

## **Abstract of the dissertation**

The following five interdisciplinary essays contribute to International Relations, sociology and media studies, mainly on empirical, but also on theoretical level. Their overarching message is to reject paranoid, but also benign narrative of global elite clubs as exemplified on the case of the controversial transatlantic forum Bilderberg Group.

On theoretical level, the dissertation highlights continuing relevance of sometimes overlooked neo-Marxism. It offers further support for the thesis that some kind of transnational capitalist class (TCC) has developed, which is disputed even by several neo-Marxists, let alone other scholars. Specifically, the findings on Bilderberg Group corroborate the existence of Euro-Atlantic TCC. Within this social network, the European fraction seems to be the most consolidated one.

On empirical level, the dissertation is the first publication that thoroughly exploited data from the recently launched official Bilderberg Group's website. From another under-researched source, the dissertation compiled new datasets about all post-Cold War Bilderberg conferences. On this basis, the essays provide original quantitative and qualitative insights into the composition of Bilderberg attendees and topics of their discussions.

The dissertation offers the first multifaceted appraisal of post-Cold War power of Bilderberg Group. It came to balanced conclusions, namely that Bilderberg Group was and continues to be influential, but its power decreases. This trend is documented on two areas of which Bilderberg Group cares most – European integration and transatlantic ties. The argument is that both Brexit and TTIP's failure imply that Bilderberg Group no longer fulfils its role of uniting the Western countries.

The dissertation introduces a new research agenda, as it conducts the first robust test of the hypothesis that Bilderberg Group can serve as career elevator. It shows that there are dozens of politicians who *first* attended Bilderberg conference(s) and *later* became key ministers, prime ministers, presidents and heads of international organizations like EU, NATO, IMF or UN. These findings add new provocative dimension to understanding of the processes of political elite recruitment and networking.

Finally, the dissertation proves that Bilderberg Group is no longer taboo for Western mass media, but there is still a marked difference in the coverage of the conferences in European newspapers. Only British daily *The Guardian* systematically reported on Bilderberg gatherings for more than a decade.