

# OPINION

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of the dissertation thesis of **Anton Valeriev Nachev**, full-time doctoral student at the Department of Political Science, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, on the topic  
**“European Green Parties and Movements as a Factor for the Europeanization and Modernization of the Bulgarian Political Process after 1989”**

Scientific supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Boris Petrov Popivanov, PhD, SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”

for the award of the educational and scientific degree **“Doctor”**  
Professional field: 3.3. Political Sciences  
Doctoral Program: “Political Science - International Relations”

## **1. Main characteristics and framework of the dissertation thesis**

Doctoral student **Anton Nachev**’s dissertation **“The European Green Parties and Movements as a Factor for the Europeanization and Modernization of the Bulgarian Political Process after 1989”** contains 170 pages of text, and consists of an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. The references list includes 174 sources in Bulgarian, English and French.

The introduction clearly sets out the framework of the study, including **relevance and significance** of the topic, object, subject, hypothesis, aim, objectives, structure, methods and limitations of the study.

The doctoral student correctly associates the relevance and significance of the topic of the dissertation thesis with Bulgaria’s affiliation to the democratic world and, in particular, with the membership in the European Union. It makes a good impression that he distinguishes between the direct and indirect influence “of European green ideas on Bulgarian politics” (p. 7), which is also part of the research **hypothesis**, namely “European green parties and movements are the central

factor for the modernization and Europeanization of the Bulgarian political process in the field of environmental policies, but this is achieved not only directly, but also through the policies of the European Union” (p. 8).

The **goal** is formulated in a precisely and clearly as the author’s purpose is “to establish the tools for the implementation of green ideas and policies” (p. 8). The aim predetermines the **object** and the **focus** of the research, which are set as follows: **object** - the green ideas and policies in the Bulgarian political process after the beginning of the democratic transformations; **focus** - the implementation of ideas and policies from European green parties and movements towards Bulgaria. (p. 8)

The **tasks** to be solved correspond to the set goal and are arranged logically correctly. They are qualitatively resolved in the process of carrying out the scientific research.

The description of the **methods** used is precise, and the application of each method is indicated. Qualitative and quantitative research approaches are skilfully combined.

The set **limitations** show that the doctoral student was able to focus his work, assess the risks, and deepen his research in directions closely related to the set goal.

## **2. Content, research and analysis**

In the **first chapter** are discussed topics and concepts related to the purpose, hypothesis and object of the dissertation research. The main concepts from the title of the dissertation are defined. It is of high value that the doctoral student examined the axiological basis of environmentalism through the lens of Ronald Inglehart's ideas on postmaterialism. The chosen theoretical framework is relevant to the set goal and quite appropriate, due to the availability of quantitative data on the post-materialist values. Such international studies with free access are European Values Study (EVS), World Values Survey (WVS), Eurobarometer. This provides the author with the opportunity to argue his thesis with quantitative data. The presentation of various trends in environmentalism and the emphasis on “the relationship between economic and ecological development and the role of public authority as a mediator in this regard” (p. 27) are also essential. Along with the above, the framework of the concepts of “Europeanization” and “modernization” is presented, with special emphasis on their practical implementation in the context of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (pp. 33-35). Considering the specifics of the latter, Nachev correctly draws the attention to the role of the national context for Europeanization (p. 29).

Regarding modernization, the association between the types of modernization is considered, and the author points out that it should also take into account “the leading role of cultural change” (p. 31).

The **second chapter** focuses on the genesis of green movements in Europe and their transformation into political parties. The need for such a retrospective is indisputable, and the author has managed to summarize the most important from the large volume of available information, reaching the most recent features of the “greens”. Analyzing the modernity, Nachev also pays attention to generational dynamics (p. 45). This perspective is relevant because post-materialist attitudes are in no small measure related to age. EVS data (2017-2020) show that post-materialist preferences often decrease with the age.

The **third chapter** is dedicated to the Bulgarian green formations. The author draws attention to the role of greens in the transformation processes at the end of the 1980s in CEE. He points out that “generally within CEE, civil resistance is expressed in the development of environmental movements that are sceptical of the institutions of the state and rather adhere to their anti-system character” (p. 72). Especially in Bulgaria, the role of Ecoglasnost was highlighted, but the author correctly states that regardless of the role of environmental movements, “the leading cleavage is communism and anti-communism” (p. 73), and on this basis the first political parties were formed after 1989. The chapter looks at various environmental parties and movements in Bulgaria, with special attention paid to the political party “The Greens”, established in 2008, and from 2019 – “Green Movement”. Data on the electoral dynamics of the “greens” could be a basis for prognosis, but their participation in coalitions makes it difficult to assess their electoral support.

The **fourth chapter** presents the indirect influence of European green parties on Bulgarian politics, through the implementation of European policies. I sympathize with that author’s decision to focus on The Just Transition Mechanism, as it helps him focus his work and present the most relevant and recent dimensions of the discussed influence.

In **the conclusion**, the main outcomes that can be drawn based on the conducted research are presented in a synthesized version. Key moments of the research hypothesis, which was proven in the process of work, are commented.

### **3. Contributions**

The contributions of Anton Nachev's dissertation research are both theoretical and practical. I accept the contributions formulated by him, which can be summarized in the following three directions:

- 1) Detailed presentation of the genesis of the Bulgarian green political parties;
- 2) Establishing the basis for their support (democracy protection and anti-communism rather than post-materialist values);
- 3) Establishing the way in which green parties influence Bulgaria's environmental agenda, namely through European policies.

The doctoral student has published three texts that are related to the focus of the dissertation research. The abstract presents the main framework of the study, as well as key points from the four chapters, the conclusion, a self-assessment of the contributions and a list of published texts, conference participations and projects.

### **4. Recommendations and questions**

Doctoral student Nachev sets a theoretical framework based on Ronald Inglehart's concept of the transformation of values from materialist to post-materialist. I believe that the work would have won if there were quantitative data on the dynamics of the post-materialist index in Bulgaria in the last paragraphs of the third chapter. The above can be done in Nachev's subsequent studies, confirming the finding in the conclusion that "the public role of the Bulgarian greens rests on other reasons, not so much arising from the authenticity of the ecological issues, as from the resistance against the socialist system" (p. 154 ).

If the doctoral student intends to publish his work, I recommend that he makes a detailed proofreading. In the process of reading of the dissertation thesis and its abstract, some technical and typographical errors were found, including wrong words in the sense of missing letters, changed places of letters, etc.; missing space after a period or comma, and in places there is more than one space; some of the sources used lack reference and/or quotation marks when it is an exact quote, etc.

I have two related questions for the doctoral student:

1) In the process of writing the dissertation, did you manage to get acquainted with the Environmental Performance Index (EPI)?

2) Do you have information on whether EPI is better in countries with more active green parties?

## 5. Conclusion

Anton Nachev's CV shows consistency and upgrading in his education, which also corresponds to his professional activity. The above presupposes the qualitative elaboration of his dissertation thesis "**European Green Parties and Movements as a Factor for the Europeanization and Modernization of the Bulgarian Political Process after 1989**". The latter has a standard structure, reflects the preparation of the doctoral student and undoubtedly has scientific and practical contributions to the proposed and professionally developed area. Thus, I express my **positive opinion** and propose to the respected scientific jury to award **Anton Valeriev Nachev** the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**" in the professional field "3.3. Political Sciences", doctoral program "Political Science - International Relations".

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