

REVIEW

by: Associate Professor PhD Simeon Asenov, UNSS, Department of Political Science,
professional direction 3.3 "Political Sciences",

member of a scientific jury formed by order RD-38-106/19.02.2024
of the Rector of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski",

regarding: public defense of Anton Valeriev Nachev's dissertation,

on the subject:

**"The European green parties and movements as a factor for the Europeanization and
modernization of the Bulgarian political process after 1989",**

for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree

"PhD of Political Science",

professional direction: 3.3 "Political Sciences" (International Relations).

1. Information about the PhD student and the doctoral program

Anton Nachev obtained his Bachelor's (2013-2017) and Master's (2017-2019) higher education degrees at the Political Science Department of the University of "St. Kliment Ohridski". During his studies, he has shown a strong interest and commitment to political science and the processes of political life in the country and abroad. In 2020, he was admitted to a full-time doctoral program in the scientific specialty "Political Science". During his studies, the PhD student has taken the exams, realized the publications on the topic of the dissertation, and performed precisely the other activities stipulated in his individual study plan. After an internal discussion of the dissertation work, the PhD student has been directed to a public defense in early 2024.

The procedure for referral to public defense of the submitted dissertation has been followed. The documentation for the preparation of this review is complete and carefully prepared. Along with the dissertation work, an abstract, an autobiography of the doctoral student, a list of publications, and a reference to scientific contributions are presented.

2. General characteristics of the presented dissertation work

The dissertation has a total length of 170 standard pages. It consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography. The dissertation has 3 tables that illustrate summaries of empirical data used to support the author's analysis. The bibliography contains monographs and scientific articles in English, French, and Bulgarian, results of sociological studies, statutes,

programs, and election documents of political parties, and reports of international non-governmental organizations.

The presented dissertation is aimed at researching the influence of the European green parties (with their ideas and policies) on the Bulgarian green parties and the political process in our country after 1989. This influence is analyzed through the conceptual framework of the notions of Europeanization and modernization, which accompanied the democratic changes in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of the communist regimes. The study of this issue has its relevance and the reasons for the choice of the topic are very well justified by the author of the dissertation.

The introduction (pp. 6-10) accurately states the mandatory elements required for this type of research study. The object of the work is the green ideas and policies in the Bulgarian political process after the beginning of the democratic reforms, and the subject - the implementation of ideas and policies developed by the European green parties and movements in Bulgaria. The main goal is to identify the instruments for the adoption of European green ideas and policies. This goal is realized through the formulation of four research tasks that determine the content of the individual chapters of the dissertation. The main working hypothesis is that (1) European green parties and movements are the central factor in the modernization and Europeanization of the Bulgarian political process in the field of environmental policies, and (2) this is achieved not only directly, but also through the policies of the European Union. Hence, the dissertation logically presupposes the study and analysis of two lines of influence of the European Greens on the Bulgarian political process. The first is their influence and impact on the ideological and programmatic state and development of the Bulgarian green parties; and the second is the implementation (inclusion and implementation) of EU green policies as policies of Bulgarian governments. The research methods presented and the limitations made are relevant and applied in the subsequent development and implementation of the paper.

The first chapter (pp.11-41) is theoretical and conceptual. It clarifies the basic concepts and ideological positions of the Greens, the role of post-materialist theory in the rise and shaping of environmentalism as a new political project and alternative to traditional parties and politics in Western societies. Subsequently, the analysis focuses on the concepts of Europeanization and modernization. The relationship and connections between these processes and the parties in the so-called new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), among which is Bulgaria, are

clarified on a conceptual basis. The paper focuses on the links between theories and practices of political and ecological modernization that shape two phases in the political behavior of green formations in the new democracies. Political modernization theory emphasizes the transformation of political institutions and decision-making processes over time (phase one), while ecological modernization theory focuses on environmental management and policy development within this evolving political context (second phase). This relationship is then subsequently attributed to the two phases in the development of green parties and movements in Bulgaria.

The second chapter (pp.42-71) is aimed at clarifying the process of the emergence of green parties and movements in Western Europe, the development of their ideological and programmatic ideas and values, the rise of public influence, and the parliamentary presence of green parties in four "old " European democracies (Germany, France, the UK, and Belgium), the supranational party grouping and expansion of the political representation of the Greens at the level of the European Parliament. The fundamental differences and specifics between the green parties in Western Europe and those in the CEE countries are revealed. The paper concludes that in practice the green parties in Central and Eastern Europe position themselves by "overturning" the traditional cleavage and understanding of "left-right" in comparison with their counterparts from Western Europe (p.59).

The third chapter (pp.72-130) is dedicated to the study and analysis of the Bulgarian "green space" and its representatives - the various green political formations with their ideological and programmatic positions and regroupings (from 1989 to now), as well as a brief overview of green NGOs in civil society. Here is realized the proof of the first of the two lines of influence of European greens - their reflection and presence in the ideas, programs, and political behavior of the Bulgarian Green parties. Through in-depth analysis and the citation of relevant examples, the complex genesis and peculiarities of the emergence and development of the green movement and parties in Bulgaria are revealed. They expressed environmental concerns and put forward political demands that were closely linked to dissidents, protest activity, and the activities of the anti-communist opposition. This made them a factor in the democratization and modernization of the Bulgarian political process after the fall of the communist regime. The paper distinguishes two types of green formations that evolved within the green space of politics. The first type of formations (Green Party, Green Bulgaria, Green Alliance, KEP) are created for participation in elections and access to resources, without active political action. Their goals are rather an

integration into the system, reflecting environmental goals at a programmatic level. The second type of green formations ("Ekoglasnost" and the "Greens" party, renamed in 2019 to "Green Movement") stem from civil campaigns and aspirations for social and political change in unison with the intensification of the so-called "green wave" in Europe. In their behavior, they are distinguished by a broader approach and expression of a new political paradigm based on participatory democracy, an active attitude to acute socio-political problems, and a flexible approach in the search for coalition partnerships. The paper concludes that Bulgarian green movements and parties in their emergence, formation, and development reproduce key characteristics of European green formations.

The fourth chapter (pp.131-152) develops the second line of the research hypothesis - the analysis of the implementation (inclusion and implementation) of the EU green policies as policies of the Bulgarian governments. The case used as an example is the implementation, by EU member states, of the EU Green Transition Strategy within the framework of the so-called Green Deal and the Just Transition Mechanism. This part of the paper details the green policies and commitments set out in the European Commission-endorsed National Recovery and Sustainability Plan and the Territorial Fair Transition Plans (for the Stara Zagora, Kyustendil, and Pernik regions), which are committed to be implemented by Bulgarian governments in the coming two decades. They reflect the environmental modernization phase of EU policy and the Green Group in the European Parliament. It is argued that environmental policies are set by the EU itself, while green parties and movements - European and Bulgarian - have no independent role in imposing and implementing these policies (p.150). In the Bulgarian case, the main driver and advocate of the green transition and policies are the governments and ruling majorities themselves. In the current situation, the Green Movement Party has the role of a public legitimator of the implementation of European green policies through the Bulgarian state, rather than an independent and active subject in environmental modernization.

The conclusion (pp.153-155) draws summary conclusions that reflect the results obtained and confirm the working hypothesis formulated in the introduction.

3. Evaluation of the achieved results and scientific contributions

The dissertation submitted for public defense is a completed study of the influence and reflection of the ideology of green parties and movements in Europe, in the ideas, program

positions, and policies of the Bulgarian green formations in the political process after 1989. The chosen methodology has been successfully applied in the implementation of the main tasks in the individual structural units of the content.

I find that the research work has led to the following scientific results, which I will summarize as follows:

- The influence and the relationship of the Green ideology with the processes of democratization, Europeanization, political and ecological modernization in the new democracies of CEE, and in Bulgaria in particular, after 1989, are revealed on a conceptual basis.

- A systematic review of the genesis and development of green parties and movements in the European political context is presented, tracing their ideological evolution, transformations, and expansion of the role and place of green representation and policies in the EU institutions and political agenda.

- The paper examines the process of emergence, formation and development of green movements and parties in the Bulgarian political space. Their ideological and political influence from the European green formations, their regroupings, typology, and impact on the democratic political process in Bulgaria are analyzed.

- The process of implementation of green policies from the EU to Bulgaria through the so-called Green Deal and the Just Transition Mechanism by the Member States is presented. It is shown that it is not implemented directly by the European and Bulgarian green political formations, but through the common policy of the European Union and the national policy of the Bulgarian governments.

In the author's self-assessment of contributions made in the text of the abstract, five scientific contributions are highlighted, which are based in their entirety on the presented research results. I accept the contributions formulated by the author under No. 2, 3 and 4. These three contributions have their basis and coverage in the text of the thesis.

I find the first contribution to be extremely general and not sufficiently well formulated in view of the subject of the dissertation. It is more accurate for the doctoral student to state that this is the first study of the influence and implementation of the ideas and policies of the European green political formations and the green policies of the EU in the Bulgarian political process after 1989. I partially accept the findings under №5 as an author's contribution. My consideration here is from a practical standpoint. Are empirical data and results available that show a sustainable trend

that environmental policies lead to economic growth at present in Bulgarian conditions? Perhaps this could be confirmed by political practice in the future. Then this contribution would be fully justified.

The dissertation reflects the author's research efforts. I find no improper use of another's authorship, other's theses, research results, or citations. A check by specialized software of the text of the dissertation found no plagiarism from other works or infringement of other copyrights.

4. Evaluation of the abstract and publications

The submitted abstract consistently and faithfully reflects the content of the dissertation. No inconsistencies were found between it and the text of the dissertation.

Three publications on the dissertation topic have been submitted, which meet the requirements. They reflect individual aspects of the doctoral student's research work. There are also several participations in projects and conferences, which confirm his activity and interest in research and expert work.

5. Critical notes, recommendations and questions

The dissertation work presented for public defense is very well developed considering the research elements set in the introduction and the final scientific result achieved. By coincidence, I participated in its preliminary internal discussion. I note that the PhD student has taken into account a large part of the notes and recommendations made at the time, as a result of which the dissertation has a significantly improved quality and content as a scientific text.

In a constructive spirit, I offer some critical comments and recommendations for the dissertation. They do not call into question its scientific merits and results.

First. I find that Chapter Three could be improved structurally and substantively. It is appropriate to specify its title and link it to the topic of the dissertation. In some places in its content, there is an unnecessarily text-heavy retelling of programmatic statements and platforms, events, and actions from the political life of Bulgarian green formations, which burdens the text. This chapter could be organized in a clearer and more problem-oriented way by bringing out a few criteria and summarized appropriately in a few additional summary tables. In this way, for example, it would be easier and comparable for the reader to highlight the differences in the political programs and political behavior of the green formations from the 1990s to the present.

Borrowing information from some well-known reference books and Internet sources should be avoided because it does not fit well with the standards for developing a scientific study.

Second. I find that some errors of a linguistic and technical nature have been made. There is not a single paragraph in the text of the dissertation, and its presence is a rule and standard in the Bulgarian language. In separate places, the use of different verb tenses is noticeable in the author's analysis. It should be standardized according to the accepted verb form for writing a scientific text in such cases. There is also a different technical layout of the titles for individual chapters and paragraphs, a difference in the title of the fourth chapter displayed in the table of contents and subsequently in the text of the work (see p.3 in connection with p.131), etc. I recommend that these notes be considered in future research work.

I ask the following question to the PhD student: what is the perspective for the Bulgarian green parties and movements in the context of the growing "green wave" in Europe and the crisis processes in the Bulgarian party system? What are their prospects for acquiring independent parliamentary representation and a sustainable presence in Bulgarian politics?

6. Conclusion

The presented review gives sufficient grounds to summarize that the reviewed dissertation work is an independent study of an actual political science problem, which contains scientific and scientific-applied results and contributions.

On the basis of what was stated in the review and taking into account the implementation of the legal provisions of Article 6 of the Law Academic Staff Development (ZRASRB) and Article 27, paragraph 1 of the Regulations for its implementation, I express my categorical support "for" the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor of Political Science" to Anton Valeriev Nachev for his dissertation work on the topic: "The European green parties and movements as a factor for the Europeanization and modernization of the Bulgarian political process after 1989."

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Sofia, April 23, 2024.