BILDERBERG
PEOPLE

Elite power and
consensus in
world affairs

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Bilderberg People

Bilderberg People explores the hidden mechanisms of influence at work in the private world and personal interactions of the transnational power elite. It is not concerned with conspiracy theories; instead it is about certain fundamental forces that shape the world in which we live. These forces, with their power to bring about transitions in emotion and preference within and beyond the elite community, have potentially profound implications for all of us.

Through exclusive interviews with attendees of the most prestigious of all informal transnational networks – Bilderberg – this book provides a unique insight into the networking habits and motivations of the world's most powerful people. In doing so, it demonstrates that elite consensus is not simply a product of collective common sense among the elite group; rather, it is a consequence of subtle power relationships within the elite circle. These relationships, which are embedded in the very fabric of elite institutions and interactions, result in a particular brand of enlightened thinking within the elite community. This exciting new volume sheds light for the first time on the critical question of who runs the world, and why they run it the way they do.

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"*Bilderberg People* shows convincingly how the transnational elite policy making community works and whose interests it serves. This book throws light on many baffling foreign policy issues happening all around us today."

Leslie Sklair, Emeritus Professor of Sociology, London School of Economics and author of The Transnational Capitalist Class

"*Bilderberg People* does a great service to the cause of deepening democracy […] it is high time that the ways in which a more equitable and transparent global order can be achieved, is placed on the agenda. This book is a solid contribution to that process."

Kees Van Der Pijl, Professor of International Relations, School of Global Studies at the University of Sussex and author of The Making of an Atlantic Ruling Class and Transnational Classes and International Relations

"The mechanisms of consensus building and maintenance apply not only to world affairs but also to the construction an 'ever closer Union' in Europe. It makes this unique book even more fascinating, if not a bit worrying, reading."

Stefan Schepers, Hon. Director General, European Institute of Public Administration

"An illuminating excursion into the intricacies of power and economics and the esotericism that shape global affairs – today and for the future."

Kalu Kalu, Professor of Political Science, Auburn University Montgomery, USA

"At last – a serious study of power elites, with a human touch. Timely and necessary."

Stefan Stern, former FT columnist, director of strategy at Edelman UK and Visiting Professor at Cass Business School, London

"Any modern analysis of the relationships between partnership, collaboration, consensus and legitimacy can only be of benefit to

those of us trying to grapple with twenty-first century threats across the national and international policing community. Add elites into the equation and you have an interesting mix!"

Sir Hugh Orde, President of the Association of
Chief Police Officers

"The first analysis of the dynamics of consensus building among the world elite – fascinating reading – highly recommended!"

Dr. Celia Romm Livermore, Editor-in-Chief, International
Journal of E-Politics*, School of Business Administration,*
Wayne State University, USA

"*Bilderberg People* deftly probes a transnational, elite network; places this intriguing process in theoretical context; and relates it to current policy issues in Europe, the United States and beyond."

James L. Garnett, Professor of Public Policy and
Administration, Rutgers University at Camden

"What looks like accidental and dispersed forces that shape world politics, might not be so random after all."

Prof. Baroness Lutgart Van den Berghe, Executive
Director, GUBERNA

"The authors of the book *Bilderberg People: Elite Power and Consensus in World Affairs* challenge the fundamental existential problem of the modern world: institutional disharmony between the power relationships at the global scale, from one side, and the ethical imperatives of globalization, from another – the later still to be formed in the environment dominated by the ideology of neo-liberalism. This book – informative, analytical and comprehensive – definitely will be demanded by the community of thinking people."

Niko Melikadze, Director, The Strategic Research
Center, Georgia

"This book is an absolute must-read for the globally concerned scholar with an interest in exploring how contemporary politics and the international system of governance seems incapable of creating coherent collective responses to transcendental global problems.

The authors ask the critical question of how change can be brought about without destabilising existing, and advantageous, socio-economic establishments. By providing a first time insight to the powerful Bilderberg eltite network, the authors suggest that transnational elite networks provide dynamics of power and consensuses that serve as a critical mechanism for facilitating change in world politics. Acknowledging the obvious lack of democratic governance, this book attempts to bring understanding to the underlying powers, control and direction of this influential subpolitical activity."

Professor Mette Morsing – Copenhagen Business School

"If privatization can be defined as a situation where private standards are turned into public norms without proof of their representativity, *Bilderberg People* is one of its sources..."

Prof. Yvon PESQUEUX, CNAM (Conservatoire National des Arts et Metiers) Paris, France

"From elite perspectives seeking to control mass behaviour, this exciting study turns the focus back on global elite behaviour itself."

Professor Alex Kouzmin, Southern Cross University, Australia

"An intelligent, informative and level-headed analysis of the real influence of the worlds' leading "élite networks."

Prof. Eric Cornuel, Director General & CEO, EFMD

"So many words are said and written about 'Bilderberg Group'. But the more that is said and written, greater becomes the mystification of this theme and thereafter the savor of society. I dare say that the offered book, the co-author of which is a remarkable academician with singular talent, Mr. Andrew Kakabadse, will clarify this issue and give an answer to those questions."

Mirza Davitai, Minister for Diasporia, Georgia

"A thoughtful and well researched assessment of power elites in the modern age."

Professor Mitchell Koza, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, USA

Bilderberg People

Elite power and consensus in world affairs

Ian N. Richardson, Andrew P. Kakabadse, and Nada K. Kakabadse

For Valerie, Isabelle, and Soren

There is really no reason for supposing that the powerful always threaten, rather than sometimes advance, the interests of others; sometimes, indeed, the use of power can benefit all, albeit usually unequally.

Steven Lukes

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Acknowledgments

Authors' note

Bilderberg People is based on research conducted by the lead author while pursuing a PhD at Cranfield University School of Management. Andrew and Nada Kakabadse were the supervisors of this project. The PhD, entitled "The dynamics of third dimensional power in determining a pre-orientation to policymaking: an exploratory study of transnational elite interactions in the post-Cold War period," was completed in 2009 and awarded a straight pass by examiners. The thesis contains details of the ontological, epistemological, and methodological considerations that have guided the research throughout its development. It is felt that including information of this kind is unnecessary for the purposes of the book, but we accept that some readers will, no doubt, be interested to understand more of such things. The thesis manuscript has been made available by Cranfield University School of Management and can be readily located online.

We would like to make clear that, for the purposes of preserving the identities of interview participants, some descriptive details, in the book and thesis, have been changed. This doesn't influence the points being made in any material sense, but it will result in inconsistencies for those hoping to identify individual attendees. What we can reveal is that all participants in the original study were male, European, and attended the Bilderberg conference between 1991 and 2008. There were roughly equal numbers of business, political, and media/academic subjects, but there was, and is, no attempt to suggest sampling validity. Thirteen face-to-face interviews were conducted by the lead author, and further

interview material from Viscount Davignon, Martin Wolf, and Will Hutton was supplied by a reputable journalistic source. Additionally, the three authors' experience of dealing with governments at the level of policy design in Europe, North America, Australasia, and the Middle East, is woven into the fabric of the book. The combined interview data, most of which has never been seen before, is supported by a wealth of secondary material and represents the most extensive array of Bilderberg commentary available.

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INTRODUCTION

Iran. Since its revolution in 1979, few countries have been such vociferous critics of western democracy and political consensus. And, with its uranium enrichment program causing undisguised consternation in international diplomatic circles, the western political elite has attempted to forge an international consensus on Iran's intentions and how best to deal with them. In January 2010, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated "we believe that there is a growing understanding in the international community that Iran should face consequences for its defiance of international obligations" and cited the cooperation and support of the Russian and Chinese governments.[1] The implication of her words was clear: an international consensus was emerging and, as it did so, would provide a backdrop to the actions that would surely follow. *International consensus* has thus become a euphemism for legitimacy as a basis for action in world affairs. But such consensus doesn't just emerge accidentally, it is determined. The power to act in world affairs is driven by the power to influence prevailing consensus.

This is not a book of conspiracies. It is a book about efforts to organize the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It concerns the activities of elite networks and, most importantly, their role in forming and disseminating a particular brand of consensus. It argues that to

understand the real significance of elites in world affairs today, we need to look beyond crude ideas of power. Instead, we have to come to terms with the more subtle influence of common sense and dominant logic in our societies. After all, nowhere is power more compelling than in our collective imagination.

We live in a time of great uncertainty in world politics. The extent of our problems as a global society easily outstrips the capacity of our governance systems to deal with them. And, despite the successful crafting and relentless advance of economic globalization in recent decades, a lack of collective political will has failed to deliver similarly enthusiastic momentum to global social and political frameworks. This apparent prioritization of the market, ahead of social and political considerations, has led to a significant civil backlash and growing awareness of the obstacles that existing economic arrangements present to the resolution of global problems. Certainly, the faith that many have shown in policies of economic liberalization, designed to facilitate globalization, as a solution to problems of poverty and inequality has been called into question by a growing body of evidence that suggests quite the opposite.[2] And, crucially, globalization and open competition between national economies are affecting the behavior of individual states in ways that make immediate political solutions to global problems seem fairly unlikely. Take, for instance, the cynical horse-trading of developed nations and trade blocs, at the obvious expense of developing countries, in the ill-fated Doha trade talks; the ongoing failure of developed nations to deliver on their promises of Official Development Assistance towards accomplishment of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals; and the dismal spectacle of the Copenhagen Climate Summit in 2009 – touted as the final chance for developed and developing nations to come to a binding agreement on carbon emissions and global warming – failing to reach any kind of meaningful accord.

In essence, the demand for international cooperation has never been greater, yet the forces capable of delivering it have never seemed more incapable of doing so. Even if we were to assume that our world leaders and the constituencies they represent were willing to cooperate for the common good, which is highly debatable, they are stymied by a complex mire of contradictory and irreconcilable policy demands. These demands exist at all levels of the policy process and are set against a backdrop of

pervasive, and largely unspoken, forms of consensus. To fundamentally alter the trajectory of our policy responses, first we have to challenge the nature of this consensus. And what the policy lessons of the past fifty years have taught us, if nothing else, is that established policy structures, processes, and ways of thinking are incredibly difficult to shake – even when the case for change seems overwhelming.

An obvious recent example of this is provided by the collective reticence of policymakers to act when called upon to deal with fundamental regulatory gaps exposed by the global financial crisis. The sheer scale, risk, and complexity of the crisis, set against a background of free market consensus and business/government collusion related to deregulation, has seen our political leaders consistently fail to address the "too big to fail" dilemma posed by major financial institutions. Instead of using the crisis as an opportunity to rethink the role of financial institutions in our global society and, importantly, to subjugate them to meaningful oversight and control, a tentative "business as usual" approach was adopted with the promise of political action once the crisis was averted. But the absence of a global regulatory framework, and the inability of global leaders to agree on anything resembling one during this period, has meant that individual governments have once again been left with the prospect of regulating transnational corporations at their own economic expense – something they have consistently demonstrated is beyond them. Amid the turmoil of the crisis, the stability and economic power of major financial institutions has been restored at taxpayers' expense and they have, once again, become too critical to individual governments to control.

But is this outcome more than just an accidental consequence of pre-existing arrangements and short-sighted crisis management strategies? Throughout, policymakers have demonstrated that they are guided by the belief that the financial monoliths at the heart of the crisis should, with better oversight, be restored to their primary function of powering economic growth. Within the current policy consensus, very few have seriously questioned the desirability or function, let alone private ownership, of such organizations. Instead, there has been a populist emphasis on excessive profitability and bonuses which, while playing well with the gallery, has fallen short of any meaningful attempt to redefine, in societal terms, the role of banks or the regulatory vacuum that contributed to the crisis in the first place. The Obama administration, for instance, which came to

power on a near spiritual chorus of "change we can believe in," in his first year of office conspicuously failed to take the regulatory initiative or challenge the club-like consensus that surrounds discussion of major financial institutions. In the words of Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph E. Stiglitz, President Obama had failed to grasp a once in a lifetime opportunity and, instead, had "only slightly rearranged the deck chairs on the Titanic".[3]

Responding to such criticism, and a degree of public anger that refused to abate, President Obama subsequently announced the most far-reaching reform plan since the Glass–Steagall Act of the 1930s, with a promise that never again would taxpayers be held hostage by banks that are "too big to fail". It remains to be seen, of course, just how extensive any eventual regulation will be once it emerges from the powerful lobbying practices and inevitable congressional bartering of US politics. What the example demonstrates, however, is a pattern of avoidance among policymakers that is driven, in the United States and beyond, by the acceptance of a powerful underlying consensus concerning the nature and desirability of existing investment activity. Any regulatory changes take place within the context of the parameters of this consensus. It defines the extent of our policy response and effectively limits the capacity for significant change. How, then, given the existence of such a consensus, and the consequent tendency of our systems to do what they have always done, can meaningful change ever be brought about?

In order to think about this question, we need to consider policy-making in the broadest sense and better understand why it is that our policy systems and processes not only lag behind the demand for meaningful change, but are, for the most part, incapable of delivering it. This, in turn, requires that we distinguish between incremental and transformational forms of change. When we look at the systems and logics that have developed around our policy processes – local, national, international, and transnational – it becomes clear that change takes place over time and almost always in tiny, incremental stages.[4] Changing anything, even for those at the very heart of government, is an enormous task involving massive self-sacrifice, diligence, and political compromise. Policy rarely emerges in the way it was envisaged, and invariably fails to deliver what was intended. The idea that our existing policy systems are capable of delivering more transformational forms of change, detached

from existing processes or ways of thinking, is clearly nonsense. In essence, the forces that hold policy systems together – the rules, institutions, and ways of thinking – are so entrenched and pervasive that it becomes inconceivable to question their logic. Common sense is defined by the existing policy system, and calls for transformational change are invariably seen as counter-intuitive and potentially destabilizing. As a consequence, emergent ideas that challenge the dominant logic of the policy process are systematically rejected. Put simply, policy systems cling to what they know and represent a forceful opposition to new ideas. Demands for transformational change that garner significant support, and that aren't easily rejected, are assimilated into existing policy processes in ways that nullify the requirement for drastic alterations to the way the overall system works. In this way, familiar patterns of thought and behavior remain intact, for the most part, and the system continues to function in its existing, albeit slightly revised, form. In overall terms, the system evolves gradually, preserving its integrity and ensuring its long-term survival. What this means for policy outputs, of course, is rather unsatisfactory: a diluted and inadequate response that lags well behind the nature and immediacy of the issue at hand.

These characteristics of systems are not peculiar to policymaking. What makes them potentially more interesting where policy is concerned, certainly in liberal democracies, is that the incremental bias is "hardwired" into the system in ways that are far more fundamental than they first appear. Long-term political stability is more than just an accidental consequence of a complex raft of historical policy structures, institutions, habits, and ways of thinking; it is a desirable and intended outcome of policymaking.[5] Conventions such as the need for constitutional "checks and balances" in order to counter the threat of overwhelming power in the hands of one branch of government do more than protect the individual from the tyranny of government. They limit the capacity of policymakers to affect transformational political change. Political stability can be said, therefore, to come at a price, and that price is the ability to change anything too drastically. Indeed, isn't this the very definition of political stability? And, while we may be inclined to think of it as, by its very nature, a good thing, we should at the same time recognize that the arrangement naturally benefits some more than others – in particular, those who stand to lose most through changes to existing arrangements in the allocation of resources throughout society.

The problem with this analysis is that it appears to suggest some kind of hidden design, purpose, or intent when, for many, these outcomes are little more than accidental by-products of the system. Nobody means for these things to happen, they just do, right? At the heart of this thinking, however, lies confusion between an understanding of things that are unconscious and things that are accidental. Liberal democracies do not accidentally produce stability any more than their policy processes accidentally privilege certain interests. Such outcomes are unconscious, perhaps, but they are not accidental.[6] The suggestion that they are accidental implies a degree of randomness when, in fact, such outcomes are clearly the product of established arrangements, relationships, and thinking. There is nothing random about them. Likewise, the extent of the incorporation of private interests into systems of government over the past forty years may have been a largely unconscious, and seemingly natural, development for many of those involved in policymaking, but accidental it was not. The most fundamental cause of the way we are governed today, and the way we tend to think about politics in general, rests in the relationship that exists between politics and markets. Not only have the state's traditional boundaries been called into question by the global market,[7] but the everyday interdependency of politics and markets has become so absolute that it's difficult to know where one ends and the other begins. From the perspective of understanding political change, this lack of delineation between the public and private sectors, between politics and markets, is absolutely critical. After all, the starting point for nearly all market-based activity is political stability.

In macro terms, we don't need to look any further than the experience of countries such as Zimbabwe – with unquantifiable levels of hyperinflation, near full unemployment and considerable civil unrest – to see what happens to market activity when political stability is undermined. But this is only part of the story. Stability may be a precursor to market-based activity, but it is also a product of it. The resilience of the complex, networked policy systems of liberal democracies to demands for change, especially in those policy areas dominated by economic and professional interests,[8] is evidence of such a relationship. In simple terms, the market is deploying its resources to influence government policy in ways that improve the business attractiveness of existing regulatory frameworks. At the same time these forces, largely unconsciously, work to protect

existing, and advantageous, social and economic arrangements against calls for more transformational forms of change emerging elsewhere in society. In other words, the market – the cumulative forces of economic growth and accumulation in society – is a major force in protecting existing economic, social, and political arrangements. But this begs an important question: what if transformational change is a necessary requirement for continued economic growth and accumulation?

In a sense, this brings us back to the broader question of how meaningful change can be brought about against a background of entrenched processes and ways of thinking. How can new paths be forged when the thinking that prevents them is still in place? How can change be brought about without destabilizing existing, and advantageous, socio-economic arrangements? And, more specifically, what devices exist to create the latitude for such change in the first place? This book suggests that elite networks, and the consensuses that are formed and disseminated by them, are a critical mechanism for resisting or facilitating change in world politics. After all, the world is given shape and form by our collective understanding of it[9] and, crucially, the shared understandings of our elites. Certainty within this world, such as it is, is a product of how elites think and, moreover, our acceptance of their disseminated logic. It is their collective ability to reinforce or challenge assumptions related to the nature of world problems, in essence to define the terms of reference for the rest of us, which holds the key to unlocking the capacity for political and societal change. While this ability may often be unconscious and lacking obvious control, it is not an accidental consequence of elite interaction. There are underlying forces that play a considerable role in determining the nature, momentum, and general direction of such activity.

The role of consensus in international relations, and the forces that guide its logic, have been the subjects of debate for some time, but this is the first attempt to explore individual mechanisms of consensus formation at the heart of the elite community. It takes issue with the idea that consensus should be seen as naturally emerging from the collaborative interplay of shared beliefs, interests, and resource dependency. If we take resource dependency, for instance, should we really be talking about consensus at all? Was it a shared belief in the "international consensus," for example, that led Pakistan to support the efforts of the United States and Coalition forces in Afghanistan, or was it the fear of not appearing to

support the world's biggest economy and military force at a time when, according to its then leader, countries were either "with us or against us"?[10] Similarly, was it an underlying belief in the market-based principles of the Washington Consensus, or just a much more basic requirement for money, that has led so many developing countries to accept the liberalization dictates of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund over the past twenty years? Power clearly has some bearing on our appreciation of consensus, but how is this power wielded, what form does it take, and why bother – if coercive forms of power are so effective – with consensus at all?

The fact of the matter is that consensus bestows legitimacy and, critically, legitimacy as a basis for action in world affairs. In the post-Cold War period, where the structural certainties of old alliances have given way to more fluid forms of international cooperation, it's absolutely critical to our understanding of political action in world affairs. Consider the attempts at legitimacy building made by the United States and Britain before the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the fractures that existed in the international community at that time. The absence of an international consensus may not have been sufficient to prevent the war, but the subsequent inability of Coalition forces to retrospectively bolster the legitimacy of their actions by providing evidence of Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction has significantly undermined their standing in world politics. At the same time, the standing and legitimacy of those opposed to the war has been significantly enhanced. Consensus and legitimacy, therefore, go hand-in-hand and represent the real power play in world affairs. Owning the consensus, possessing the capacity to legitimize action, bestows considerable control over downstream policy responses. And, moreover, it helps to define what constitutes legitimacy within ongoing consensus-forming activity – a virtuous circle.

This book doesn't seek to overstate the role of elite networks in shaping global outcomes; neither does it conveniently overlook their contribution. In an age of uncertainty, fear, and complexity, the activities of these networks are absolutely critical to our understanding of how – and why – things happen in world affairs. Elite networks, and the power relationships that exist within them, are an integral part of a system of world politics that exists beyond any formal constituency or formal governance framework. And, while the depiction of such networks presented in this book falls short of that of a sinister global elite, gathered in

wood-paneled rooms, effortlessly making decisions that affect the lives of millions – like Grand Masters moving pieces across a chess board – there are, nevertheless, important questions concerning the purpose, transparency, accountability, and effects of these networks that demand a response. Why do they exist? What do they do? Why are elite participants engaged in this activity? Is consensus formed? If so, what is driving it? And, crucially, what implications do such networks have for the rest of us?

For the very first time, participants within the most pre-eminent elite network of all, Bilderberg, provide answers to these questions. Noted for its privacy and self-conscious avoidance of publicity, Bilderberg has been an undeniable presence in transatlantic relations since the mid-1950s. Its attendees represent a select network of individuals drawn from the business, financial, and political elites of the United States and Western Europe. Its conference of 120 or so of the most powerful people in the world gathers annually with no public record of its discussions, a conspicuous absence of media coverage, participants who refuse to be drawn into discussing the event, and policymakers who frequently deny attendance – a combination of factors that has led to an almost cult-like interest in the group. Many observers believe it to be intent on the creation of a new world order, and it has been variously described as a modern-day incarnation of the Illuminati, a global socialist conspiracy, a CIA plot, a mechanism for transmitting neoliberal hegemony and, in an extreme case, the vanguard of an alien conspiracy to take over the world.[11] But, leaving aside the rather absurd suggestion of an alien conspiracy, does it resemble any of these things or is it something altogether different? What do its attendees think? How does Bilderberg fit into a global depiction of elite network activity? How does it compare with other elite groups and networks? Is there a pecking order? Do they do different things? Why do people attend? What do they take away? Is power a feature of elite interactions, or is consensus formation a more fitting description of such activity? Is there a function, or is it just, in the words of one attendee, "a gang of high-profile people meeting together and having a chat"? Focused on subtle dynamics of power and consensus in the transnational elite community, *Bilderberg People* provides insights into these questions and many more.

Drawing on interviews with government ministers, heads of international organizations, chairmen of banks and multinational corporations,

editors of national newspapers, and heads of media corporations,[12] *Bilderberg People* takes a look at the transnational elite from within. It analyses the highly personal demands of elite membership and the discreet power relationships that exist at the heart of elite networks. More generally, it considers the role of informal networks in contemporary politics and asks whether they are an essential, and desirable, feature of the way the world currently works. And, crucially, it asks where this type of activity may be leading us. The book is comprised of seven chapters.

Chapter 1 considers the challenges of contemporary politics and the shortfalls of an international system of governance that, time and again, seems incapable of generating coherent collective responses to transcendental world problems. It distinguishes between global, international, and transnational forms of political activity, and describes how the latter has emerged as a key collaborative mechanism for the development of consensus in a wide array of policy-related areas. It situates this activity within a universalist tradition that has its intellectual origins in the work of Immanuel Kant and its twentieth-century foundations in the liberal internationalist movement of the United States. The Atlantic relationship, in particular, is explored and the function of elite policy networks such as the Bilderberg group is considered. Various perspectives of this kind of elite activity are presented and a number of well trodden conspiracy theories are challenged.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are interconnected and consider the relationship between legitimacy, collaboration, and consensus in world politics. In particular, the chapters emphasize their *mutually constitutive* nature – where each serves to support notions of the other. Policy initiatives, for instance, are made legitimate in the contemporary setting by our sense of the collaboration and consensus that produced them. And, when faced with problems of great complexity, collaboration is, by definition, seen as a legitimate response – the consensus emanating from it being imbued with the same reflective legitimacy. After all, in a world where ideology and zero-sum politics has been replaced with talk of pragmatism, cooperation, and stakeholder responsibility, what could be more legitimate than a consensus stemming from the altruistic and purposeful collaboration of all parties?

Chapter 2 argues that legitimacy should not be viewed as some kind of objective or extant reality; instead, it needs to be seen as a fluid,

expedient, and purposeful concept. With this in mind, the role of legitimacy in world politics is explored and the significance of a rhetorical legitimacy based on principles of pragmatism and cooperation is considered – principles, incidentally, so seemingly compelling and obvious that they have the effect of diverting attention away from the lack of formal legitimacy at the heart of many contemporary international and transnational governance initiatives. The reasons for this are explored and the legitimacy of transnational elite networks is discussed in detail – specifically in relation to issues of authority, consent, and accountability. Finally, the challenges of legitimacy in world affairs are described by Bilderberg participants who share their perspectives on its contemporary significance.

Chapter 3 highlights the prevailing logic of collaboration and partnership in transnational elite circles. This logic, which is premised on the need for cooperation in the face of the vast complexity of world affairs, has undoubtedly been fuelled by the forces of globalization and the rise of neoliberal thinking during the past forty years. The chapter focuses on the collaboration between business and political elites and demonstrates how embedded the relationship between public and private has become in matters of policy. What's more, it draws attention to how natural this relationship is for all concerned – the rationale for such collaboration rarely being questioned by members of the transnational elite and generally seen as a desirable state of affairs. Indeed, such pragmatism may be an unintended consequence of bias in the selection procedures of elite networks – since those perceived to be more ideologically minded, or dogmatic, will generally find themselves filtered out at source.

Chapter 4 considers the role of consensus in world affairs and, specifically, the nature of consensus formation in elite policy networks. While most elite participants view elite interactions as producing consensus, shared understanding or, at the very least, narrowed differences, they have differing views on whether this is a purposeful or accidental outcome. The chapter demonstrates that consensus formation is rather misleading as a description of the objective of elite networking, but does tend to describe the overall momentum and consequence of such activity. It also points to discreet forces of bias at work within elite networks – forces that have significant implications for the overall shape and tenor of eventual consensus. In particular, it highlights the highly personal dynamics of selection and membership within such communities, and challenges the