

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE
Fakulta sociálních věd
Institut mezinárodních studií

PROTOKOL O HODNOCENÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE
(Posudek vedoucího)

Práci předložil(a) student(ka): **Tereza Balková**

Název práce: **Fossil Fuels Lobby and Climate Change: Influencing the Discourse in Politics and Media**

Vedoucí práce (u externích vedoucích uveďte též adresu a funkci v rámci instituce):
Jana Sehnálková

1. OBSAH A CÍL PRÁCE (stručná informace o práci, formulace cíle):

In her thesis, Tereza Balková focuses on uncovering the “sophisticated, decades-long campaign led by the fossil fuels industry” that “contributed to political inaction on climate change in the country” (i.e. the United States). She aims to prove that the fossil fuels industry’s ties to the political establishment and professionally drafted PR strategies were the key tools to turn, or better say to dilute, the once widely accepted fact of climate change into a matter that is subject to personal opinion, political views, ideology, and identity. The author poses the following research questions: What caused the fossil fuels companies to turn its back on the environment? What were the connections of the lobby to politics? What was the Republican Party's role in the phenomenon? What was the difference between the positions of the GOP and the Democratic Party? How was the environmental debate pictured in the media? What were the main strategies of the movement? And finally, how did the public opinion reflect the manipulations from the denialist campaign?

2. VĚCNÉ ZPRACOVÁNÍ (náročnost, tvůrčí přístup, argumentace, logická struktura, teoretické a metodologické ukotvení, práce s prameny a literaturou, vhodnost příloh apod.):

Tereza has presented a clearly written and well-organized work, where she gradually develops her argument and provides evidence to illustrate the influence that the fossil fuels industry built over the years. While the methodological approach is not explicitly pronounced in the introduction, in each chapter, Tereza analyzes accessible documents and synthesizes information from other authors. In the chapter dedicated to media, Tereza primarily observes how media can frame and prime their audiences.

In the first chapter, the author describes the evolution of the debate on climate change in the United States. Here, Tereza accounts for a turnabout in the fossil fuels industry’s approach towards researching climate change and provides an explanation to such changes. She also analyzes the gradual change within the Republican Party's approach towards climate change and points out that this change is primarily a result of the GOP ties to the American industry and the influence of campaign donations. Alluding to growing polarization and identity politics, Tereza then examines how climate change shifted from facts to being framed as a matter of ideology and opinion and became a tool of political mobilization.

In the second chapter, Tereza describes the gradual change in the approach towards science by fossil fuels companies. Using secondary research and investigative journalism reports, she proves that while originally supporting research on mitigating climate change, fossil fuels companies switched to denial as they realized the ultimate costs of adapting to climate change. She illustrates the techniques used by fossil fuels hired PR experts who employed junk scientists and spin doctors, relativization of science, and a broad variety of what we

would today call fake news and disinformation in order to undermine the notion that climate change is a real phenomenon and fossil fuels industry is a huge contributor to it.

In the third chapter, Tereza describes the role of the media and public opinion. She examines how the media shape and frame public opinion and points out to the so-called fairness doctrine, which made American journalists give equal space to different sides of a debate, including the one on climate change. By the time the fairness doctrine was abandoned, climate change deniers were perceived as a legitimate part of the discussion, which the author underscores by using opinion polls.

The fourth chapter then focuses on the fossil fuels lobby and uses the example of ExxonMobile approach towards climate change. Using leaked information, published by U.S. newspapers or online resources, as well as interviews with former employees, Tereza builds up a strong case to show how “fossil fuels gradually adopted an approach of climate change denial in order to protect their profits”. She also documents the linkages between fossil fuels and the GOP: “Since the 1990s approximately two thirds of the oil and gas industry’s political contributions went to the GOP.”

In her analysis, Tereza used a variety of resources - the list of references is quite impressive. It is just a pity that it is not divided into different categories (primary/secondary sources, books, academic resources etc.). Some of the resources come from climate change interest groups and could be considered as having an agenda - the author however is making sure that these sources are complemented with academic studies.

3. FORMÁLNÍ A JAZYKOVÉ ZPRACOVÁNÍ (jazykový projev, správnost citace a odkazů na literaturu, grafická úprava, formální náležitosti práce apod.):

As far as formal and language requirements are concerned, Tereza has done an excellent job. Her text is well written, there are almost no grammar mistakes. Footnotes as well as bibliography are prepared meticulously.

4. STRUČNÝ KOMENTÁŘ HODNOTITELE (celkový dojem z bakalářské práce, silné a slabé stránky, originalita myšlenek, naplnění cíle apod.):

Tereza presented a detailed account of the fossil fuels lobby, its attitude towards climate change, and climate change science. She details the PR tools which were used by fossil fuels companies to inject uncertainty into the climate change discourse and to undermine science. In my opinion, Tereza carefully develops her argument to show the role of the fossil fuels industry in helping to build the climate change denial. She also documents the linkages between the fossil fuels industry and the GOP, which gradually built in the skepticism over climate change as a man-made process into their ideology and partisan identity. Overall, she fulfills the goals of her thesis and answers all of the questions.

5. SPOLUPRÁCE S VEDOUCÍM PRÁCE (komunikace s vedoucím práce, schopnost reflektovat připomínky, posun od původního záměru apod.)

Tereza has consulted her work on a regular basis in several in-person and virtual meetings. In writing her thesis, she had a very good sense of direction in which she wanted to go and it was clear from the first chapter she submitted that she would not need much support - she had a clear vision of the structure as well as individual components of her analysis.

6. OTÁZKY A PŘIPOMÍNKY DOPORUČENÉ K BLIŽŠÍMU VYSVĚTLENÍ PŘI OBHAJOBĚ (jedna až tři):

- Do you think that the fossil fuels lobby now considers its mission accomplished? How do they try to influence the climate change debate under the presidency of Donald Trump who seems to favor fossil fuels.

7. DOPORUČENÍ / NEDOPORUČENÍ K OBHAJOBĚ A NAVRHOVANÁ ZNÁMKA

Tereza Balková's thesis fulfils all of the requirements of the master's thesis and is therefore recommended for defense. I propose grade A.

Datum: 5. června 2020

Podpis: Jana Sehnalkova

Pozn.: Hodnocení píše k jednotlivým bodům, pokud nepíšete v textovém editoru, použijte při nedostatku místa zadní stranu nebo příložený list. V hodnocení práce se pokuste oddělit ty její nedostatky, které jsou, podle vašeho mínění, obhajobou neodstranitelné (např. chybí kritické zhodnocení pramenů a literatury), od těch věcí, které student může dobrou obhajobou napravit; poměr těchto dvou položek berte prosím v úvahu při stanovení konečné známky.