Faculty
of Arts

Statement of the Habilitation Committee

regarding the proposal for appointment of the candidate:

Gökhan Bacık, Ph.D.

as Associate Professor in the field:

Political Science

The committee was appointed on **12 December 2025** with the following members (in alphabetical order):

Chair:
Professor Jiří Lach, Faculty of Arts Palacky University Olomouc, Czech Republic
Members:
Professor Ramazan Kilinc, School of Government and International Affairs, Kennesaw State University, USA
Professor Ahmet Kuru, Center for Islamic and Arabic Studies and Professor of Political Science, San Diego State University, USA
Professor Ihsan Yilmaz, Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalization, Deakin University, Australia
Associate Professor Daniel Marek, Faculty of Arts Palacky University Olomouc, Czech Republic

The Scientific Board of the Faculty of Arts of Palacký University Olomouc approved the above-mentioned habilitation committee at its meeting on 12 December 2025. The committee reviewed all submitted materials and, following an examination of the required documents pursuant to Act No. 111/1998 Coll. on Higher Education Institutions, confirmed that all required documentation had been duly submitted.

The committee decided to appoint three reviewers for the habilitation thesis entitled ***The Birth and Evolution of Islamic Political Theory: Political Rationalism from Ibn al-Muqaffa to Ibn Khaldun***. This monograph constitutes one of the accepted forms of a habilitation thesis.

The reviewers of the habilitation thesis were:

Professor Gregory Hall, Patterson School of Diplomacy, University of Kentucky, USA

Associate Professor Ahmet Erdi Öztürk, London Metropolitan University, UK
Associate Professor Claudio Cressetti, University of Udine, Italy

The public lecture was organised under the auspices of the Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc (hereafter under the Czech abbreviation FF UP), with the topic approved by the relevant academic committee. The event was held on 29 April 2026 in a hybrid format, combining in-person attendance at the Department of Politics and European Studies (DPES FF UP) with participation via the Zoom platform. Approximately 17 participants attended in person, while 6 additional participants joined online. The event lasted approximately 65 minutes in total, comprising a lecture of approximately 50 minutes followed by a discussion of approximately 15 minutes.

Committee members in attendance included professor Jiří Lach, professor Daniel Marek, who were present in person, and Professor Ramazan Kilinc participated via Zoom.

The lecture, entitled ***Understanding Turkey's Civilizational Populism: Who Shapes It and Why It Matters***, was delivered by Dr. Gökhan Bacık and supported by a PowerPoint presentation. Dr. Bacık structured his lecture in a clear and logically coherent manner, proceeding from a conceptual introduction to a detailed empirical analysis of the Turkish case while maintaining consistent thematic focus throughout.

In the opening section, Dr. Bacık introduced the concept of civilizational populism, situating it within contemporary global politics and arguing for its significance as an analytical framework for understanding political developments both in Turkey and beyond. He made a compelling case that civilizational populism represents a distinct and undertheorised dimension of contemporary politics that merits sustained scholarly attention.

The main body of the lecture was organised around a two-level analytical framework. At the first level, Dr. Bacık examined the intellectual and historical origins of civilizational ideas, tracing the ideological genealogies that inform current political discourse in Turkey. At the second level, he analysed how these ideas are operationalised by political actors in the construction of populist civilizational narratives within the context of everyday politics. This two-level approach provided both historical depth and contemporary relevance, enabling the audience to appreciate the discursive mechanisms through which civilizational themes are mobilised for political ends.

Particular attention was devoted to the role of Turkey's ruling political parties — specifically the Justice and Development Party (AKP, referred to as the Islamist JDP in the lecture) and the Nationalist Action Party (MHP, referred to as the NAP) — in reframing established civilizational ideas into a populist format. Dr. Bacık argued that these parties instrumentalise pre-existing civilizational discourses for both ideological and pragmatic purposes, adapting them to shifting political contexts. This section of the lecture was especially

valuable in illuminating the dynamics of Turkish domestic politics while simultaneously offering a theoretical framework of broader applicability, including insights into how civilizational populism may shape domestic governance and foreign policy in comparable contexts.

In his concluding remarks, Dr. Bacık presented three interrelated propositions. First, civilizational populism constitutes a salient and consequential phenomenon in Turkish political life, illustrating how Islam and nationalism have come to be socially and politically coded as mutually reinforcing and ideologically compatible categories. Second, while political actors serve as the primary agents of civilizational populism, they are not the original authors of the ideas they instrumentalise; rather, they selectively appropriate and adapt pre-existing intellectual traditions for contemporary political purposes. Third, civilizational populism in Turkey is constructed upon an anti-Western narrative that is fundamentally essentialist and culturalist in character, positing an irreconcilable civilizational divide between Turkey and the West.

The lecture generated considerable interest among the audience, as evidenced by the quality and range of questions raised during the discussion period. Questions addressed several thematic areas: the electoral impact of civilizational populism and its influence on voter behaviour; the relationship between civilizational populism and foreign policy formulation; the potential applicability of the framework beyond centre-right parties, including to left-wing political movements; and the comparative relevance of the Turkish model for understanding analogous phenomena in European politics. Dr. Bacık responded to each question in a substantive and well-informed manner, drawing on empirical evidence and theoretical insight befitting his expertise. The discussion thus ser+ved to extend and enrich the themes introduced in the lecture and contributed to a productive scholarly exchange.

The public lecture delivered by Dr. Gökhan Bacık was well organised and academically rigorous. The thematic focus was clearly defined, the argumentation was structured and well-supported, and the content was presented at a level appropriate for an academically informed audience. Dr. Bacık demonstrated thorough command of the subject matter and a capacity to communicate complex ideas in a lucid and accessible manner. His proficiency in English was fully adequate for the purposes of the lecture and did not impede the effective transmission of scholarly content.

In sum, Dr. Bacık's performance convincingly demonstrated his capacity to deliver a public lecture on a topically and theoretically significant subject in a manner that is both academically substantive and accessible to a diverse audience.

The committee also discussed the reviewers' reports at its meeting on 4 May 2026, all of which had been made available to committee members in advance.

Summaries of the Reviews

Associate Professor Ahmet Erdi Öztürk (London Metropolitan University, UK)

Assoc. Prof. A. Erdi Öztürk evaluates Dr. Gökhan Bacık's habilitation submission as an outstanding and intellectually ambitious scholarly achievement. The submission centres on the monograph *The Birth and Evolution of Islamic Political Theory: Political Rationalism from Ibn al-Muqaffa to Ibn Khaldun*, published by Edinburgh University Press in 2025. The reviewer's assessment is unambiguously and strongly positive.

He highlights the book's central contribution as the successful reconstruction of Islamic political theory as an analytically autonomous tradition of political rationalism, clearly distinguished from jurisprudence, theology, and normative philosophy. He commends the author's methodological originality in rejecting doctrinal and teleological readings in favour of a framework centred on the autonomous variables of political life — power, legitimacy, coercion, group solidarity, and institutional endurance — and praises the rigour and intellectual independence this framework demonstrates. The reviewer also notes the author's careful situating of classical thinkers within their concrete historical and political contexts, treating them as actors embedded in imperial, bureaucratic, and elite structures rather than as isolated intellectuals.

The reviewer further commends the book's command of primary sources and secondary literature, the clarity and discipline of its prose, and its capacity to connect historical inquiry with contemporary debates on state authority, legitimacy, and political Islam without falling into presentism.

The publication of the monograph with a leading international academic press is cited as additional evidence of its quality and significance. The reviewer identifies no substantive weaknesses. In conclusion, he states that Dr. Bacık has demonstrated the capacity for independent, field-defining scholarship at the highest level, and expresses very strong and unequivocal support for the habilitation, recommending it to proceed without reservation.

Professor Gregory Hall (University of Kentucky, USA)

Professor Gregory Hall of the Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Commerce at the University of Kentucky evaluates Dr. Gökhan Bacık's habilitation monograph, *The Birth and Evolution of Islamic Political Theory: Political Rationalism from Ibn al-Muqaffa to Ibn Khaldun* (Edinburgh University Press, 2024), as an authoritative and comprehensive scholarly contribution that engages the existing literature thoughtfully and with evident command.

The reviewer highlights the book's central argument — that Islamic history is another chapter of human history, and that Islam was gradually deconstructed by political dynamics across successive historical periods — as a compelling and clearly articulated thesis. He commends the conceptual framework, which distinguishes three categories of Islamic political thought and anchors its

analysis in the concept of political rationalism through a comparative historical study of five thinkers: Ibn al-Muqaffa, al-Mawardi, Nizam al-Mulk, Ibn Tufayl, and Ibn Khaldun. The reviewer considers this framework conceptually sound and presented with clarity, and praises the study's depth of engagement with the existing literature as well as the breadth of its sources.

Professor Hall also underscores the work's wider relevance, noting that while the study is grounded in theory and history, it functions as a bridge for readers seeking to understand the political dynamics of the contemporary Islamic world, including the ongoing conflicts and transformations across the MENA region. He endorses the assessment of Edinburgh University Press reviewer Philip Dorroll, who described the book as uncommonly insightful and essential reading on the relationship between Islam, politics, and the state, a judgment Hall explicitly shares. The reviewer poses several questions for the habilitation defence, concerning the place of Political Islam and movements such as IS and the Taliban within the framework, potential extensions of the methodology into the modern period, and implications for the Iranian case since 1979; these are framed as avenues for productive scholarly discussion rather than as criticisms.

In conclusion, Professor Hall recommends the thesis as a basis for proceeding with the habilitation process without reservation.

Associate Professor Claudio Cressetti, University of Udine, Italy

Professor Claudio Cressati presents Dr. Gökhan Bacik's habilitation thesis as a substantial and highly original contribution to the study of Islamic political thought. The report emphasizes that *The Birth and Evolution of Islamic Political Theory: Political Rationalism from Ibn al-Muqaffa to Ibn Khaldun* offers a comprehensive reconstruction of Islamic political theory's transformation from its early religious foundations into a progressively rationalist and empirically grounded tradition. A central strength identified by the reviewer is Bacik's conceptualization of Islamic political theory as a distinct category of political thought, differentiated from both religious views of politics and Islamic political philosophy, with political rationalism serving as its unifying analytical core.

The review particularly praises the thesis's historical breadth, analytical depth, and methodological rigor. Through close engagement with five major thinkers—Ibn al-Muqaffa, al-Mawardi, Nizam al-Mulk, Ibn Tufayl, and Ibn Khaldun—Bacik is credited with demonstrating how Islamic political thought evolved across diverse historical contexts and regions from the eighth to the fifteenth century. Professor Cressati highlights the work's effective use of primary sources, contextualized interpretation of political and intellectual developments, and nuanced treatment of how religion, governance, and sociopolitical realities interacted over time. The study is portrayed not only as a historical reconstruction but also as a corrective to reductive narratives about Islamic political history.

Overall, the reviewer's assessment is unequivocally positive, describing the thesis as intellectually sophisticated, methodologically robust, and highly relevant to both scholarly and pedagogical contexts. Bacik is characterized as a strong academic candidate whose work significantly enriches contemporary understanding of Islamic political theory while also offering broader relevance for current discourse. The final recommendation is fully supportive: Professor Cressati endorses the thesis without reservation as an excellent basis for proceeding with Dr. Bacik's habilitation

Committee Assessment

The habilitation committee considered all three reviews, including both their critical observations and their positive conclusions, and is of the opinion that Dr. Gökhan Bacık's thesis ***The Birth and Evolution of Islamic Political Theory: Political Rationalism from Ibn al-Muqaffa to Ibn Khaldun*** meets the requirements for a habilitation thesis.

For the lecture before the Scientific Board of the Faculty of Arts, Palacký University, the committee suggested topic **No. 1**, entitled ***Informal Islamisation and Authoritarian Politics in Turkey: Explaining Religious Transformation under Islamist Governance***.

Teaching Experience of the Candidate

Dr. Bacık has been affiliated with the Faculty of Arts at Palacký University Olomouc since December 2016, where he teaches in the areas of political science, Middle Eastern studies, and Turkish politics. He is the guarantor and lecturer of various courses focused on the Middle East, covering both broader comparative fields such as Comparative Politics of the Middle East and more specific dimensions such as the Syrian Crisis and Turkish Politics and Society. His teaching is conducted in English and regularly attracts international students participating in various programmes, including Erasmus. Dr. Bacık also teaches Methods of Political Science in cooperation with the history department for BA and MA students in the Euroculture programme. Within the same programme, he teaches Islam and the West for both Euroculture and Palacký University students. Each spring semester he delivers a four-week intensive methodology module focused on political science research methods, and he contributes to the programme through annual evaluation meetings at which student research papers are assessed.

From 2000 to 2016, Dr. Bacık taught at various Turkish universities, offering core and elective courses in international relations and Middle Eastern politics. During this period he promoted public engagement with the discipline through lectures at civil society organisations and secondary schools, as well as regular opinion pieces in Turkish media. Notably, together with colleagues, he co-founded the first Department of Political Science at Zirve University in Gaziantep. His teaching experience also includes work at universities abroad; he taught a three-week intensive course on Turkish Foreign Policy at Clemson University in the United States. Following the award of an IIE Scholar Rescue

Fund Fellowship in 2016, he relocated to the Czech Republic and continued his academic career there.

At Palacký University, Dr. Bacık has supervised more than 25 bachelor's and master's theses applying rigorous methodological and comparative approaches to topics including terrorism, authoritarianism in the Middle East, Europe–Middle East relations, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. All of these theses were conducted, written, and defended in English. He also supervises MA theses addressing contemporary issues such as hybrid warfare, energy security, and Europe's engagement with the Middle East. His approach to teaching has long been grounded in connecting theory with empirical research and in guiding students towards analytical and critical thinking. Across all scholarly, pedagogical, and public activities — whether publishing peer-reviewed articles, delivering public lectures, or supervising theses — his educational philosophy centres on methodological rigour, theoretical robustness, and the cultivation of critical thinking and democratic engagement.

Dr. Bacık has long been dedicated to popularising political science and social science research through the media. He has given interviews to Czech media outlets and delivered public lectures organised by various Czech civil society organisations. He has also contributed to the popularisation of political science topics, particularly on the Middle East, in international media.

On the basis of the above, the habilitation committee considers Dr. Gökhan Bacık to be an experienced university teacher with many years of practice.

Publication Activities of the Candidate

Dr. Gökhan Bacık has an extensive publication record with considerable international impact. His research focuses on Middle Eastern studies, Arab state formation, Turkish politics, radical and Islamic movements in the Middle East, theories of international relations, and authoritarianism in the region. Throughout his scholarly career, he has published four academic monographs, numerous chapters in international edited volumes, more than twenty articles in peer-reviewed journals indexed in *Web of Science* and *Scopus*, and further scholarly texts in conference proceedings and academic periodicals.

Dr. Bacık's work has appeared in prestigious international journals including *Middle East Policy, Middle Eastern Studies, Peace Review, Arab Studies Quarterly, Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, Terrorism and Political Violence, Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, Turkish Studies, Nationalism and Ethnic Politics, Sociology of Islam, Journal of Global Slavery, International Review of Sociology,* and *Journal of Near Eastern and Balkan Studies*. These publications represent significant contributions to the literature on regional studies, Islam, and politics.

Dr. Bacık is the author and co-author of several internationally edited volumes/chapters published by prestigious presses including Oxford

University Press, Palgrave Macmillan, I. B. Tauris, and Edinburgh University Press. His scholarly work also reflects sustained international collaboration, having worked with co-authors and contributing scholars from the United States, various European countries, and the Middle East.

In terms of bibliometric indicators, Dr. Bacık achieves consistently strong results:
Web of Science: 170 citations (excluding self-citations), **h-index 8** (as of 25 November 2025).

Among the most significant publications are:

1. **Bacık, G.**, & Afacan, I. (2013). Turkey Discovers Sub-Saharan Africa: The Critical Role of Agents in the Construction of the Turkish Foreign-Policy Discourse. *Turkish Studies*, 14(1): 1–20.
2. **Bacık, G.**, & Coşkun, B. B. (2011). The PKK Problem: Explaining Turkey's Failure to Develop a Political Solution. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 34(3): 248–265.
3. **Bacık, G.** (2013). Turkey and the BRICS: Can Turkey Join the BRICS? *Turkish Studies*, 14(4): 758–773.

Overall, Dr. Gökhan Bacık's publication record demonstrates long-term research continuity, high scholarly standards, methodological innovation, and sustained international impact.

International Experience, Project and Grant Activities

Throughout his academic career, Dr. Gökhan Bacık has undertaken numerous scholarly and professional activities abroad, which have significantly contributed to his international standing. Most notably, following the award of an IIE Scholar Rescue Fund Fellowship, he was affiliated with Palacký University in Olomouc from December 2016 to May 2017, where he conducted research and taught courses including *Turkish Politics and Society, Middle Eastern Politics, The Middle East After the Arab Spring, The Syrian Crisis,* and *Turkish Foreign Policy.*

In addition to this fellowship, Dr. Bacık has participated in a number of international workshops and short-term professional activities at leading institutions. In 2016, he took part in a workshop on contemporary Turkish discourses on culture in international relations, organised by the London School of Economics and the British Academy. In 2013, he participated in the workshop "Power and Influence in the 21st Century," organised by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the German Marshall Fund of the United States in Stockholm, where he presented on the transformation of Turkish foreign policy following the Arab Spring. In the same year, he attended a workshop on Turkey's foreign policy and EU relations organised by TESEV and Stockholm University, as well as an international workshop on the Syrian displacement crisis organised by the Brookings Institution in Washington D.C. In 2012, he participated in workshops organised by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in

Brussels on the changing Middle East, and by the Presidency of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in Nicosia on the Cyprus problem and international negotiations.

Earlier in his career, Dr. Bacık attended several international summer schools, including the Amsterdam Summer University (2000), a summer school at the Luxembourg Institute for European and International Studies in Romania (2004), and the University of Ljubljana summer school on European Union expansion and institutional culture (2002). These experiences reflect a sustained commitment to international scholarly exchange across a wide range of institutional and thematic contexts.

Also, while working in Turkey, Dr. Bacik led a research project funded by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK). He also served as a referee and panel member for the evaluation of relevant projects submitted to TÜBİTAK. He also served as an associate member of the Turkish Academy of Sciences (the country's highest official body for scientific research), where he similarly participated in various committees to evaluate projects.

Conclusion
The committee considers Dr. Gökhan Bacık to be a well-rounded academic and researcher with an international reach, and regards him as a strong candidate for the habilitation process.

Vote of the Habilitation Committee
Number of voters:

Votes in favour: **5**

Votes against: **0**

Abstentions: **0**

Based on the outcome of the secret ballot, **the habilitation committee, in accordance with § 72 of Act No. 111/1998 on Higher Education Institutions and on Amendments to Other Acts, recommends to the Scientific Board of the Faculty of Arts Palacky University to proceed with the procedure for appointment to the rank of Associate Professor in the field of Political Science.**

In Olomouc, on 4 May 2026

Signatures of committee members:

Please see the attachments and the online voting form.

Jiří Lach Digitálně podepsal Jiří Lach
Datum: 2026.05.05 08:47:10 +02'00'