

The case study: Exxon-Mobil

The example of U.S multinationals affecting U.S foreign policy is President George Bush's decision not to sign the United States up to the Kyoto global warming treaty. This was partly a result of pressure from Exxon-Mobil, the world's most powerful oil company, and other industries, according to US State Department papers seen by the Guardian. The documents, which emerged as Tony Blair visited the White House for discussions on climate change before next G8 meeting, reinforce widely-held suspicions of how close the company is to the administration and its role in helping to formulate US policy.

As it was quoted: "In briefing papers given before meetings to the US under- secretary of state, Paula Dobriansky, between 2001 and 2004, the administration is found thanking Exxon executives for the company's "active involvement" in helping to determine climate change policy, and also seeking its advice on what climate change policies the company might find acceptable."

Until now Exxon has publicly maintained that it had no involvement in the US government's rejection of Kyoto. But the documents, obtained by Greenpeace under US freedom of information legislation, suggest this is not the case. As it was cited in Greenpeace web site: "In the email, Myron Ebell of the Exxon-funded Competitive Enterprise Institute writes to Phil Cooney, a senior official at the White House Council for Environmental Quality. He describes his plans to discredit an EPA study on climate change through a lawsuit. He states the need to "drive a wedge between the President and those in the Administration who think that they are serving the president's interests by publishing this rubbish." He notes his group is considering a call for the then-head of the Environmental Protection Agency, Christine Todd Whitman, to resign, and openly suggests that she'd make an appropriate "fall gal" if the administration is serious about getting back into bed with conservatives opposing action on climate change."

His memo to the US government official begins "Thanks for calling and asking for our help." That statement, and the cosy, conspiratorial tone of the document was enough to make Richard Blumenthal, State Attorney General of Connecticut, and G. Steven Rowe, State Attorney General of Maine, demand an investigation by US Attorney General John Ashcroft into whether Cooney or other officials in the Bush administration solicited the Competitive Enterprise Institute's filing of the new lawsuit, as the memo certainly makes it appear. "President of the United States rejected Kyoto in part based on input from you [the Global Climate Coalition]," says one briefing note before Ms Dobriansky's meeting with the GCC, the main anti-Kyoto US industry group, which was dominated by Exxon. This was in fact what should be seen on the scene for Exxon's efforts in international arena. In order to cover up its actions Exxon proposed its ideas as the suggestions of Global Climate Control Coalition. But today it is was accepted by 199 nation states that Kyoto protocol's aim is to protect the world's climate and reduce the dangerous emissions that harm atmosphere.

The papers further state that the White House considered Exxon "among the companies most actively and prominently opposed to binding approaches [like Kyoto] to cut greenhouse gas emissions". But in evidence to the UK House of Lords Science and Technology Committee in 2003, Exxon's head of public affairs, Nick Thomas, said: "I think we can say categorically we have not campaigned with the United States government or any other government to take any sort of position over Kyoto." This is a rejection of the allegation that they manipulated the American government's actions on the protocol but it is quite obvious as claimed by many NGOs that Exxon has a great influence on the rejection of Kyoto.

Exxon, officially the US's most valuable company valued \$379bn this year, portrayed in the papers to share the White House's unwavering skepticism of international efforts to address climate change. The documents, which reflect unanimity between the company and the US administration on the idea that the need for more global warming science and the unacceptable costs of Kyoto, state that Exxon believes joining Kyoto "would be unjustifiably drastic and premature". This line has been taken consistently by President Bush, and was expected to be continued in yesterday's talks with Tony Blair who has said that climate change is "the most pressing issue facing mankind". As it was quoted, President Bush tells Mr. Blair that; "He's concerned about climate change, but the documents reached by Greenpeace reveal the alarming truth that policy in White House is being written by the world's most powerful oil company." Although the official policy of United States is not signing Kyoto, the President Bush is aware of the fact that this policy has been shaped by one of the most powerful oil multinational of the country, Exxon.

The questions:

1. What is the case about?
2. Why Exxon-Mobil is recognized here as a the most powerfull world MNC?
3. Do you think this behaviour of the company is ethically right?
4. What kind of conclusion you can recommended to local governement?