

The Bilderberg Conferences as Transnational Informal Governance Network (TIGN) – Part I

Aleksander Miłosz Zieliński,

University of Fribourg, Switzerland

1. Introduction

The first Bilderberg conference took place in May 1954 in the Bilderberg Hotel in the Netherlands with more than 70 participants from 13 countries. It is widely recognized as the first of its kind – never before have leading elite members of so many countries met in the same venue to discuss important geopolitical and economic issues of their time. Since then almost 3000 members of the Establishment¹ participated in 65 conferences which were held in 18 countries. Due to the secretive character of the meetings (the Chatham House rules prevent participants from quoting statements of other participants), for a long time the discourse has been dominated by conspiracy theorists, especially from the right-wing political spectrum.² Considering the high-level of participants from finance, business, politics, media and academia (as well as military and secret services), it is surprising that until recently there has been basically no academic research into these conferences (with some exceptions, c.f. Thompson 1980, van der Pijl 2012 [1984]). Only after the emergence of the internet as counter-hegemonic public space, interest in the Bilderberg meetings began to grow. The first academic publications began to appear after the end of the Cold War (c.f. Aldrich 1997, Aubourg 2003, Richardson 2011, Wendt 2015, Wiford 2003). Most of these publications focus on the foundation (1952-1954) and the early years of the Bilderberg conferences, mainly because access to the official archive is blocked for 50 years which means that currently only documents till 1968 can be accessed in that archive.

However, the emergence of the internet has resulted in the availability of more information: The organisers of the conferences themselves created a website where they publish some basic information about the meetings, including the official lists of participants. However, they provide detailed information only for the last three meetings. And while the website includes a list of former members of the Steering Committee, no information is provided on the time period when they were members. But the evolution of the Internet as counter-hegemonic public space also has the consequence that more and more previously classified or private documents are available. One such

¹ The exact number is difficult to establish because (till today) participants can request not to be mentioned in the conference report. The presence of additional participants – some of them for the whole duration of the conference, others just for some hours – has been confirmed by internal documents as well as the work of investigative journalists who publish pictures of additional participants every year, as well as in interviews with participants (c.f. Richardson 2011).

² Which is not totally surprising considering the radical anti-nationalist worldview of the organisers and most participants of these conferences. From the onset, the participants were expected to have „no obvious nationalistic bias“ (Retinger 1956: 6). The only other political orientation which is not welcome at the Bilderberg conferences are so-called Communists.

leak on the file depository platform scribd.com consisted of a selection of documents regarding these conferences, including the complete annual conference reports from the years 1954-1995.³ Before this leak the official position of the organizers of these conferences was that no written documents exist. However, we now know that after every conference a detailed report including the official list of participants as well as a summary of the presented papers and the subsequent discussions is being compiled and distributed to former and prospective participants.

The thesis I advance in this paper is that the main achievement of the organizers of the Bilderberg conferences is to have created a transnational network of influential people in positions of power, what we propose to call a Transnational Informal Governance Network (TIGN), and which can be alternatively – depending on the research perspective – labelled a Transnational Power Elite (Mills 1956, Domhoff Kauppi/Madsen 2013, Domhoff 2014 [1967]) or (the Central Committee of) the Transnational Capitalist Class (Sklair 2001, Robinson 2004, Carroll 2010). The Bilderberg conference is a network hub for CEOs of some of the largest MNCs as well as leading politicians, academics and representatives of the media, the military and the secret services for strategic discussions on important geopolitical topics related to economic and security issues with a strong liberal bias (at least during Bilderberg I, i.e. 1952-1980). My main objective in this paper is to provide a first systematic overview over the participants in these conferences. I start with a short historical background including a summary of the most important research results from the unpublished dissertations of Thomas Gijswijt and Ruud Geven (section 2). In the next section I provide an overview of the countries from which the more than 2500 participants have been invited, before taking a closer look at the the current Steering Committee and the people at the core of this network (section 3). After a more detailed look at the participants in the years 2003-2015 (section 4), I show some important connections between the Bilderberg conferences and international organisations (section 5). I am currently finishing Part II of this overview where I will present background information on the most important dynasties at the core of this network: (in alphabetic order): The Agnellis/Elkanns, the House of Braganza (since Bilderberg II), the Bundys (especially till the end of the Cold War), the Cohens, the Davignons, the Guelphs, the House of Habsburg (since Bilderberg II), the Heinz dynasty (during Bildebrerg I), the Kohlbergs (since the end of the Cold War?), the Johnsons, the House of Orange, the Rockefellerers, the Rothschilds, the Thyssens, the Warburgs, the Wallenbergs etc.

³ [Http://www.scribd.com/bilderbergboys](http://www.scribd.com/bilderbergboys) The authenticity of these reports has in the meantime been confirmed by research in private archives and public libraries – the most recent scanned reports (1995 and 2002) are originally from the Library of Congress.

2. Historical background

The Bilderberg conferences were founded in the context of the Cold War. During World War II the Allied Forces partnered with Stalin's Soviet Union to defeat Germany, Italy and Japan. The death of Roosevelt and his replacement as President of the United States by Truman marked the beginning of the end of the close relationship between Washington and Moscow. The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan cemented the division of Europe into two spheres of influence including a divided Germany.⁴ At the same time the OEEC was created whose task was to coordinate the Marshall Plan and collect information about the economies of its member countries. Its seat was the Château de la Muette in Paris, former residence of Baron Henri de Rothschild, whose heirs sold it to the OEEC in 1948. The OEEC and especially its successor organization the OECD were very influential in coordinating economic policy among its member states and especially in establishing the 'hegemony of growth' (Schmelzer 2016). In April 1949, representatives from twelve countries signed the North Atlantic Treaty, establishing the first truly *supranational* collective defense institution, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).⁵ The asymmetry of power between the United States and the other member countries implied its leading role in the Alliance which is reflected in the Bilderberg conferences by the fact that almost 25% of all participants are Americans. Officially, NATO was a defense pact with the aim of protecting its member countries from an invasion by an outside aggressor, which at that time was assumed to be most likely the Soviet Union. However, the following aspects were also part of the wider purpose of the NATO: „a) to construct firm bonds of many kinds between the United States and Europe; b) to build a strong, unified Europe by gradual stages; and c) to counter the Communist threat and work toward a stable [liberal] world order“ (Bowie 1966). The organizers and leading participants of the Bilderberg conferences were very aware of this additional, non-military purpose of the alliance and that it represented a common political background, especially because many of them knew each other from other trans-atlantic fora for growing cooperation between Europe and North America like the Marshall Plan or the OEEC (later OECD). According to Thomas Gijswijt „the Bilderberg Group became part of an informal transatlantic consultation infrastructure that rounded out the official institutions of the alliance. The fact that high-level NATO officials – sometimes even the top civilian and military leaders simultaneously – took part in most Bilderberg conferences indicates that this aspect of the meetings was recognized in the alliance. By the late 1950s, the leaders of the economic institutions of the West – the OEEC/OECD, the IMF, the World Bank, GATT – could also be counted among the frequent participants.“ (Gijswijt 2007: 298)

⁴ Cf. Beisner 2007, Isaacson 1986, Leffler 1992, Thompson 2009, Trachtenberg 1999, Yergin 1977.

⁵ Of course, many international/intergovernmental organizations existed before, for an overview cf. Herren 2009, Iriye 2002, MacKenzie 2010, Reinalda 2009.

After the outbreak of the Korean War, the American leaders decided that they would continue to aid Western Europe only if Germany was allowed to arm itself and join NATO (Trachtenberg/Gehrz 2003) which led to increased tensions between the United States and its allies in Western Europe, especially France. The founding myth of the Bilderberg conferences takes this anti-Americanism as starting point and focuses on how, in 1952, Joseph Retinger and Prince Bernhard supported by Paul van Zeeland and other prominent European elite members began preparations to organize an informal conference that would bring together influential Americans and Europeans and help them iron out their differences.⁶ However, in order to properly understand the place of the Bilderberg meetings in the emerging trans-atlantic world order, we need to analyse them in the larger context of the building of an anti-communist Atlantic Community after World War II (Aubourg et al. 2008, Catlin 1959, Scott-Smith 2012, Sloan 2005) where European integration and the Transatlantic security cooperation were both considered necessary components of a successful alliance. Other examples of such transnational forums to foster economic and political cooperation between the European countries as well as between Europe and North America include the European League for Economic Cooperation (Dumoulin 1997, Geven 2014), the European Movement (Rebattet 1962), the Action Committee for the United States of Europe (Aldrich 1997), which existed approximately since 1947.⁷

In 1952, Lord Ismay, a British general, became first Secretary General of NATO.⁸ In the same year, Greece and Turkey joined the NATO ensuring that this part of South Eastern Europe stayed in the Western sphere of influence during the emerging Cold War.⁹ The first secret meeting of the European members of the Steering Committee took place on 25 September 1952 in Paris in the apartment of Baron Jacques de Nervo.¹⁰ The participants were Prince Bernhard (the former Nazi

⁶ „Because of the Marshall Plan and NATO, the United States had undeniably become a European power. The presence of the United States caused contradictory reactions in Europe. It was demanded and welcomed by many Europeans, but at the same time opposed by some and resented by most. America’s presence inevitably caused a great deal of problems and misunderstandings, resulting in a sharp rise of anti-Americanism in the early 1950s. By bringing together influential Americans and Europeans to discuss problems of common concern, the Bilderberg Group aimed to overcome many of these problems and to increase mutual understanding. In other words, the purpose of the Bilderberg Group was to unite the West.“ (Gijswijt 2007: 1)

⁷ The origins of these networks can be traced to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 and to the Atlantic Charter in 1941. Cf. Zieliński 2016 for a first overview of the activities of the founders of the Bilderberg conferences in the years 1940-1952. It is interesting to note that the founder and main strategist in the foundational years of the Bilderberg Group, Joseph Retinger, was heavily involved in all of these organisations, especially when they were most influential and effective. For recent scholar biographies of Retinger see Podgórski 2013 and Biskupski 2017. I am currently working on a biography of his life focusing on the the years 1941-1960 based on a wide variety of new archival sources.

⁸ He participated in the third Bilderberg conference in Germany in 1955, thus establishing an ongoing tradition of participation: All Secretaries General of NATO have participated in at least one Bilderberg conference, some of them in each conference during their term in office (c.f. section 5 for more details).

⁹ Since the beginning, elite members from both countries have been regular attendees at the Bilderberg Conferences.

¹⁰ To my knowledge, Baron de Nervo is never mentioned in any publications on the Bilderberg Group. He was one of the most connected and powerful French industrialists at this time, especially in the Arms and Steel industry, cf. his biography at <http://clio.ish-lyon.cnrs.fr/patrons/AC000007858/AC000007858Doc1020.pdf>

and later consort of Queen Juliana of the Netherlands¹¹), Joseph Retinger (the grey eminence¹² of Jewish Masonry and *haute finance*¹³), Antoine Pinay (the French Prime Minister and founder of *Le Cercle* at the same time as the Bilderberg Conferences¹⁴), Guy Mollet (a leading French trade unionist and later Prime Minister), Rudolph Mueller (a German lawyer from Frankfurt), Panagiotis Pipinelis (the Greek representative to NATO, after 1967 Foreign Minister during the Dictatorship), Hugh Gaitskell (the British Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the opposition in the years 1955-1963¹⁵), Colin Gubbins¹⁶ (the former Head of the Special Operations Executive during World War II and one of Britain's master spies of this era), Paul Rijkens (Chairman of Dutch-British multinational Unilever) and Paul van Zeeland (the Belgian foreign minister and member of its *haute finance* – his brother Marcel van Zeeland was one of the founding directors of the Bank of International Settlements in Basel).¹⁷ Right after that meeting Retinger met the young German politician Walter Scheel who in 1953 began his meteoric rise in German politics culminating in the office of Foreign Minister (1969-1974), President of the Federal Republic of Germany (1974-1979) and chairman of the Bilderberg Meetings (1980-1985). On 3rd October 1952, the first British atomic bomb was detonated.¹⁸ The time period between this first secret meeting in Paris and the first Bilderberg conference in the Netherlands in May 1954 is very well documented and need not be repeated here.¹⁹

The first conference was held in May 1954 in the Hotel de Bilderberg in Oosterbeek in the Netherlands. The participants of the first Bilderberg conferences came from ten NATO member countries as well as Germany, Sweden and Switzerland.²⁰ One of the most controversial topics on

¹¹ See Hatch 1962 for his authorized biography.

¹² Huxley 1942.

¹³ Cf. Zieliński 2017 for some new documental evidence of his involvement in high-level negotiations with the Vatican as well as his strategic influence on the European Integration process.

¹⁴ The best scholar treatment of this highly secretive meeting point of the transnational conservative elites is Großmann 2014. For a slightly more conspirational account of its history see Teacher 2015 [1993].

¹⁵ Williams 1985, Brivati 1996.

¹⁶ For Gubbins and the SOE see Wilkinson 2010, Atkin 2015, Gubbins 2016, Lett 2016, Lewis 2016, Linderman 2016, Milton 2017.

¹⁷ From these participants of the first nucleus of the European group, Retinger, Pinay, Mueller, Gubbins, Rijkens and van Zeeland would remain regular participants in the first period of the Bilderberg Meetings (till 1960, some till 1964) while Prince Bernhard remained Chairmen till he was forced to resign in the aftermath of the Lockheed scandal in 1976.

¹⁸ The Director of the British Atomic Programme was Lord Portal of Hungerford. During World War II he was British Chief of Air Staff and in this position supporter of the strategic bombing of Germany. After the war, from 1946 to 1951, he was Controller of Production (Atomic Energy) at the Ministry of Supply. In this role he had a decisive influence on the decision to develop the bomb in January 1947, cf. Hill 2013: 76 f. After his retirement from the Ministry of Supply, he was one of the founders of the Bilderberg Group in 1952 when it was still called „The Group“ but probably never participated in its meetings. However, he provided a paper for their first report and was in touch with Retinger in this time period. For his biography, cf. Richards 1977, for Portal's role in the atomic programme, cf. Gowing 1974.

¹⁹ Cf. Wilford 2003, Gijswijt 2007: 7-39.

²⁰ The organisers tried to invite Guillaume Konsbruck from Luxembourg but he was not able to participate – only in 1978 did the first participant from this country (Gaston Thorn) take part and in general Luxembourg played a very marginal role in the Bilderberg conferences. The participation from Iceland began in the mid 1960s and was slightly

the first Bilderberg conferences in 1954 and 1955 was the question of German rearmament. Advocates of a stronger inclusion of Germany into the Western political and security structures held sway and already in 1955, between the second and third Bilderberg conference, Germany joined the NATO. Shortly afterwards the third Bilderberg conference took place in Germany for the first time. Another important topic was anti-communism. For the organizers and participants of these conferences, anti-communism did not mean only the struggle against the Soviet bloc but also against all other forms of political self-determination and economic redistribution, including Keynesianism. Especially at the second conference in Barbizon in March 1955 there was an extended debate about the communist challenge. Stalin's death and the resulting rhetorical adjustments of the Soviet leadership ('peaceful coexistence') were a big challenge for these members of the Western power elites. After the conference Prince Bernhard forwarded the transcripts of the discussions to the chief of the Dutch Secret Services, Louis Einthoven, with the following remark: »We shall certainly be glad to have a series of propositions which we can recommend to relevant countries for a genuinely effective response to this propaganda.»²¹

This short overview demonstrates the strong link between the Bilderberg Conferences and NATO as well as the anti-communist worldview of the organizers and participants. But, of course, the connection is not limited to the participants – many of the topics discussed during the meetings, are more or less directly related to NATO activities and its legitimacy. The latter was especially important at certain historical moments, for example in the 1960s when there was a growing mistrust of the necessity for a military alliance in the European and American youth or after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. Unfortunately, so far, the most thorough analysis of the contents of the discussions remains unpublished (Geven 2014, Gijswijt 2007, Philipsen 2009). According to Thomas Gijswijt, a consequence of the Bilderberg conferences was the emergence of „a basic consensus on transatlantic cooperation and the need for Western unity“ (Gijswijt 2007: 294). His conclusion is that the conferences „became part of an informal transatlantic consultation infrastructure that rounded out the official institutions of the alliance“ (Gijswijt 2007: 298) and was a platform where individuals “influenced each other.” (Gijswijt 2007: 293). In many cases „the discussions indeed had an impact on policy-making“ (Gijswijt 2007: 2). because many participants at that time held key positions in governments and international organisations. From the beginning, the aim was to invite influential people from different factions of the national elites. In the words of Joseph Retinger, the participants were expected to have a „considerable influence in at least an important section of the population (... and hold a position of) authority and enjoy the confidence of

more substantial. After 1999 nobody from Iceland was ever invited again.

²¹ Scott-Smith 2012: 25. For pioneering research into anti-communist networks during the Cold War see also Roulin et al. 2014; Thouet 2004.

their fellow-men“ (Retinger 1956: 6). Gijswijt cites the following prominent examples from the time period examined in his dissertation: Germany's entry into NATO, the Messina Conference and the Rome Treaties²², the Suave plan born at the conference in Fiuggi in 1957, the Gaither report or the British decision to join the EEC.²³ Also, according to Ruud Geven, „those that presided over and took part in Bilderberg's activities felt that more was at stake than (... the) rather general purpose” (Geven 2014: 66) of nurturing an Atlantic spirit and establishing a common understanding. He concludes that „the annual meetings were very much like regular conferences: they revolved around presented papers and debate. However, the combination of the importance of the guests, the important themes such as transatlantic security and global economic conflict, and the confidential character, turned them into meetings of consultative relevance for foreign policy debates that were taking place in international relations. The conference reports read as an overview of what the different camps in the West were thinking at the time, including a discussion on how consequences of major differences could be minimized.“ (Geven 2014: 69) According to internal documents of the Steering Committee, there is indeed a long-term aim of the organizers which, however, they preferred not to put into writing.

Geven is correct when he states that “membership from the societal sphere of business was consistently dominant” (Geven 2014: 73) in the Steering Committee in the period 1955-1980. The same applies for the time period 1980-2015 and is one of the central characteristics of the composition of the Steering Committee which warrants its classification as Central Committee of the Transnational Capitalist Class. However, Geven does not differentiate between financial and industrial corporations which is a bit surprising, considering the large amount of representatives of the financial sphere (multinational banks, central banks, hedge funds) in the inner circle of the Bilderberg Conferences. Half of the current members of the Steering Committee (15 out of 31) belong to the financial sector, while another 7 are CEOs of large MNCs. This means that all together two thirds of the members of the Steering Committee right now belong to the business sector as defined by Geven while the financial sector clearly dominates by a factor of 2:1. The same factor applies if we analyse only participants who took part in at least 17 conferences (= at least 25% of all conferences), while the number of representatives of the political sector is just as high as from the industrial sector, which is a strong indicator that transnational policy-making has always been one of the functions of these conferences. Or as Martin Taylor from Barclay's Bank puts it: “we want to control the politicians who come“ (Richardson 2011: 166). Geven obtained more interesting results: During the 25 years that he analysed, there was a consensus among the participants of the Bilderberg conferences that trade liberalization is desired and should be actively

²² On this particular point see also Gijswijt 2012.

²³ See Gijswijt 2007: 203 ff.; 208 ff., 239 ff.

pursued (Geven 2014: 151). At the same time he demonstrated some important differences between the analysed networks: While the ELEC focused on integration in the European market, at the Bilderberg meetings the European market was discussed in relation to developments in world trade (ibid.). Besides that, the members of the ELEC were trying to move consensus in the direction of their priorities while the focus of the Bilderberg meetings on transatlantic relations “placed European and American business-contexts in conflict with each other” (Geven 2014: 90).

3. *The Bilderberg network 1954-2017*

3.1 Overview of all participants by country

In table 1 we present an overview of the countries of origin of the 2737 official participants of the 65 Bilderberg conferences between 1954 and 2017. As can be expected, the country with the most participants is the United States which reflects the dominant geopolitical role of this country in world politics and NATO after World War II. A strong presence of British, Canadian, Dutch and German elite members underlines the Anglo-Saxon character of the network. As can be expected from an organisation that has been characterized as an informal supplement to the NATO (Gijswijt 2007: 294 ff.), most of the participants stem from NATO member countries. A typical example is Spain whose elite members started participating more regularly after Spain joined NATO in 1982. A noteworthy exception is Switzerland which although not a member of NATO, has traditionally had strong ties to the transnational liberal elite since 1815. Also noteworthy is the strong presence of members of the – secular – Turkish elite.²⁴

Table 1. Participants in the Bilderberg conferences 1954-2017 by country²⁵

Number of participants	Country	Percentage of all participants	percentage of participants in inner circle
637	USA	23.7 %	27.4 %
248	UK	9.4 %	9.4 %
199	France	7.5 %	1.8 %

²⁴ However, this cannot be confused with their influence in this network. Turkish attendees perceive the agenda setting at the Bilderberg conferences as “Western”, because the organizers “tend to be from Western economies” (c.f. Richardson 2011: 113 f.)

²⁵ 34 participants are counted once as representative of an international organisation and once as representative of their country, if and only if they were invited on more than occasion in different functions. If they were invited only as representative of an international organisation, they are counted there (79 participants in total). Several participants are counted as representatives of two countries if they changed their citizenship in the meantime. In 2017 three former British participants were listed for the first time as international participants: Joh Micklethwait, Zanny Minton Beddoes and Martin Wolf which might be related to Great Britain's decision to leave the European Union.

183	Canada	7.3 %	4.7 %
172	Germany	6.2 %	3.8 %
142	Netherlands	5.3 %	13.2 %
135	Italy	5.0 %	5.7 %
118	International Organizations	4.4 %	----
110	Turkey	4.0 %	3.8 %
92	Switzerland	3.4 %	1.9 %
91	Sweden	3.4 %	3.8 %
87	Norway	3.3 %	1.9 %
71	Portugal	2.6 %	1.9 %
66	Austria	2.5 %	3.8 %
64	Denmark	2.4 %	1.9 %
62	Greece	2.3 %	1.9 %
60	Finland	2.3 %	1.9 %
57	Belgium	2.1 %	3.8 %
55	Spain	2.1 %	5.7 %
16	Ireland	0.6 %	1.8 %
10	Russia	0.4 %	
8	Iceland	0.4 %	
8	Poland	0.3 %	
6	China	0.2 %	
5	Israel	0.2 %	
4	Hungary	0.2 %	
4	Czech Republic	0.2 %	
3	Luxembourg	0.1 %	
2	Palestine	0.05 %	
2	Australia	0.05 %	
1	New Zealand	0.05 %	
1	Liechtenstein	0.05 %	
1	Bulgaria	0.05 %	
1	Pakistan	0.05 %	
1	Kuwait	0.05 %	
1	Iraq	0.05 %	
1	Cyprus	0.05 %	
1	Iran	0.05 %	

1	Kosovo	0.05 %
1	Ukraine	0.05 %

Total 2737 participants from 39 countries + international organisations but more than 95 % of all participants come from 18 countries

More than 95% of all participants come from the following 18 countries: USA, UK, France, Canada, Germany, Netherlands, Italy, Turkey, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Portugal, Austria, Denmark, Greece, Finland, Belgium and Spain. Ten of these countries were NATO founding members in 1949, Turkey and Greece joined in 1952, Germany in 1955, Spain only in 1986. The remaining four countries (the so-called 'neutrals' from Western Europe during the Cold War, i.e. Austria, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland) are not formal members of the alliance, although they participate in the Partnership for Peace programme since the mid-1990s. An even better indicator of Bilderberg participation than NATO is the OECD: When it was founded in 1948 it had 17 members, 14 of which belong to the 18 countries which form the core of the Bilderberg meetings. From the 19 founding members of the OECD in 1961, 16 belong to this core. Only Ireland, Iceland and Luxembourg do not, although elite members from all of these countries participated in some Bilderberg conferences.²⁶ The remaining two countries, Italy (1962) and Finland (1969), both joined the OECD in the 1960s.

3.2 The inner circle of the Bilderberg conferences

Despite the high fluctuation of participants – roughly 80% participated in only one or two conferences – there is at the heart of the network a group of individuals, many of them representing large financial institutions, that participate in virtually every conference for approximately 10 years, sometimes longer. In this section we would like to highlight some characteristics of this „inner circle“ (Useem 1984) of the Bilderberg network over the six decades since the first conference. According to Ian Richardson „longevity of membership ... is clearly associated with perceived influence within the elite network“ (Richardson 2011: 182) although there are of course limits to this statement. Only 13 people have participated in at least 33 conferences, 32 people in at least 20 conferences, while not even 100 people have participated in 12 or more conferences, i.e. at least 20 per cent of all conferences (see table 2.). In order to better understand the collective identity of the Bilderberg Conferences, every member of this inner circle was assigned to a particular sector of society: Finance, Industry, Politics, Royalty, Academia, Media, Think Tank, Diplomat or Lawyer.

²⁶ The first person from Iceland participated in 1965, the last in 1999 – Geir Hallgrímsson was the only member in the Steering Committee. The first participants from Ireland took part in 1975, in the 1990s Peter Sutherland became the only Irish member of the Steering Committee so far. The first participant from Luxembourg was Gaston Thorn in 1978, although the Steering Committee invited Guillaume Kérisbrück to the first conference in 1954.

Some members were assigned to two different sectors because of the different positions they had throughout their career.

Table 2. The inner circle of the Bilderberg network 1954-2018

number of Conferences	Name	Country	Time period	Sector
52	David Rockefeller	USA	1954-2011	Finance
44	Otto Wolff von Amerongen	Germany	1955-2001	Industry
43	Henry Kissinger	USA	1957-2018	Politics/Academia
43	Victor Halberstadt	Netherlands	1975-2018	Academia
39	George W. Ball	USA	1954-1993	Finance/Politics
37	w Princess/Queen Beatrix	Netherlands	1962-2015	Royalty/Industry
36	Vernon Jordan jr.	USA	1969-2017	Finance
36	Thierry de Montbrial	France	1974-2013	Think Tank
36	Sir Eric Roll	Great Britain	1964-2002	Finance
36	Giovanni Agnelli	Italy	1957-2000	Industry
35	Vicomte Davignon	Belgium	1972-2014	Finance/Politics
34	Henry J. Heinz II	USA	1954-1986	Industry
33	Ernst van der Beugel	Netherlands	1960-1998	Academia
31	Francisco Pinto Balsemao	Portugal	1981-2015	Politics/Media
29	w Marie-Josée Drouin-Kravis	Canada/USA	1989-2018	Think Tank
28	Max Kohnstamm	Netherlands	1961-1998	Diplomat
27	James Wolfensohn	USA	1985-2015	Finance
26	Mario Monti	Italy	1983-2015	Politics
26	Selahattin Beyazit	Turkey	1971-1997	Industry
24	Juan Luis Cebrian	Spain	1983-2018	Media
24	Peter Sutherland	Ireland	1989-2015	Finance
24	Prince Bernhard	Netherlands	1954-1975	Royalty/Industry
23	Anthony Griffin	Canada	1963-1996	Diplomat/Finance
23	Denis Healey	Great Britain	1954-1992	Politics
23	Nuri Birgi	Turkey	1957-1985	Diplomat
23	Henry Kravis	USA	1992-2018	Finance
21	Marcus Wallenberg	Sweden	1957-1981	Finance/Industry
21	Leif Hoegh	Norway	1954-1974	Industry
20	Rudolph Scholten	Austria	1992-2018	Finance
20	Theo Sommer	Germany	1973-1993	Media
20	Joseph Luns	Netherlands	1964-1984	Politics
20	Sir Frederic Bennett	Great Britain	1959-1980	Finance/Politics
20	Joseph E. Johnson	USA	1960-1980	Think tank
19	James Johnson	USA	1998-2017	Finance
19	Franco Bernabe	Italy	1994-2016	Finance
19	Jorma Ollila	Finland	1994-2014	Industry
19	Martin Taylor	Great Britain	1993-2013	Finance
19	Conrad Black	Canada	1981-2003	Media
19	Costa Carras	Greece	1979-1997	Industry
19	Andrew Knight	Great Britain	1975-1996	Media
18	Jacob Wallenberg	Sweden	1998-2016	Finance

18		Richard Perle	USA	1983-2015	Think tank
18		Jonkheer Emiel van Lennep	Netherlands	1963-1987	Politics
18		Emilio Collado	USA	1961-1980	Finance
18		Terkel Terkelsen	Denmark	1956-1980	Media
18		Gabriel Hauge	USA	1955-1978	Finance
17		Henri de Castries	France	2002-2018	Finance
17		Jaime Carvajal Urquijo	Spain	1982-2010	Finance
17		Frantz Vranitzky	Austria	1975-2002	Politics
17		Charles Mathias	USA	1967-1993	Politics

= 50 participants who attended at least 17 conferences, including **9 participants** who participated in 2017 or 2018 and thus might participate again in the future

16	w	Heather Reisman	Canada	2002-2017	Industry
16		Daniel Vasella	Switzerland	1998-2014	Industry
16	w	Queen Sofia	Spain	1989-2014	Royalty
16		Kenneth Dam	USA	1983-2002	Industry
16		Daniel Janssen	Belgium	1969-2000	Industry
15		Craig Mundie	USA	2003-2018	digital industry
15	w	Jessica Mathews	USA	1998-2017	think tank
15		Martin Feldstein	USA	1996-2015	academia
15		George David	UK	1996-2011	industry
15		Christoph Bertram	GER	1978-1998	media
15		Theodore Eliot jr.	USA	1979-1993	Diplomat
15		Victor Umbricht	SUI	1964-1985	Industry
15		Otto Tidemand	NOR	1967-1984	Politics/Industry
15		Baron Snoy et D'Oppuers	BEL	1960-1980	politics/Diplomat
15		Wilfrid S. Baumgartner	FRA	1958-1974	Finance
14		Martin Wolf	UK	1999-2017	media
14		Thomas Donilon	USA	1998-2015	lawyer/NSA
14		Carl Bildt	SWE/INT	1992-2014	politics/diplomat
14		Matthias Naß	GER	1997-2012	media
14		Peter Carrington	UK	1978-1998	politics/NATO
14		Jaako Itoniemi	FIN	1984-1997	finance
14		Niels Werring	NOR	1980-1993	industry
14		Geir Hallgrimsson	ISL	1972-1990	politics/finance
14		Shepard Stone	USA	1957-1980	media/finance
14		Arthur Dean	USA	1957-1975	lawyer/diplomat
13		John Elkann	ITA	2005-2018	industry
13		Matias Rodriguez Inciarte	SPA	1997-2010	finance
13		Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa	ITA/INT	1986-2010	academia/finance
13		Bertrand Collomb	FRA	1991-2008	industry
13		Jürgen Schrempp	GER	1994-2007	industry
13		Paul Allaire	USA	1987-2002	industry
13		Prinz Claus Netherlands	NED	1967-2001	royalty/industry
13		John C. Whitehead	USA	1984-1997	finance/politics
13		Dwayne Andreas	USA	1982-1996	industry
13		Björn Bjarnason	ISL	1977-1995	politics
13		Jack Bennett	USA	1977-1990	industry
13		Leon Lambert	BEL	1971-1987	finance
13		George Nebolsine	USA	1954-1964	lawyer
12		Klaus Kleinfeld	GER/USA	2005-2017	industry

12	John Kerr	UK	2005-2016	politics
12	Mustafa Koc	TUR	2004-2015	industry
12	Jean-Claude Trichet	FRA/INT	1995-2011	finance
12	Richard Holbrooke	USA	1995-2010	diplomat
12	Paul D. Wolfowitz	USA	1990-2009	politics
12	Donald MacDonald	CAN	1971-1993	politics/diplomat
12	Sten Gustafsson	SWE	1981-1992	industry
12	Carlo Schmid	GER	1954-1966	politics

= 97 participants who attended 12 or more, i.e. 20% of all conferences, including 5 women

Bold = 14 participants, including two women, who participated in 2017 or 2018 and might participate again in the future

In Table 3 we present an overview of the sectors and countries that the participants from this inner circle belong to. What is striking is that basically half of them represent financial or industrial corporations. This is a very strong indicator that the organizers of these conferences – they could be also called 'hosts' as opposed to the less frequent participants who are 'guests' – represent the interests of large financial institutions and multinational corporations.

Let's have a closer look at two prominent examples: Since the 1980s, men in senior positions of Goldman Sachs have participated very regularly in the Bilderberg conferences (in alphabetic order): Lloyd Blankfein (since 2006 CEO, Goldman Sachs – BB participation at least in 2008); Jon Corzine (1994-1999 CEO, Goldman Sachs; 2006-2010 Governor of New Jersey – BB participation at least in 1995, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2003 and 2004); Michael Evans (former Vice Chairman, Goldman Sachs; former Chairman, Goldman Sachs Asia – BB participation at least in 2012 and 2013); Stephen Friedman (between 1987 and 1994 Co-COO, Co-Chairman and Chairman, Goldman Sachs; 2002-2005 Director National Economic Council; 2005-2013 Director, Goldman Sachs; 2005-2009 Chairman, President's Intelligence Advisory Board; 2008-2009 Chairman New York Federal Reserve Board – BB participation at least in 1993 and 1994); James A. Johnson (1991-1999, Chairman/CEO, Fannie Mae; since 1999 Director Goldman Sachs – BB participation almost always between 1998 and 2017); John Thornton (1988-2003 Partner, Goldman Sachs; 1996-1998 Chairman, Goldman Sachs Asia; since 2003 Chairman, Brookings Institution; since 2014 Chairman, Barrick Gold Corporation – BB participation at least in 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004); Peter Weinberg (1999-2005 CEO, Goldman Sachs International – BB participation at least in 2004 and 2005); John Whitehead (1976-1985 Co-Chairman, Goldman Sachs; 1985-1989 Deputy Secretary of State; 1989-1995 Chairman, Asia Society; 1992-1994 Chairman, Brookings Institution; 1995-2000

Chairman, Federal Reserve Bank of New York – BB participation almost always between 1984 and 1997).

Besides this, many former Commissioners of the European Union, who have been regular participants of the Bilderberg conferences, have at some point worked for Goldman Sachs International, the most prominent examples being Romano Prodi, Mario Monti, Peter Sutherland (Chairman Goldman Sachs International 1995-2015 and during this time participant in all Bilderberg Conferences) and recently Jose Manuel Barroso.

A similar pattern can be observed for CEOs of the Lazard bank. Bilderberg veteran Vernon E. Jordan Jr. (36 conferences between 1969 and 2016 and the person who invited Bill Clinton to the conference in 1991 before chairing his presidential transition team) has been Senior Managing Director of the bank since the year 2000. represented for a long time by Vernon Jordan jr. Kenneth Jacobs participated in 2007 and 2008 as Deputy Chairman before becoming CEO of Lazard. Since 2011 he hasn't missed a single conference. Former Managing Director (1989-2002) and Chairman of Lazard London (2001-2006) and of Barclay's (2007-2012) as well as son-in-law of Edmund Leopold de Rothschild, Marc Agius, has participated in all conferences since 2010. The head of the bank, Michael David-Weill, only appears twice on the official list of participants, but – like Siegmund Warburg – at key conferences, in 1972 before the creation of the Trilateral Commission and in 2002. However, dozens of participants of the Bilderberg conferences were employees of the various branches of this banking empire either during or after their participation.

Other interesting features are the ongoing presence of the Dutch Royal House (as well as the Spanish Queen between 1989 and 2015); the presence of presidents of very influential think tanks as well as the presence of journalists and publishers from leading mass media outlets. Ian Richardson interprets their presence as a sign of growing interdependence between the transnational policy and media elites which has reached a stage where the “editorial participants are no longer, in any meaningful sense, distinguishable from the policy network itself” (Richardson 2011: 171). I would add that it is especially the concept of 'framing' which is relevant here: do we speak of „the transnational capitalist class“ or „the financial markets“? „economic warfare“ or „sanctions? etc.²⁷

Table 3. Inner circle of the Bilderberg Conferences 1954-2017 by country and by sector:

By country:	By sector:	smaller inner circle	larger inner circle
		49 participants	97 participants

²⁷ C.f. Goffman 1974, Johnson-Cartee 2005, Pan/Kosicki 1993, Scheufele/Dietram 1999.

USA	29	Finance	16.5 = 33.7 %	24.5 = 25.3 %
Netherlands	8	Industry	8.5 = 17.4 %	26.5 = 27.3 %
Germany	5.5	Politics	8.5 = 17.4 %	16 = 16.5 %
Italy	5	Media	5.5 = 11.2 %	9 = 9.3 %
Canada	4.5	Think Tank	4 = 8.1 %	5 = 5.2 %
UK	4	Academia	2.5 = 5.1 %	4 = 4.1 %
Sweden	4	Diplomat	2.5 = 5.1 %	6.5 = 6.7 %
Spain	4	Royalty	1 = 2.0 %	2.5 = 2.6 %
Belgium	4	lawyer	---	2 = 2.1 %
Norway	3	NSA	---	0.5 = 0.5 %
France	3	NATO	---	0.5 = 0.5 %
Turkey	3			
Switzerland	2			
Iceland	2			
Finland	2			
Austria	2			
Denmark	1			
Greece	1			
Ireland	1			
Portugal	1			

3.3 Gender and Race

The Bilderberg conferences have been repeatedly characterized (also by participants themselves) as an „old-boys' network“. A look at the participation of women in these conferences confirms this. In 1972 for the first time in their history, the Steering Committee invited six women to a Bilderberg conference. One of them was the princess, later queen, later princess again Beatrix of Netherlands. She later became one of the 'hosts' of the conferences, having participated in all conferences between 1986 and 2015.²⁸ Since then, the number of female participants has grown steadily, from two to three per conference in the 1970s, seven to eight in the 1990s, to almost 15 per conference in the last 10 years, reaching an all-time high in 2016 with 28 female participants. In the last few years, there have been always at least 20 women invitees, which is around 20 per cent of all

²⁸ According to Thomas Gijswijt, who cites van der Beugel, Princess Beatrix was indeed the first woman to participate in a Bilderberg conference, but already in 1963 in Cannes (she “was usually reticent during the plenary Bilderberg sessions, but all the more active outside the official debates”, Gijswijt 2007: 270). However, a closer look at the official lists of participants in the conference reports demonstrates that her first participation was already in 1962 when she was listed as „in attendance“ (as well as in 1963, 1964 and 1965).

participants. What is striking, is that most of the female participants are featured on various lists of powerful women – especially the Forbes Magazine' list.²⁹ This development parallels women graduating elsewhere to more leading positions in politics and economy. In general, the Steering Committee is very much aware of current macroeconomic trends and the invited business representatives continuously represent the most profitable sectors of the economy at any given time.

From the 176 female participants, only five belong to the inner circle, two of them due to their status as members of important royal families (Princess/Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands and Queen Sophia of Spain) while another two chair important American think tanks: Marie-Josée Drouin-Kravis (and wife of Henry Kravis from Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & co.) from the Hudson Institute and Jessica Matthews³⁰ from the Carnegie Endowment on International Peace. The fifth woman in the inner circle is Heather Reisman, currently the CEO of Indigo Books, the largest book retailer in Canada, and niece of Simon Reisman, who headed the Canadian delegation at the negotiations of the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement in 1988.

If we have shown the Bilderberg conferences to be an old-boys club, can the same be true of race – are they also a white-boys' club? Our analysis shows that nothing similar to the inclusion of women can be observed concerning non-white participants. While from time to time single non-white people have been invited to the conferences (e.g. Secretary of State, Condolezza Rice, in 2008), there is only one non-white person who belongs to the inner circle, having participated in 36 conferences between 1969 and 2016, namely Vernon Jordan Jr.. A former activist for racial emancipation, he became very influential in the Democratic Party since the 1980s and was responsible for inviting Bill Clinton to the Bilderberg conference in 1991 where he even introduced him as future president of the United States (Richardson 2011: 173).

The same holds true for Asians: except for Nobuo Tanaka, who participated in 2009 when he was director of the International Energy Agency (IEA), no Japanese has ever been invited to a Bilderberg conference. In recent years a few Chinese guests have been invited, which is indicative of their rising geopolitical importance: In 2004, Yongtu Long was the first Chinese to be invited to

²⁹ To cite the most prominent examples: Angela Merkel, Forbes' most powerful women between 2011 and 2017, participated in 2005, a few months before becoming Chancellor of Germany, as position she has held ever since. Christine Lagarde first participated in 2009 as French Minister of Finance and then in almost every conference since 2013. In 2011 she became Secretary General of the IMF and has been repeatedly featured in the top ten of most powerful women. Ana Botin, since 2014 CEO of Santander and one of the top ten most powerful women in the world, participated in 2010, 2015, 2016 and 2017.

³⁰ She is the daughter of historian Barbara Tuchman, who published a history of relations between Great Britain and Palestine in 1956 entitled *Bible and Sword: England and Palestine from the Bronze Age to Balfour*, as well as grand-daughter of Maurice Wertheim, a Jewish banker from New York, founder of Wertheim & co. in 1927, owner of *The Nation* magazine member of the War Production Board and President of the American Jewish Committee (1941-1943), and his wife Alma Morgenthau, sister of Henry Morgenthau jr., the Secretary of Treasury from 1934 till 1945, author of the unsuccessful Morgenthau Plan to de-industrialize Germany after World War II and president of the Bretton Woods conference in 1944. Morgenthau's wife, Elinor Lehman Fatman, was the grand-daughter of the founder of Lehman Brothers, a Jewish bank from New York with close ties to the Bilderberg network at least since the 1960s till their collapse in 2008.

a Bilderberg Conference. At that time he was Chairman of the Boao Forum Asia. Previously he had served as Director-General of the International Relations Department in the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation and was chief negotiator for China's WTO accession. In 1995 he led the first Chinese OECD delegation in Paris. Shortly after the Conference, he received a special award by the United Nations Secretary General Mr. Kofi Annan for his outstanding contribution to the UN partnership in China and in promoting the values of the UN. There were five more Chinese participants were so far: Yi Zhang in 2006, Ying Fu in 2011 and 2012³¹; Yiping Huang in 2011, 2012 and 2014³²; Liu He in 2014³³; and Tiankai Cui, the Chinese Ambassador in Washington, in 2017. In the three conferences were most Chinese participates (2011, 2012 and 2014) were invited Cheng Li, member of CFR and Brookings Institution and expert on China, participated as well, probably as translator.

When the conferences started in the 1950s, almost all participants – except for the brain and motor behind the Group, Joseph Retinger – were white Christian males. In the late 1950s, early 1960s the first Jewish members joined the Steering Committee with an increase after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Nowadays Jewish participants account for around one third of all participants and of the members of the Steering Committee. Non-white (including arabic) participants are still a big exception.

4. The Bilderberg network 2003-2015

In this section we provide a more in-depth analysis of the Bilderberg network in the years 2003-2015 as well as of the current (end of 2017) Steering Committee. The years 2003 and 2015 are not as arbitrary as they might appear: The events of „9/11“ marked a shift in the composition and political outlook of the Bilderberg conferences from neoliberal to neoconervative while 2015 marks the end of this period when many regular participants stopped participating in the conferences. This can be interpreted as another generational shift comparable to the ones in 1964, 1977-1980 or 2002.

³¹ She was Chinese Ambassador to the United Kingdom (2007-2010) before becoming Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2010. In this position she participated in the Bilderberg conferences.

³² Yiping Huang is an Professor of Economy at the Chinese Center for Economic Research in Peking. He previously taught at Columbia university and worked for Citigroup in Hongkong.

³³ Since March 2013 he has been Chief of the Leading Group for Financial and Economic Affairs. In March 2018 he became Deputy Prime Minister of China and will be leading the Financial Stability and Development Commission. He is also Vice Chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission. He gave a keynote address to the World Economic Forum in 2018.

4.1 All participants by country and by sector

In total, 773 participants from 31 countries (including 40 representatives of international organisations) were invited to the 13 Bilderberg conferences between 2003 and 2015. Almost 68 % of them (525 persons) participated in only one conference, while another approximately 10 % (87 persons) participated in two conferences, half of them in two consecutive years. From the remaining 161 participants 89 participated in three, four or five conferences while only 72 persons participated in six or more Bilderberg conferences in the last thirteen years. For the purposes of our analysis, these 72 persons will be considered the inner circle of the Bilderberg network 2003-2015.

Table 4. Participants at Bilderberg conferences 2003-2015 by country

USA	167	21.3 %
France	64	8.1 %
Great Britain	47	6 %
Turkey	45	5.7 %
Canada	41	5.2 %
International Organisations	40	5.1 %
Netherlands	40	5.1 %
Germany	39	5 %
Italy	30	3.8 %
Norway	27	3.4 %
Denmark	26	3.3 %
Sweden	26	3.3 %
Switzerland	25	3.2 %
Finland	25	3.2 %
Portugal	25	3.2 %
Spain	21	2.7 %
Austria	21	2.7 %
Greece	18	2.3 %
Belgium	12	1.5 %
Russia	9	1.2 %
Ireland	9	1.2 %
Israel	5	0.6 %
China	5	0.6 %
Poland	5	0.6 %

Hungary	2	0.3 %
Kuwait	1	0.1 %
Iraq	1	0.1 %
Slovakia	1	0.1 %
Cyprus	1	0.1 %
Iran	1	0.1 %
Czech Republic	1	0.1 %
Palestine	1	0.1 %

Total 781 (773 persons) from 31 countries³⁴

This means that nobody was ever invited from the following countries and regions: Iceland (the only from these 'missing' countries whose citizens used to participated regularly before 1999), the Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia³⁵, Estland), the Balkans (Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, former Yugoslavia), the former Soviet Republics (except Russia), South and Middle America, Africa, Asia (except China), Australia/New Zealand.

All participants have been assigned to one of the following sectors: Politics, Industry, Finance, Academia, Media, Think Tank, Diplomacy, Consulting, Law, Military, Royalty and Secret Service. 9 participants could not be reasonably assigned to one of these twelve sectors, so the category 'other' was created for them. Because a time period of thirteen years is covered in this analysis, some participants were assigned to more than one category.³⁶ The category 'politics' includes all participants who have been listed as president, prime minister, minister, member of parliament, party leader etc. on the list of participants. The category 'business' includes mostly CEOs of corporations from a broad range of economical sectors like energy (especially Oil), telecommunication or manufacturing. Also included in this category are chairmen of business associations and similar functions. The category 'finance' encompasses all CEOs (and other important employees) of banks, insurance companies, hedge funds or foundations. The sector 'academia' includes all professors, university presidents etc. 'Media' are publishers, editors and journalists, mostly from newspapers but sometimes also from television. The category 'think tank' is an interesting one as it shows that key figures from influential American and European think tanks

³⁴ 18 of these countries are NATO member countries, while another six participate in its Partnership for Peace Programme. Again over 95 % of all participants stem from the same 18 countries as the large majority of the whole network.

³⁵ The exception is Andirs Piebalgs who participated in 2006 as European Commissioner for Energy.

³⁶ Another possibility would have been to count them in one category in one year and in another category in another year. However, this would create the false impression that it is possible to be a profit-maximizing businessmen in one moment and an impartial politician in the next one.

play an important role in the Bilderberg network.

Table 5. Bilderberg network 2003-2015 by sectors

	All participants	inner circle
226 politics	29.2 %	12.5 %
+ 1 politics/lawyer	0.1 %	
+ 1 politics/finance	0.1 %	
+ 1 industry/politician	0.1 %	
147 industry	19 %	19 %
136 finance	17.6 %	35 %
+ 2 finance/academia	0.25 %	
+ 1 diplomat/finance	0.1 %	
86 academia	11.1 %	4 %
+ 1 media/academia	0.1 %	
68 media	8.8 %	10 %
39 think tank	5 %	7 %
13 diplomat	1.7 %	1.5 %
12 consulting	1.6 %	----
10 law	1.3 %	4 %
7 military	0.9 %	----
+ 1 military/secret service	0.1 %	
5 royalty	0.6 %	4 %
5 secret service	0.6 %	----

1 finance/academia/politician	0.1 %	1.5 %
1 diplomat/politician/industry	0.1 %	1.5 %
9 other	1.2 %	----

The invited 226 politicians included 9 incumbent and 10 former prime ministers; several other heads of state; more than 40 ministers which were in office at the time of the conference and more than 20 former ministers as well as 12 acting Commissioners of the European Commission.

We can distinguish two inner circles: one consisting of 29 participants that have attended at least ten conferences in these thirteen years and one consisting of 72 participants that have attended at least six conferences in these thirteen years. The 29 participants in the smaller inner circle come from 16 countries, most of them from the United States (8). Most countries are represented with one participant, only Italy and the United States have more than 2. The 72 participants in the bigger inner circle come from the same 16 countries, however, two participants represent international organisations (European Commissioner Neelie Kroes from the Netherlands and Jean-Claude Trichet, the president of the European Central Bank between 2003 and 2011). Again, the United States has the most participants in this circle (20) while the United Kingdom has 8. The numbers of participants per country corresponds more accurately to their total number of participants in the Bilderberg meetings, although there are some differences.

Country	participants in the larger inner circle	% of inner circle	% of this country
USA	20	28	12
UK	9	12.5	19
Canada	5	7	12
Italy	5	7	23
Germany	4	5.5	10
Spain	4	5.5	19
France	3	4	5
Austria	2	3	9.5
Netherlands	2	3	5
Int. Organisations	2	3	5

Sweden	2	3	8
Ireland	2	3	22
Turkey	2	3	4
Belgium	2	3	16
Switzerland	2	3	8
Denmark	2	3	8
Portugal	1	1.5	4
Finland	1	1.5	4
Greece	1	1.5	6
Norway	1	1.5	4

The results of the sectorial analysis for this period are similar to the analysis of the inner circle of all conferences. Again, the financial and industrial sector are over-represented compared to the number of total participants: Participants from the world of finance (banks, insurance companies etc.) represent 35 % of the inner circle (both the smaller and the bigger) while CEOs of multinational companies represent 20-25% of the inner circles. At the same time it is much less likely for a politician or an academic to become a member of the inner circle.

The following financial institutions and corporations belong to the inner circle of the Bilderberg network 2013-2015: World Bank, European Central Bank (2x, EU), Österreichische Kontrollbank (Austria), Investor AB, Enskilda (Sweden), Rothschild Europe (EU), Goldman Sachs International (USA), Société Générale (France), Lazard (2x, France/USA), Barclay's (2x, Great Britain), Deutsche Bank (Germany), TD Bank (2x, Canada), Allied Irish Banks (Ireland), Santander (Spain), JP Morgan Chase (USA), HSBC (Great Britain). Some of these banks are the largest banks in the world, while Lazard and Rothschild are the only banks who specialize in sovereign debt consulting for governments. While the European fraction of transnational finance capital is represented by CEOs of large banks, the American fraction is mostly represented by CEOs of private equity firms: Kohlberg, Kravis Roberts & co., Johnson Capital Partners, BT Wolfensohn, Thiel Capital, Ripplewood, Evercore. Finally, from the big global insurance companies, French Axa is the only one at the inner core of the network.³⁷ This means that CEOs of some major international banks which are competitors in the financial markets meet regularly with each other while CEOs of other major international banks are rarely if ever invited to the Bilderberg conferences. To cite some prominent absentees: Royal Bank of Canada, Citigroup, Bank of America, BNP Paribas (since its merger in 2000). This means that the transnational power elite is not monolithic but made up of

³⁷ Many of the banks at the core of the Bilderberg network were part of a banking cartel which was subject of judicial investigations regarding the Libor scandal, where large banks manipulated the interest rate for inter-bank lending.

different fractions who compete with each other as well as with fractions of national capitalism. We conducted a similar analysis for the representatives of business in the inner circle of the network. The presence of internet and telecommunication giants Google, Microsoft, Facebook and Nokia (together with the less known Kudelski Group which now specializes in Digital TV) indicates that the Bilderberg group – which previously had sometimes been accused of living in the past – has firmly arrived in the twenty-first century. Other important sectors are energy, led by Royal Dutch Shell and featuring ENI from Italy and DONG from Denmark. Norsk Hydro and Alcoa are two leading manufacturers of aluminium. Another transnational corporation is Airbus, Europe's leading firm in the defence industry. Also featured are generalists like Siemens and Koc Holding. The latter is Turkey's biggest corporation.³⁸ Swiss pharmaceutical giant Novartis is represented, as is FiatChrysler. From the food and beverage industry the only company in the inner circle is Coca-Cola. In general, most of the companies whose CEOs participate in the Bilderberg conferences are market leaders in their segment, sometimes worldwide.

4.2 The Steering Committee (late 2017)

Right now, the Steering Committee consists of 31 members from 19 countries (plus the chairman who traditionally stems from an aristocratic European family³⁹ – since 2012 it has been Henri de Castries, the former CEO of French insurance company AXA). Currently all countries which participate regularly in the conferences have one member in the Steering Committee, while a few have more than one: Germany, Great Britain, Italy and France have two, and the United States have ten.⁴⁰ This corresponds – with some negligible exceptions – to the distribution of all participants at the annual conferences. The task of the Steering Committee is to set the agenda for the next conference, to decide whom to invite and to choose who will present papers as well as to steer the discussions of the conference in accordance with the strategic objectives of this organisation and the dynasties behind it.

The members of the Steering Committee belong to 8 different sectors of society. The dominant sector is financial capital with 10 members and another 5 members which at the same time belong to the financial sector as well as a second sector.⁴¹ Another seven members are CEOs of

³⁸ Until his sudden death in 2015, Mustafa Koç was the Turkish member of the Steering Committee. Since then the relations between NATO and Turkey have deteriorated rapidly. For unknown reasons, his name does not appear on the list of former members of the Steering Committee on the official website [March 2018].

³⁹ In general there is a strong presence of aristocratic families in the Bilderberg meetings, especially the Royal Family of the Netherlands, and (between 1989 and 2015) Spain. In a network which is so strongly focused on power, this can be interpreted as a sign of ongoing economic and political power of these dynasties in the contemporary world.

⁴⁰ Per November 2017 seven out of the ten American members of the Steering Committee were also members of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) which is a sign of the importance of this New York think tank for the Bilderberg network. On the history of the CFR, c.f. Shuop/Minter 1977, Walla 1990, Parmar 2004, Shuop 2015. One „American“ member of the Steering Committee, Klaus Kleinfeld, is a German citizen.

⁴¹ A prominent example is Jose Manuel Barroso, former Prime Minister of Portugal (2002-2004) and former President

multinational corporations; two are representatives of the media, two are academics, two represent companies dealing with digital technologies. Two are from consulting companies⁴²; one is a former CEO of a big insurance company and current chairman of Institut Montaigne (Henri de Castries) and one is a (former) politician who is now Senior Fellow at Harvard University's Center for European Studies. Some of the largest multinational corporations whose CEOs are members of the Steering Committee are (in alphabetic order): Airbus, Alphabet (aka Google), Deutsche Bank, Enskilda Banken, FiatChrysler, Goldman Sachs, Lazard and Santander.

5. Bilderberg meetings and international organisations

The special importance the organizers of the Bilderberg conferences attach to international organisations is implicit in the fact that invitees representing these organisations are marked on the list of participants with an 'INT' instead of the country abbreviation as other participants. The connections to certain organisations have been particularly close as can be guessed from the fact that their head officer (Secretary General in most cases) has been invited to almost every Bilderberg conference over a longer period of time – with other organisations the contact has been more sporadic, but still regular. The following international organisations have had particularly close ties to the Bilderberg network: NATO, OECD, GATT/WTO, World Bank/IMF, European Union, Trilateral Commission.

The relationship with the United Nations is more complex. The incumbent Secretary General of the UN, Antonio Guterres, is the first ever former Bilderberg participant in this position. But other members of the Bilderberg network (including members of the Steering Committee) held other key positions in this organisation, like Undersecretary General, President of the General Assembly or High Commissioner for Refugees and received a mandate from the UN on many occasions (a prominent example was the war in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s when many Bilderbergers were involved in the Peace Process; the Swiss member of the Steering Committee in the 1960s and 1970s, Victor Umbricht, undertook many missions – sometimes for the UN, sometimes for the ICRC – in Africa and Asia).

All Secretaries General of NATO since the early 1960s have participated in at least one Bilderberg

of the European Commission (2004-2014). Since his retirement, he has been a member of the Steering Committee. In July 2016 he became non-executive chairman of Goldman Sachs International

⁴² One of them, John Sawers, was chief of MI6 between November 2009 and November 2014, thus continuing the tradition of secret services involvement in the inner circle of the Bilderberg Conferences which dates back to the founding members Colin Gubbins and Joseph Retinger. Sawers was also a British diplomat, including Permanent Representative to the UN (2007-2009) and is a governor of the Ditchley Foundation.

conference. Some even participated in every conference during their term in office, like Joseph Luns between 1971 and 1984. He had been an annual Bilderberg participant already since 1964 when he was still Dutch foreign minister. His successor, the British Lord Peter Carrington, later became chairman of the Bilderberg conferences from 1990 till 1998. In recent years all Secretaries General of NATO had participated in at least one conference before assuming this position and at least one conference while in office. Since the inception of the Conferences, **every** Supreme Allied Commander Europe participated in at least one conference, mostly while in office. This relationship was closest between 1979 and 1992 when the two SACEURS (Bernard Rogers and John Galvin) participated in every conference except for 1986.

A similarly close connection can be observed with the OECD and the GATT. Jose Angel Gurria from Mexico, serving as secretary general of the OECD since 2006, is the first person in this office not to have been invited to any Bilderberg conferences so far which is probably also due to the fact that nobody from Latin America was ever invited to a Bilderberg Conference.⁴³ **All** seven previous Secretaries General (of OEEC/OECD) have been invited to at least one Bilderberg conference, most of them while they were in office. Emiel van Lennep was the most regular participant, having participated in almost every conference that took place during his tenure between 1969 and 1984. As noted above, this is the same time period when the secretary general of NATO, Joseph Luns, also from the Netherlands, participated in every conference during his term in office (1971-1984).

GATT, a multilateral agreement regulating international trade, was in effect between 1948 and 1995 before being replaced by the World Trade Organization (WTO). Most Director-Generals of this organisation participated in several Bilderberg conferences while in office. Peter Sutherland is a similar case as Lord Carrington: he first participated in a Bilderberg conference in 1989 after his term as European Commissioner. Since then he became part of the inner core of the Bilderberg conferences and participated in almost every conference, also during his term in office as Director-General of GATT between 1993 and 1995. His successor Renato Ruggiero (in office 1995-99) participated in almost all conferences between 1986 and 2000.

Another influential international organisation with close connections to the Bilderberg conferences is the World Bank. John McCloy (President 1947-1949) was invited in 1958, 1954, 1965 and 1966; Eugene Black (President 1949-1963) participated in 1957 I; Robert McNamara (President 1968-1981)⁴⁴, participated in 1968, 1969 and 1975; his successor, A. W. Clausen (President 1981-1986)

⁴³ The only exception is Gustavo Cisneros from Venezuela who also has a Spanish citizenship and was invited in 2010.

⁴⁴ And former US Secretary of Defense during the Vietnam War.

in 1983 and 1985. Between 1995 and 2012, the presidents of the World Bank (Wolfensohn, Paul Wolfowitz and Robert Zoellick) participated in virtually every Bilderberg conference. This means that from the 11 World Bank presidents till 2012, seven belonged to the Bilderberg network. The relationship with the IMF has been also very close. From the 9 Managing Directors of the IMF since 1956, 6 participated in between one and five Bilderberg Conferences each – except for Dominique Strauss Kahn all while in office. In 1994 the office of First Deputy Managing Director was created and so far held by four persons. Two of them are part of this network: The first office holder was Stanley Fischer (1994-2001) who participated in the conferences in 1996, 1998, 1999 and 2018 and John Lipsky (2006-2011) who participated in 2012.

Another supranational financial institution with very close ties to the Bilderberg network since its inception, is the European Central Bank – **all** three of its presidents have been previously regular participants of the Bilderberg conferences. The Dutch Wim Duisenberg participated in seven conferences, his successor Jean-Claude Trichet from France took part in twelve conferences, many of them while serving as president of the ECB, while the current president, Mario Draghi from Italy, participated in eight conferences in total. The last chairman of the Federal Reserve, the American equivalent of the European Central Bank, to participate frequently in the Bilderberg conferences was Paul Volcker, in office between 1979 and 1987. He was invited to four conferences during his term in office and kept taking part in the discussions in the following decades. His successors Alan Greenspan and Ben Bernanke participated only once each in the Bilderberg meetings. In general, it is difficult if not impossible to say whether changes such as these reflect changes in the function these conferences play in the geopolitical arena, or whether they can be at least partly attributed to the fact that there has been a rising public interest in the Bilderberg conferences since the late 1990s and that some people in important official positions prefer not to participate or at least not to be listed on the official list. An illustrious example is Hilary Clinton who has never appeared on an official list⁴⁵ but has been reported by other participants as frequent guest (c.f. Richardson 2011: 173).⁴⁶ Another explanation could be that in the meantime other fora exist where more specialized discussions can take place, like the Group of Thirty for central bankers.

Another supranational financial institution with close ties to the Bilderberg network is the Bank for

⁴⁵ Unlike her husband, Bill Clinton, who participated in the conference in 1991, one year before becoming president of the United States. During his office term more Americans in governmental positions than ever participated in Bilderberg conferences.

⁴⁶ According to the Clinton Archive, she participated in 1997. There are strong indicators that she participated at least in 2008 and 2012 as well.

International Settlements (BIS) which has its seat in Basel, Switzerland.⁴⁷ Between 1998 and 2006 almost all chairmen were members of the Bilderberg network⁴⁸, except for Bengt Dennis who became member of the Trilateral Commission after his term in office. Currently it has 21 directors, six of them have participated in at least one Bilderberg conference, while Mario Draghi and Klaas Knot have been regular participants. Since 1991 four out of seven Chairmen of the Basle Committee on Banking Supervision have been part of the Bilderberg network.⁴⁹ During the same time period, four out of seven chairmen of the Committee on Payments and Market Infrastructure were part of the network.⁵⁰

Not only the European Central Bank but also the European Commission – the executive body of the European Union – has close links to the Bilderberg network which is a result of the strong promotion of European integration by the organizers of these conferences ever since 1947. Since 1998 every year at least one member of the European Commission (sometimes up to four) has been invited to the Bilderberg conference.

Since its foundation following the Bilderberg conference in 1973, the European Group of the Trilateral Commission has had six chairmen, all of whom have participated in Bilderberg conferences, while four of them (Max Kohnstamm, Mario Monti, Peter Sutherland and Jean-Claude Trichet) can be considered part of the inner circle. The American group has had five chairmen so far – again all of them have attended Bilderberg conferences with two (David Rockefeller and Paul Volcker) being regular participants. Since traditionally no Japanese have been invited to the Bilderberg conferences⁵¹, the chairmen of the Asian group has never been part of this network.

Not only the leaders of the Trilateral Commission but also its members are regular attendees of the Bilderberg conferences. When we compare the membership lists of the Trilateral Commission from the last ten years with the list of participants in Bilderberg conferences we get the following results: In 2007 the European group had 155 members including 58 Bilderberg participants (37 %). In 2010 there were 164 members in the European group – 57 of them (i.e. almost 35 %) have been invited to at least one Bilderberg conference. In 2015 the European Group consisted of 169 members – still 51 (30 %) of them had attended at least one Bilderberg conference. The numbers would be probably higher if not for the almost complete absence of participants from Eastern Europe at Bilderberg

⁴⁷ For this history of this controversial institution, which is often referred to as 'central banks of/for central banks', see e.g. Toniolo 2005, James 2012, Lebor 2013.

⁴⁸ Wim Duisenberg, Alfons Verplaetse, Urban Bäckström and Nout Wellink.

⁴⁹ E. Gerald Corrigan, Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa, William McDonough and Nout Wellink.

⁵⁰ William McDonough, Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa, Timothy Geithner and Benoît Cœuré.

⁵¹ The only exception being Nobuo Tanaka who participated in the 2009 conference as executive director of the International Energy Agency (IEA).

meetings.⁵² The North American group had 126 members in 2007, 39 of them (almost 31 %) had been invited to at least one Bilderberg conference; in 2010 the American group had 132 members, 35 (approximately 27 %) of which had been invited to a Bilderberg conference at some point; in late 2015 it was again 35 out of 131 members. The American share of Bilderberg participants among members of the Trilateral is smaller than in the European group (and both have been declining in the last 15 years) but still substantial enough so we can assume that there is a strong overlapping of world-views and interests between both organisations. Since the Bilderberg meetings publish no official reports, an analysis of the publicly available reports of the Trilateral Commission could provide more insight into the world-view and objectives of *both* organisations.

An organisation which was instrumental in promoting stronger economic and political cooperation between European states since the 1980s is the European Roundtable of Industrialists. Considering the strong presence of industrialists in the Bilderberg network, it is not surprising that the ties between both organisations are particularly strong: At the moment the ERTI has 51 member companies – CEOs of 34 (i.e. 2/3) of them have been invited to at least one Bilderberg conference, with six companies belonging to the inner core of the network: Nokia, Siemens, Investor AB, Royal Dutch Shell, Lafarge Holcim and BP.⁵³ **All** chairmen of this organisation since 1988 have participated in at least one conference before their appointment.

6. Literature

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⁵² Which raises the question whether other informal meeting points of the transatlantic (or at least European) elite exist which would foster more cooperation between Western and Eastern European countries. In Richardson's book, one interviewee mentions a forum called „Da Arrabida“ in Portugal, which he places on a similar level of geopolitical importance but which is much smaller than the Bilderberg conference and includes people from Eastern Europe (Richardson 2011: 162). However, on a more general level it is possible that the absence of elite members from Eastern European countries reflects the geopolitical power relations and the almost total dominance of Western Europe over Eastern Europe – economically, politically and militarily.

⁵³ When the organisation was founded in 1983 it had only 18 members and almost all of them were at some point invited to a Bilderberg conference.

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