
REPORT

By Member of the Dissertation Committee on the Dissertation of

Alena Denisovna LISENKOVA on the theme:

**“The Global Problem of Climate Change in the Political Agenda of the
European Union: The Transformation of European Parties”**

**Submitted in conformity with the requirements for the Academic Degree of
Candidate in Political Sciences**

Specialisation 5.5.4 – International Relations, Global and Regional Studies

Having read the doctoral dissertation of Alena D. LISENKOVA in the English-language version, I am ready to offer a series of observations and draw conclusions concerning the academic quality of the work. The thesis concerns the analysis of the theoretical and practical approaches and effects of the climate change issue on the political agenda of political parties in the European Union, with special attention paid to the German example. The topic is at the intersection of several different academic disciplines, which includes among others international relations, psychology, politics, national and transnational policymaking, public opinion, elections and organised persuasive communication. This thesis is very informative, easy to follow and the text written in an easy to digest format. A very rich set of data from academic and official sources are used to illustrate the logic of the political parties' and electioneering approach to the topic and discussion of climate change as a contested issue during election cycles at the national and EU levels.

The thesis consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion and bibliography. The format and order of the constituent parts of the thesis is in a clear, consistent and logical order. In the flow of the appearance of topics and subjects, knowledge and information is appearing in a manner that assists the reader in digesting the evaluations, observations and conclusions of the work in an incremental manner. The academic and practical relevance of the topic are clear as are the purpose and objectives of the thesis. An excellent background and context to climate change in the political agenda of the European Union is given through a comprehensive global overview of academic thinking, politics at the national (German and transnational level), legal aspects,

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communications research and elections. There is also evident, a highly consistent and systematic approach to ordering and presenting data, which facilitates enables a comparability perspective for the reader. A remarkably impressive array of various kinds of literature has been consulted and worked into the framework of the thesis. The work is very well researched, written and argued. Observations, interpretations, evaluations and conclusions are well justified and convincing. One strong point in particular that is noted is the high level of integration and interplay between the academic parts of the thesis with the vast amount of empirical data that has been collected. A lot of the complexity of elections at the national and EU level are captured very well in this thesis in terms of the climate change debate and its impact upon political parties during the election cycle.

Despite the obvious strengths and many merits of this thesis, there are several academic points that should have been considered for inclusion in the work to further strengthen it. These points are relatively minor and should be understood within the spirit of being friendly advice on strengthening an already excellent academic work as well as something to consider in your future works as a young scholar beginning your professional journey. Perhaps something that influences some of the weaknesses stems from the apparent taking of people and events at a relative face value, whereas politics in liberal democracy works very much on an idealistic facade. Having been the European Union and its politics for over 20 years, the hidden aspects and patterns are clearer. There is a great deal of cardstacking (creating an uneven political playing field) in the mainstream political system. One of the methods is the use of “administrative resources” by the system of political power, which tends to employ tactics as kompromat/black PR against emerging and actual political threats to them.

To enable a more critical turn in your research, namely the interpretation and analysis of the data collected, some further literature and alternative academic conceptual points of view could have yielded further interesting results. For example, it is clear that the use of fear is a prominent aspect of the climate change debate in order to engineer consensus and conformity. In this respect, it can be said it is a form of securitization to create a form of moral panic, which would make the inclusion of the Copenhagen School of securitization to make greater sense of the political and communication process. To support this track, it would pay dividends to include the works of Walter Lippmann and Edward Bernays in their interpretation and application of public opinion in democracies. They believed the public need to be groomed and guided to make the 'correct' decisions as they lack the intellectual capacity to do this by themselves. These points are clearly evident in the EU communications of climate change on the political agenda.

In summary, the thesis covers a rapidly transforming field of academic study in the 21st century, and how this topic is perceived and acted upon theoretically as an object of study and practically through the influence of populist policy discussions during election cycles at a time of declining public trust in mainstream mass media and the mainstream political establishment in liberal democracies. The strengths of the work far outweigh the few minor weaknesses uncovered in the thesis. One of the consistent themes concerning choices refers to the informational and cognitive facades faced by academics and policymakers that require critical examination and interpretation. This work contributes to a deeper conceptual and empirical understanding of the nature and practice of popular political agenda and politics on the interpretations and representations, the theoretical concepts, political processes and the electoral outcomes.

The dissertation meets the basic requirements established by Order No. 11181/1 of 19 November 2021, “On the Procedure for Awarding Academic Degrees at Saint Petersburg State University,” the candidate Alena D. LISENKOVA deserves the award of the scientific degree of Candidate of Political Sciences in the speciality 5.5.4. – International Relations, Global and Regional Studies. Clause 11 of the aforementioned Order by the author of the thesis is not broken.



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Member of the Dissertation Council

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