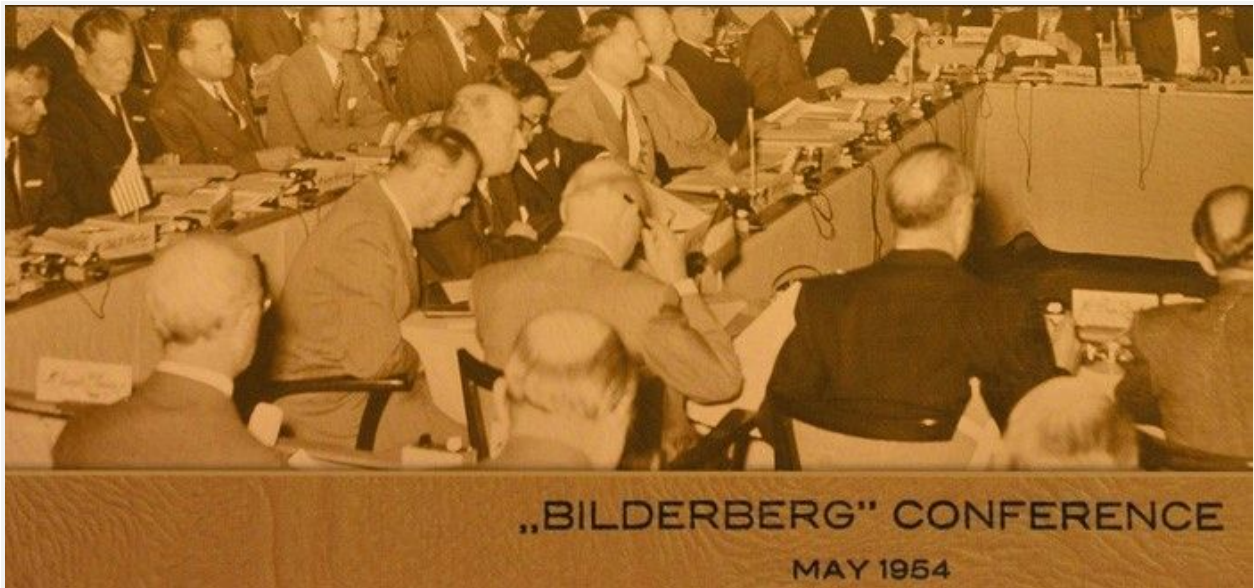


Bilderberg: Upper Echelon of the Interlocking Transnational Power Elite



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Of all the formal and informal transnational policy forums and networks, one group, Bilderberg, is considered to be the most exclusive and private. With the regular attendance

of recognisable power brokers, and the longstanding support of notable European royalty, Bilderberg continues to attract select participants from the upper transatlantic echelons of business, politics, media, academia, and prestigious policy institutes. Given that Bilderberg attendees are frequently active in numerous other elite transnational groups and forums, they are able to provide a unique perspective of the purpose and effects of such activity and the significance of interconnections between elite communities and networks. – *Ian Richardson*

You may be surprised to learn that, when describing the Bilderberg Group, the only real difference in language between conspiracy theorists and academics is the degree to which hyperbole is used. By contrast, so-called journalists in the mainstream media engage in mocking the messenger. It is therefore much more productive to concentrate on the former.

As many have learned already, a new book on the Bilderberg Group has recently been published: *Bilderberg People: Elite Power and Consensus in World Affairs* by Ian Richardson, Andrew Kakabadse, Nada Kakabadse. (See below for a short video by the authors) Although I haven't had a chance to read it yet, I came across a PhD thesis by one of its authors, Ian Richardson. In fact, it was this preliminary study that eventually led to the book. Richardson's supervising professor for the thesis was his soon-to-be co-author Andrew P. Kakabadse.

"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" (2009), studies the power elite networks and their influence on government and finance – the Bilderberg in particular.

Richardson managed to score interviews with a number of attendees as well, and convinced them to speak about it for the first time – under the rubric of the Chatham House Rule, of course.

The first instance of “Bilderberg Group” occurs on page 55. Richardson describes a 2003 paper by William K. Carroll and Colin Carson, which actually took into account the influence that informal elite conclaves – Bilderberg, and the Trilateral Commission among them – had upon the “broader structure of transnational interlocking corporate power.” Strikingly similar to what conspiracy theorists have posited for decades, these groups, Richardson writes, are “deeply enmeshed within the global corporate elite. They are substantially interlocked with each other as well as with common corporate boards, a small number of which account for two-fifths of all the corporate policy links.” Richardson adds:

These contributions, from the fields of international political economy and global systems theory, present a view of transnational forums and networks as essentially the coordinative and communications infrastructure of a transnational elite; an elite, if not dominating in any clear sense, then certainly responsible for the creation, perpetuation, and projection of a prevailing hegemonic culture, that of economic neo-liberalism (55-6).

Lamenting the fact that groups such as Bilderberg and the Trilateral Commission have been overlooked by academia, he writes: “When one considers the elite composition of such groups, and the fact that they are credited in some quarters with considerable influence this is an astounding scholarly omission. Such an omission is almost certainly the product of a broader reluctance on the part of social scientists to engage in research related to elite groups or dominant classes.”

Leslie Sklair, whom he quotes, is in total agreement:

It is somewhat surprising to discover that of all the social classes, however defined and categorised, **the group that has attracted the least serious research is the class at the very top of the pile.** Terms like elite, ruling class, and capitalist class have been out of favour in the social sciences for some time and the idea of a global ruling class appears, frankly, ridiculous to many capable scholars (56).

I think there are two factors at work here: (1) many scholars and/or heads of universities are routinely invited to the gatherings and rub elbows with the very elite to which we speak; thus, they wouldn't want to upset their bosses or their more tenured and influential colleagues. (2) Traditionally, talk about the Bilderbergers and the Trilaterals has been the domain of conspiracy theorists. Respectability is essential in scholarly circles. Therefore, out of fear of being ostracized, they deliberately chose to leave it alone. The same phenomenon is at work for other groups such as Freemasonry and the Bavarian Illuminati. It is only in recent years that Freemasonry has been taken seriously, while it will be another year yet for the first monograph on the Order of the Illuminati (in English) from a scholar.

Scant mention of the Bilderberg Group in academia notwithstanding, Richardson does indeed survey most of what exists. A paper by Hugh Wilford ("CIA plot, socialist conspiracy or New World Order? The origins of the Bilderberg Group 1952-55"), for instance, apparently concludes that from all the conspiracy theories surrounding the group, "the new world order theory is the closest depiction of actual outcomes" (59).

This jives, in somewhat less exaggerated fashion, with what *Lobster* magazine had to say: that "[t]he author concludes that the view of Bilderberg as a seat of hidden global government comes closest to the truth."

Similarly, Bilderberg regular Denis Healey (who was also on Bilderberg's Steering Committee), admitted recently: "To say we were striving for a one-world government is exaggerated, but not wholly unfair. Those of us in Bilderberg felt we couldn't go on forever fighting one another for nothing and killing people and rendering millions homeless. So we felt that a single community throughout the world would be a good thing."

The next fifty pages amounts to a review of relevant – mostly sociological – literature regarding elites, both national and transnational, as well as the methodology and conclusions arrived at by various researchers. Dry material, admittedly, but certainly

worth a skimming if only to get an idea of the way in which scholars think and write about such things.

The occupations of the Bilderberg attendees interviewed in Richardson's thesis, are:

- The editors of three national newspapers and a financial journalist
- Two professors
- Two foreign ministers
- A minister of defence
- The head of an international institution e.g. World Bank/IMF/NATO
- The governor of a central bank
- The chairmen of four international banks
- An EU Commissioner
- The head of a policy institute
- An ambassador
- The chairman of a business federation
- The CEO of a television network
- The chairmen of three international business conglomerates (109)

The interviews are also transcribed and included in the text, interspersed with commentary and analysis, and divided into sections. So, for instance, one can read what the Bilderbergers have to say about "States, power and legitimacy" (123-8), or "Global governance – hard and soft regulation" (128-131), etc.

One example in the latter section, quotes a Bilderberg member thus:

[A]s I see international relations in the twenty first century, I think the state is losing the protagonism it had during the previous system; we are now transitioning to a new system of international relations. And in this new system, there are new actors taking power from the

state: upwards to the supranational organisations and institutions and downwards to communities, individuals and, of course, multinational corporations (131).

“New actors taking power from the state” – how wonderful. And whom do you think will have a fair share in the new global arrangement, the supranational behemoths or communities and individuals?

Another interviewee actually admits and agrees with the major gripe that most people have about the Bilderbergers:

I think **these networks are rather ominous from the point of view of democratic accountability** because you don't know who's saying what, and why, and to whom they are accountable for what they've said (135).

That the very idea of Bilderberg is a slap in the face to democracy didn't seem to stop him from attending, however, and he attempts to justify it by claiming there's an upside: “because so much talking is done and there are so many informal contacts, the risk of breakdown in the international system into war and protectionism is much lower.”

Does he really expect us to believe that one out-weighs the other? Evidently so. “Don't worry about it” was the retort at the 2011 meeting after being shouted at by a protester that the meetings were undemocratic.

Taking the ridiculousness even further, one attendee interviewed by Richardson actually had the insolence to suggest:

It is very much in the public interest that powerful people get together in a private environment and exchange views. Are they [elite networks] in the interests of mankind? I think they are. (136)

There's more too; much, much more – straight from horse's mouth. The quotations continue until page 212.

Happy hunting.

Andrew Kakabadse : “One of the accusations against the Bilderbergers is that, in fact, they are pulling strings behind the scenes. As far as we can gather, they are the ones who identify the strings who other people pull.”