastructure; insufficient integration of modern technologies at the operational level; a chronic shortage of highly qualified personnel with digital competencies; and the delayed

introduction of innovative management models. The author emphasizes that Bulgaria's lag is not only technological but also conceptual.

In this context, particular importance in the study is attached to the role of the human factor, conceptualized as an indispensable constant in the process of technological transformation. A core finding of the doctoral candidate is that technological innovations can be sustainably effective only if accompanied by the development of the competencies, organizational culture, and values of the personnel within the security system.

In the context of these complex analyses, the candidate's contributions have the following specific nature:

- Novelty for science: PhD Licheva introduces an entirely new research hypothesis and conceptual framework for the transition from a classical to a "digital and cognitive intelligence cycle." As the pinnacle of this scientific contribution, the dissertation develops an original conceptual model for digital security management, which integrates the three management levels—strategic, tactical, and operational—into a unified, technology-driven system.
- Enrichment of existing knowledge: The dissertation enriches already existing knowledge. The scientific results build upon current academic concepts of intelligence management. Security is conceptualized as a shared ecosystem of values, technologies, people, and rules. Theoretical knowledge is enriched through the definition of innovative directions within the framework of the proposed model.
- Direct applied value: The study holds direct applied value. The proposed conceptual model contains clear guidelines for creating a unified regulatory and strategic framework, better coordination among institutions, and the evolution of managerial personnel into digital leaders. The developed algorithms can be directly implemented in the management

platforms of SANS and SIA in order to overcome Bulgaria's conceptual and technological lag.

2. Critical assessments, remarks and recommendations

Despite the indisputable merits of the presented work, some recommendations can be addressed to the author. I believe that in her future research activities, PhD Licheva could expand the analytical scope of her conceptual model by proposing a specific roadmap to overcome the chronic shortage of highly qualified personnel with digital competencies, and by detailing the training models for the new strategic digital leaders in the Bulgarian services.

The recommendations do not negatively affect the quality and quantity of the results obtained. The scientific and scientifically applied contributions of the doctoral candidate remain fully supported, exceptionally solidly argued, and in the volume required for the degree.

3.Conclusion

The presented abstract of the dissertation fully complies with the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (ZRASRB) and the internal regulations of the Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar". The text is original, and there is no evidence of plagiarism.

Based on the high value of the contributions proposed in the innovative conceptual model, the proven main thesis, the focus on the role of the human factor, and the exceptional relevance of the study, I give my definitive and unequivocal positive assessment and declare that the requested scientific degree should be awarded to the author.

I propose to the esteemed members of the scientific jury to award PhD Teodora Kirilova Licheva the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" (D.Sc.) in professional field 9.1. "National Security".

July 29, 2026 Corresponding Member Vladimir Chukov