



**SOFIA UNIVERSITY “ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI” FACULTY
OF PHILOSOPHY, DEPARTMENT OF POLITOLOGY**

Thesis Statement

Assoc. Prof. Petar Nikolov, New Bulgarian University, Department of "Political Sciences"
for Anton Valeriev Nachev's dissertation on topic:

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

**for awarding educational and scientific degree "PhD" in professional field & scientific
area "Political Sciences" ... (International relations)**

The green idea, also called greenism (eng. “greenism”) or environmentalism is undoubtedly among the most relevant political ideologies in the modern world, dominating in one way or another, not only the political debate, but also the real management decisions in the countries of the EU, the USA, the British Commonwealth, etc. At the same time, since the end of the 1980s, various green and eco movements in Bulgaria (and in the other former totalitarian countries of Central and Eastern Europe) have had a lasting influence, both in the process of the transition to democracy and in the subsequent post-transition a period of deeper integration into the political dynamics of a united Europe. From this point of view, at the very beginning of this thesis statement, we must point out that the dissertation, prepared under the scientific supervision of Assoc. Prof. Boris Popivanov, is successfully focused on an actual political problem and will certainly have practical significance for the understanding of the Bulgarian political process. The presented text has a volume of 170 standard pages and includes an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion and a bibliography. The bibliography contains 174 sources, mainly in Bulgarian and English, including a large number of publications on the Internet. In addition to it, a 43-page abstract describing the content of the dissertation and listing the alleged contributing points of the PhD student, his publications on the subject and his participation in scientific forums. In general, both the text of the dissertation and the abstract

and the literature used in them fully comply with good academic standards and the minimum national criteria for academic growth, and the proposed work has all the formal grounds to be admitted to academic defense.

In the introduction, the research elements of the work are formulated - object of the study ("green ideas and policies in the Bulgarian political process"), subject ("the implementation of ideas and policies from the European Greens to Bulgaria"), main hypothesis ("the 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"), aim ("to establish the tools for the implementation of green ideas and policies"), method and the limitations inevitable with such a wide range of viewing. Four main research tasks of the dissertation were also highlighted, which predetermined the chosen structure of the dissertation of four chapters.

In the first chapter, the author introduces the main terminology used and tries to answer the question of what the green ideology is. The main pillars of greenism (with an emphasis on the concept of sustainable development) and the main dividing lines within the circles of contemporary green movements, concepts and their connections with the processes of Europeanization and modernization are described. In the second chapter, the genesis and development of the greens in the context of the European political process, their potential to impose a specific environmental agenda, as well as the historically determined differences between the green movements in Western and Eastern Europe are examined. Attached here is the first (of a total of three attached tables) showing the dynamics of green representation in the European Parliament.

The third chapter is devoted to the origin and evolution of the Bulgarian green formations, from the anti-communist movement "Ekoglasnost" to the contemporary projections of the European green trend in the Bulgarian civil sector and Bulgarian politics. The other two tables summarizing the electoral dynamics of the Greens in the Bulgarian elections for the European and national parliament are also presented here. Finally, the fourth chapter examines the implementation of European green policies in Bulgaria, and in view of the large volume of the topic, it correctly concentrates on the most prominent and topical problem - the ecological components of the Bulgarian National Recovery and Sustainability Plan (NRRP).

In the conclusion, the PhD candidate repeats the main conclusions from the separate chapters and defends his initial research hypothesis, summarizing the thesis that over the years the ideas and messages of the Bulgarian Greens increasingly overlap with the ideas and messages of the European Greens, as after Bulgaria's full membership in the EU in 2007, the Bulgarian Greens have adopted a more instrumental role in the implementation of European environmental policies. Along with this, the conclusion also highlights two contradictory trends - decreasing influence of Bulgarian green non-governmental organizations at the expense of the growing influence of green parties; and at the same time - it completely reduces the influence of the Bulgarian green parties in relation to the institutions implementing European environmental policies. The structure of the work presented for discussion corresponds to the wide scope of the problem and corresponds logically to the set parameters and tasks. His presentation combines a rich theoretical base with broad empirical knowledge, as a result, the reader can trust the conscientiously collected, summarized and systematized information, which the author presents in a light and fascinating way, showing at the same time a free and precise use of the political apparatus and built scientific style. The bibliography used is comprehensive and most

of the publications in it appear to be actually used and interpreted in the text. However, the not always differentiated reference to scientific developments and ideologically stated texts suffers some criticism. The abstract also meets the existing standards and correctly presents the main points and conclusions of the dissertation work. The dissertation candidate's publications and his participation in scientific forums meet the minimum requirements and (without being particularly impressive) testify to a lasting interest in the researched issues. The self-assessment of his author's contributions is adequate, including the claim that the presented work is "the first comprehensive study of the genesis and evolution of green political parties and movements in Bulgaria".

Agreeing with this statement, I would recommend that the author, after his successful defense, format and publish the dissertation work as a monograph.

It is not criticism, but rather my high degree of agreement with the dissertation's approach and conclusions, that leads me to place two related my own scientific interests the question, somewhat stuck in the periphery of the discussed work:

- 1) According to the author's thesis, green parties in Western Europe are generally located on the left and progressive political spectrum, and those in Eastern Europe - rather on the right. To what extent, however, is the assessment of the positioning of Eastern European parties based on objective criteria and how much is the result of their subjective identification as "right-wing", burdened by their historical role as opponents of "left-wing" totalitarian regimes?
- 2) What will be the place and role in the modern green movements in Europe, of the so-called green conservatism, defended by a number of center-right political figures in the EU and the US, and especially assiduously by the late British conservatism theorist Sir Roger Scruton?

In conclusion, bearing in mind all the above remarks, the formal coverage of the basic requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff and the regulations for its implementation, as well as the analytical instincts demonstrated by the dissertation and his ability to formulate a comprehensive research paradigm, I strongly suggest of the scientific jury, to award Mr. Anton Nachev, the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the professional & scientific area "Political Sciences" (International relations).

May 3, 2024

Sofia

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Assoc. Prof. Petar Nikolov