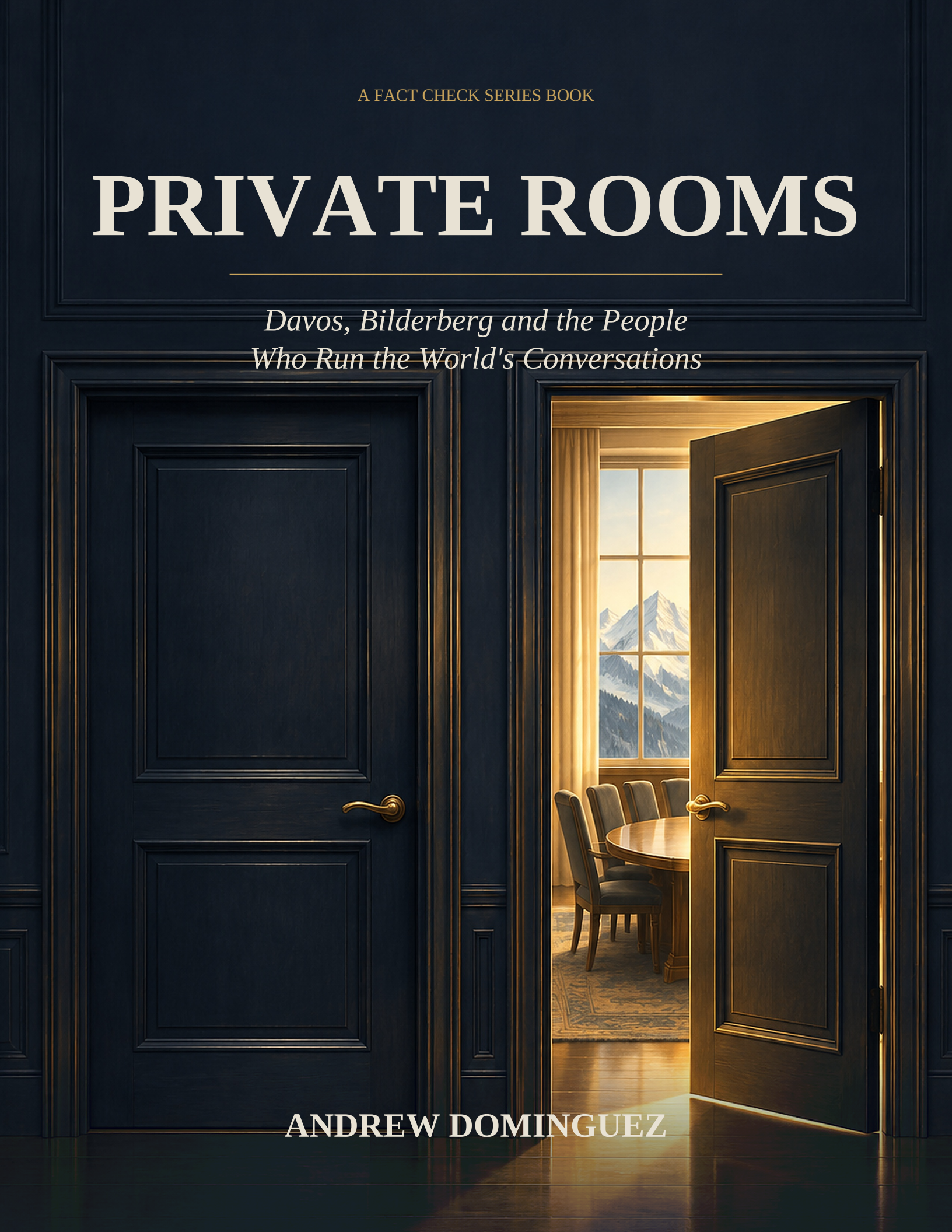
A FACT CHECK SERIES BOOK

PRIVATE ROOMS

Davos, Bilderberg and the People Who Run the World's Conversations



ANDREW DOMINGUEZ

Private Rooms

Davos, Bilderberg and the People Who Run the World's Conversations

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Trinfinity Enterprises

Private Rooms: Davos, Bilderberg and the People Who Run the World's Conversations

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This book combines and expands two earlier books in the Fact Check Series, "The Great Reset on the Record" and "Behind Closed Doors: The Bilderberg Meetings on the Record."

Information in this book stops at November 22, 2026. Leadership, laws, participant lists, investigations and official statements may have changed since then. Each chapter about the present gives the date of the newest source it uses.

This book is for general information. It reports what public records, declassified documents, tax filings, court rulings, parliamentary records, published research and news reporting show. It is not legal or financial advice.

Every factual statement is footnoted to a source a reader can open and check. Where a fact could not be confirmed, the text says so with the tag [Not verified]. Quotations of public officials and other people come from the records cited.

First edition, 2026.

About This Book

There are two famous private rooms in the Western world.

One is loud. Every January, close to 3,000 people fly into a Swiss ski town for the World Economic Forum's meeting in Davos. There are cameras, speeches and press releases. In June 2020, the Forum used that megaphone to announce a "Great Reset" of the world economy, and within a year millions of people were sure it was a plot to take their homes, their cars, their cash and their freedom.

The other is quiet. Once a year, about 130 of the most powerful people in the West check into a hotel for the Bilderberg Meeting, close the doors and talk for three days. No reporters, no quotes, no statement, no vote. For sixty years, writers have called it a secret world government.

This book looks into both rooms, and at the people who sit in both. It does not ask you to believe the wildest stories, and it does not ask you to laugh at them either. It asks a simpler question: what can we actually prove?

I name the people, the companies, the governments and the groups. I quote them in their own words, and I show you the declassified intelligence files, the tax returns, the parliamentary records and the historians' work in the archives. When a claim holds up, I say so. When it does not, I say that too. When the evidence is not strong enough either way, I tell you what is known, what is not, and where to dig if you want to check it yourself.

Every fact in this book has a footnote you can follow. You do not have to trust me. That is the point.

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Prologue: Two Rooms

Information in this book stops at November 22, 2026. Where a chapter talks about the present, it says so at the top and gives the date of the newest source it uses.

June 3, 2020

On June 3, 2020, most of the world was locked down. Businesses were closed, schools were empty and people were watching the news for the daily death count. That same day, the World Economic Forum (WEF), a private foundation based in Geneva, Switzerland, held a virtual meeting. Its press release opened this way: "The Great Reset" is "a commitment to jointly and urgently build the foundations of our economic and social system for a more fair, sustainable and resilient future."[1]

The announcement was made by two men. One was Klaus Schwab, the German-born economist who founded the Forum in 1971.[2] The other was the heir to the British throne, then called His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, now King Charles III. "In order to secure our future and to prosper, we need to evolve our economic model," the Prince said. "We simply can't waste more time."[3]

The same press release quoted the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, who called the Great Reset "a welcome recognition that this human tragedy must be a wake-up call."[4] It listed statements from the head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Kristalina Georgieva, from the head of BP, from Microsoft's president and from a global labor union leader, among others.[5] It also announced that "The Great Reset" would be the theme of the Forum's next big annual meeting in January 2021.[6]

On the same day, Schwab published an essay on the Forum's website titled "Now is the time for a 'great reset'." Two of its sentences are worth reading slowly:

> "To achieve a better outcome, the world must act jointly and swiftly to revamp all aspects of our societies and economies, from education to social contracts and working conditions."[7]
>
> "In short, we need a 'Great Reset' of capitalism."[8]

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[1] World Economic Forum, "The Great Reset: A Unique Twin Summit to Begin 2021," press release, Geneva, June 3, 2020, https://www.weforum.org/press/2020/06/the-great-reset-a-unique-twin-summit-to-begin-2021/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[2] World Economic Forum, "Davos at 50: A Timeline of Highlights," https://www.weforum.org/stories/forum-institutional/world-economic-forum-davos-at-50-history-a-timeline-of-highlights/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[3] World Economic Forum, "The Great Reset: A Unique Twin Summit to Begin 2021," June 3, 2020.

[4] Same source.

[5] Same source. The release lists statements from, among others, Kristalina Georgieva (IMF), Bernard Looney (BP), Bradford L. Smith (Microsoft), Sharan Burrow (International Trade Union Confederation), Ajay S. Banga (Mastercard) and economist Nick Stern.

[6] Same source.

[7] Klaus Schwab, "Now is the time for a 'great reset'," World Economic Forum, June 3, 2020, https://www.weforum.org/stories/2020/06/now-is-the-time-for-a-great-reset/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[8] Same source.

He called the pandemic "a rare but narrow window of opportunity to reflect, reimagine, and reset our world."[9]

Read those lines again. All aspects. Our societies. A window of opportunity. You do not need to believe in any secret plot to see why people were alarmed. The words were public, and they were big.

The book

Six weeks later, on July 14, 2020, the Forum announced a book by Schwab and Thierry Malleret, a French economist who runs a newsletter called the Monthly Barometer.[10] It was titled "COVID-19: The Great Reset" and was published by Forum Publishing in Geneva.[11]

The Forum's own press release summed up the book this way: "We are at a crossroads." One path, the authors wrote, "will take us to a better world: more inclusive, more equitable and more respectful of Mother Nature."[12]

Inside, the tone was firmer. In the introduction the authors wrote that "the world as we knew it in the early months of 2020 is no more, dissolved in the context of the pandemic."[13] They answered the question everyone was asking at the time, about when life would get back to normal, in two words: "The short response is: never."[14] They said the changes would shape "a 'new normal' radically different from the one we will be progressively leaving behind."[15] And in a section on how hard the virus would be to contain, they wrote that containing it "will necessitate a global surveillance network."[16]

You might ask, "Isn't that a confession?" Not quite. It is a prediction and an argument, written by two people, published under the Forum's name. It is not a law, a treaty or a contract. No government is bound by it. But it is a real book with real words in it, and when people say "Schwab wrote that life will never go back to normal," they are quoting him correctly. I will walk through what the book says, chapter by chapter, in Chapter 15.

The prime minister and the clip

In late September 2020, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau spoke by video to a United Nations conference. "This pandemic has provided an opportunity for a reset," he said. "This is our chance to accelerate our pre-pandemic efforts, to re-imagine economic systems that actually address global challenges like extreme poverty, inequality and climate change."[17]

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[9] Same source.

[10] World Economic Forum, "Klaus Schwab and Thierry Malleret Release 'COVID-19: The Great Reset', the First Policy Book on the COVID Crisis Globally," press release, July 14, 2020, https://www.weforum.org/media/klaus-schwab-and-thierry-malleret-release-covid-19-the-great-reset-the-first-policy-book-on-the-covid-crisis-globally/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[11] Klaus Schwab and Thierry Malleret, COVID-19: The Great Reset (Cologny/Geneva: Forum Publishing, 2020), ISBN 9782940631124 (print); the digital edition carries ISBN 978-2-940631-11-7.

[12] World Economic Forum, press release, July 14, 2020.

[13] Schwab and Malleret, COVID-19: The Great Reset, Introduction.

[14] Same source, Introduction.

[15] Same source, Introduction.

[16] Same source, Section 1.1.3. The book's section 1.6.2 discusses contact tracing and surveillance in more detail; discussed in more detail later in this book.

A short clip of the first part spread online that November. Canadian opposition lawmaker Pierre Poilievre started a petition asking the government to "end plans to impose the 'Great Reset'," and tied Trudeau's words to Schwab's June call. CBC News, Canada's public broadcaster, reported that Poilievre's petition cut off Trudeau's second sentence, the one about poverty and climate.[18]

So here is the pattern you will see over and over in this book. A real person said real words in public. Then someone cut, stretched or stacked those words into something bigger than what was said. To get the truth, you have to go back and hear the whole sentence.

Five words

Now for the five words most people know: "You'll own nothing, and be happy."

Here is where they come from.

In November 2016, a Danish member of parliament named Ida Auken wrote a short piece for the Forum's online "Agenda" blog. Its title was "Welcome to 2030. I own nothing, have no privacy, and life has never been better."[19] It was written as a day in the life of a person living in a future city where everything is rented or shared. The Forum later changed the title to "Here's how life could change in my city by the year 2030."[20] After the essay drew criticism, Auken added a note saying it was "a scenario showing where we could be heading - for better and for worse," not her dream of the future.[21]

The Forum also made a short video, "8 predictions for the world in 2030," based partly on her essay. One frame shows a smiling young man with the words "You'll own nothing. And you'll be happy."[22] The Forum posted it on its social media accounts; one copy on its Twitter account is dated April 9, 2018.[23]

So yes, the World Economic Forum put those words on screen, under its own name. Anyone who tells you that phrase was invented by conspiracy theorists is wrong.

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[17] Aaron Wherry, "The 'Great Reset' reads like a globalist plot with some plot holes," CBC News, November 2020, https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/great-reset-trudeau-poilievre-otoole-pandemic-covid-1.5817973 (accessed November 22, 2026). The article does not show its exact publication date. A fact-check by BOOM dates the remarks to September 29, 2020, the day Trudeau co-chaired a UN meeting on financing for development: "Justin Trudeau's UN Speech Is Not Proof Of 'Great Reset' Conspiracy," BOOM, https://www.boomlive.in/world/justin-trudeaus-un-speech-is-not-proof-of-great-reset-conspiracy-10737 (accessed November 22, 2026). [Not verified: the exact date; a photo caption in the CBC article gives September 23, 2020.]

[18] Wherry, CBC News.

[19] Ida Auken, "Welcome to 2030. I own nothing, have no privacy, and life has never been better," World Economic Forum Agenda, November 2016, original address https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/11/shopping-i-can-t-really-remember-what-that-is (removed by the Forum; view archived copies through web.archive.org). Republished as "Welcome to 2030. I Own Nothing, Have No Privacy, and Life Has Never Been Better," Futurism, https://futurism.com/welcome-2030-nothing-privacy-life-better (accessed November 22, 2026).

[20] Wikipedia, "You'll own nothing and be happy," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/You%27ll_own_nothing_and_be_happy (accessed November 22, 2026), citing the retitled Forum page at https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/11/how-life-could-change-2030/. Wikipedia is used here only as a pointer to the Forum's own pages.

[21] Ankita Kulkarni, "False: A 2016 video from World Economic Forum confirmed that it would have people own nothing and keep them happy," Logically Facts, November 4, 2022, https://logicallyfacts.com/en/fact-check/false-a-2016-video-from-world-economic-forum-confirmed-that-it-would-have-people-own-nothing-and-keep-them-happy (accessed November 22, 2026), quoting Auken's note.

[22] Wikipedia, "You'll own nothing and be happy"; Kulkarni, Logically Facts.

[23] World Economic Forum (@wef), "8 predictions for the world in 2030," post on X (formerly Twitter), April 9, 2018, https://twitter.com/wef/status/983378870819794945 (accessed November 22, 2026). Logically Facts reports the video was first posted on the Forum's Facebook page in 2016 and shared again on October 28, 2022.

But that is not the whole story either. The Forum's opinion pieces carry a standard note that "the views expressed in this article are those of the author alone and not the World Economic Forum."[24] The Forum has said it has no stated goal for people to "own nothing and be happy."[25] Fact-checkers at Reuters, Logically and others rated the claim that owning nothing is the Forum's official goal as false.[26] And the Forum's managing director, Adrian Monck, blamed the spread of the phrase on online disinformation and said the Forum took down the essay after Auken received abuse and threats.[27]

So which is it? Here is my verdict, and I will use this same kind of verdict for every major claim in the book.

Claim: "The World Economic Forum's plan is that you will own nothing and be happy."

Verdict: Partly true. The Forum published the essay and made the video with that exact line. That part is documented. No Forum policy, report, government agreement or law that I could find sets "owning nothing" as a goal. The words were a scenario, not a plan. But the Forum chose to put them on screen and share them, and it should not be surprised that people took it at its word.

What happened next

The Great Reset did not roll out the way the Forum announced it.

The in-person meeting planned for January 2021 never happened in Davos. The Forum moved it to Singapore and then canceled it in May 2021 because of the pandemic.[28] In January 2022 Schwab and Malleret released a follow-up book, "The Great Narrative," which the Forum said describes how to "create a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable future."[29]

Then the Forum itself was shaken from the inside.

In April 2025, Klaus Schwab, after 55 years in charge, was pushed out as chairman sooner than he had planned. A whistleblower letter sent to the board that month accused him and his family of mixing

[24] Kulkarni, Logically Facts.

[25] Kulkarni, Logically Facts; Wikipedia, "You'll own nothing and be happy," summarizing the Forum's statement.

[26] Reuters, "Fact check: The World Economic Forum does not have a stated goal to have people own nothing by 2030," February 25, 2021, https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-factcheck-wef-idUSKBN2AP2T0 [Not verified: the Reuters page could not be opened during research; title, date and finding are as reported in the Wikipedia article above]; Kulkarni, Logically Facts.

[27] Adrian Monck, "How 'own nothing and be happy' sparked a misinformation campaign that targeted the World Economic Forum," The Globe and Mail, August 5, 2022, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-world-economic-forum-misinformation/; Peter Zimonjic, "World Economic Forum official says Canada has bigger issues to discuss than conspiracy theories," CBC News, September 3, 2022, https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/adrian-monck-world-economic-forum-house-interview-1.6571569. Both as summarized in Wikipedia, "You'll own nothing and be happy," which quotes Monck saying the Forum removed the material "because of the online abuse and threats she had faced" [Not verified: the original articles could not be opened].

[28] Singapore Ministry of Trade and Industry, "Response to media queries on the World Economic Forum cancellation of the Special Annual Meeting," May 17, 2021, https://www.meti.gov.sg/newsroom/response-to-media-queries-on-the-world-economic-forum-cancellation-of-the-special-annual-meeting/ (accessed November 22, 2026); "World Economic Forum cancels 2021 annual meeting in Singapore," Malay Mail (Reuters), May 17, 2021, https://www.malaymail.com/news/money---international/2021/05/17/world-economic-forum-cancels-2021-annual-meeting-in-singapore/1974891 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[29] World Economic Forum, "Klaus Schwab Releases 'The Great Narrative' As Sequel To 'The Great Reset'," press release, January 7, 2022, https://www.weforum.org/media/klaus-schwab-releases-the-great-narrative-as-sequel-to-the-great-reset/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

personal and Forum spending. Schwab strongly denied every claim.[30] On August 15, 2025, the Forum's board announced that an outside law firm it had hired found "no evidence of material wrongdoing by Klaus Schwab." The same release named two interim co-chairmen: Larry Fink, the head of BlackRock, the largest money manager in the world, and Andre Hoffmann, vice-chairman of the Swiss drug company Roche.[31]

On February 26, 2026, the Forum's president and chief executive, Borge Brende, a former foreign minister of Norway who had led the Forum's staff since 2017, stepped down. Records released by the U.S. Department of Justice showed he had attended dinners with the convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein in 2018 and 2019 and had exchanged emails and text messages with him. Brende said he did not know Epstein's past. The Forum said an outside review found no concerns beyond what had already been disclosed.[32] Alois Zwinggi became interim president and chief executive. As of November 22, 2026, the Forum's website lists him as president and chief executive, without the word "interim," and lists Fink and Hoffmann as co-chairs. I found no announcement of a permanent appointment.[33]

In October 2026, Reuters reported, citing unnamed sources, that the Forum's board could choose Christine Lagarde, president of the European Central Bank, as its next chair as early as November 2026. No final decision had been made at the time.[34] As of November 22, 2026, I found no announcement that the board had chosen a chair.

The Forum did not go away. Its January 2026 meeting in Davos, under the theme "A Spirit of Dialogue," expected close to 3,000 leaders from more than 130 countries.[35] One of the speakers was U.S. President Donald Trump, who gave remarks and took questions at the Davos Congress Centre on January 21, 2026.[36]

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[30] "Downfall in Davos: Klaus Schwab fights for legacy after WEF whistleblower claims," Swissinfo, May 2025, reprinting reporting from the Financial Times published May 15, 2025, https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/international-geneva/downfall-in-davos-klaus-schwab-fights-for-legacy-after-wef-whistleblower-claims/89325206 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[31] World Economic Forum, "News Release," Geneva, August 15, 2025, https://www.weforum.org/press/2025/08/news-release/ (accessed November 22, 2026). The release does not name the law firm. Titles for Fink ("Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of BlackRock") and Hoffmann ("Vice-Chairman of Roche Holding") are from World Economic Forum, "Leadership and Governance," https://www.weforum.org/about/leadership-and-governance (accessed November 22, 2026). On BlackRock as the largest asset manager, with more than $15 trillion under management in mid-2026: "BlackRock tops $15tn: Where does the world's largest asset manager put it all?," Euronews, July 17, 2026, https://www.euronews.com/2026/07/17/blackrock-tops-15tn-where-does-the-worlds-largest-asset-manager-put-it-all (accessed November 22, 2026).

[32] World Economic Forum, "Press Statement from Co-Chairs Andre Hoffmann and Larry Fink [on behalf of the Board of Trustees]," February 26, 2026, https://www.weforum.org/press/2026/02/press-statement-from-co-chairs-andre-hoffmann-and-larry-fink-on-behalf-of-the-board-of-trustees/ (accessed November 22, 2026); "World Economic Forum head Borge Brende quits after Epstein links revealed," Al Jazeera, February 26, 2026, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/2/26/world-economic-forum-head-borge-brende-quits-after-epstein-links-revealed (accessed November 22, 2026).

[33] World Economic Forum, "Leadership and Governance," https://www.weforum.org/about/leadership-and-governance (accessed November 22, 2026).

[34] Reuters, "WEF could appoint Lagarde as early as November, sources say," October 15, 2026, as republished by RTE, https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2026/1015/1595518-wef-could-appoint-lagarde-as-early-as-november-sources/, and The Business Standard, https://www.tbsnews.net/world/global-economy/wef-could-appoint-lagarde-next-chair-early-november-sources-1574346 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[35] World Economic Forum, "A Spirit of Dialogue Brings Record Numbers of World Leaders to Davos for World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2026," press release, January 2026, https://www.weforum.org/press/2026/01/a-spirit-of-dialogue-brings-record-numbers-of-world-leaders-to-davos-for-world-economic-forum-annual-meeting-2026/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[36] "Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland," January 21, 2026, Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents, DCPD-202600046, U.S. Government Publishing Office, https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/DCPD-202600046/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

That is a lot of change in a short time. The man who launched the Great Reset is gone. The chief executive who ran it day to day is gone. The man now co-chairing the board runs a firm that manages trillions of dollars of other people's money. Whether the ideas launched in 2020 are fading, being renamed or quietly moving forward under new leadership is one of the questions this book tries to answer.

The other room

Six years later, and an ocean away, a very different meeting opened its doors to almost no one. The Davos crowd likes cameras. This crowd does not. But as you will see in this book, some of the same people sit in both rooms.

Washington, April 2026

On Thursday, April 9, 2026, the 72nd Bilderberg Meeting opened at the Salamander Hotel in Washington, D.C. It ran through Sunday, April 12.[37]

The guest list read like a who's who of Western power. Reporters on the scene and the group's own published list named the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Mark Rutte, and his predecessor, Jens Stoltenberg. King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands came, and so did the Dutch prime minister, Rob Jetten. From the U.S. government came Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, Army Secretary Daniel Driscoll and Admiral Samuel Paparo, head of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.[38] Business sent the chief executives of Pfizer, Deutsche Bank, Siemens, Stripe, TotalEnergies and Palantir, along with former Google chief Eric Schmidt.[39] The group's published list also included British politician David Lammy, former British intelligence chief John Sawers, Demis Hassabis of Google DeepMind and Mira Murati, the former chief technology officer of OpenAI.[40]

The published topics were artificial intelligence, the Arctic, China, digital finance, energy, Europe, world trade, the Middle East, Russia, the trans-Atlantic defense industry, Ukraine and the United States.[41]

What did they decide? Nobody outside the room knows. That is how the meeting is designed.

What Bilderberg says about itself

The group runs a public website. On it, Bilderberg Meetings says it was founded to foster dialogue between Europe and North America and calls itself "a forum for discussion on a wide range of topics."[42]

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[37] "Bilderberg ja comecou em Washington," Pagina Um (Portugal), April 10, 2026, https://paginaum.pt/2026/04/10/bilderberg-ja-comecou-em-washington-sem-antonio-costa-na-lista-oficial-mas-guta-mantem-se (accessed November 22, 2026), reporting the 72nd meeting at the Salamander Hotel, April 9 to 12, 2026. Wikipedia's list of meetings numbers it 71st, while Pagina Um and Wikipedia's article on the 2026 conference call it the 72nd [Not verified: official numbering]. The group's own 2026 meeting page is https://bilderbergmeetings.org/meetings/meeting-2026/ [Not verified: the official page would not load during research].

[38] Josh Friedman, "California funding pours into Bilderberg despite tech elites fleeing the state," Cal Coast News, April 12, 2026, https://calcoastnews.com/2026/04/california-funding-pours-into-bilderberg-despite-tech-elites-fleeing-the-state/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[39] Same source. The article names Albert Bourla (Pfizer), Christian Sewing (Deutsche Bank), Roland Busch (Siemens), Patrick Collison (Stripe), Patrick Pouyanne (TotalEnergies), Alex Karp (Palantir) and Eric Schmidt.

[40] Bilderberg Meetings, "Participants 2026," https://www.bilderbergmeetings.org/meetings/meeting-2026/participants-2026, as summarized in Wikipedia, "2026 Bilderberg Conference," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2026_Bilderberg_Conference (accessed November 22, 2026) [Not verified: names and titles not checked against the official list, which would not load]. Wikipedia is used here only as a pointer to the official list.

[41] Pagina Um, April 10, 2026; Wikipedia, "2026 Bilderberg Conference."

Its own answers to common questions are worth reading carefully, because they tell you both what the meeting is and why people distrust it:

- The meeting is closed to journalists "in order to encourage the highest level of openness and dialogue."[43]
- Participants "agree not to quote each other." They may talk about what they learned, but not about who said it. This is often called the Chatham House Rule.[44]
- "There is no closing statement, there are no resolutions proposed or votes taken."[45]
- Invitations are decided by a Steering Committee. As of the newest version of the page I could read, its co-chairs are Victor Halberstadt of the Netherlands and Marie-Josee Kravis of the United States.[46]
- The host country's Steering Committee members cover the hospitality. Participants pay their own travel and hotel, and "there is no attendance fee."[47]
- The participant list "is published on this website a few days before each annual Meeting."[48]

Read that last line again. Bilderberg publishes the names of who attends and the list of topics. It does not publish what anyone said. So when someone tells you Bilderberg is a "secret" meeting, they are half right, and I will show you which half matters.

Follow the money

Every group that meets in the United States leaves a paper trail, and Bilderberg is no exception. Its U.S. support arm is a nonprofit called American Friends of Bilderberg, Inc., registered with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) under Employer Identification Number 51-0163715.[49] Like other nonprofits, it must file a yearly tax return with the IRS, in its case Form 990-PF, the version for private foundations, and those returns are public.

A reporter for the California news site Cal Coast News went through those filings in April 2026. He reported that Palantir co-founder Peter Thiel, a Steering Committee member, gave $500,000 in 2022 and again in 2024; that Eric Schmidt gave $900,000 between 2015 and 2024; that Palantir chief Alex Karp gave more than $350,000 over the same years; and that the group spent more than $3 million in 2022, a year it hosted the meeting in the United States.[50] [Not verified: the individual donor amounts are as reported; Chapter 7 compares the yearly totals with the IRS filings.]

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[42] Bilderberg Meetings, "Brief History," https://www.bilderbergmeetings.org/background/brief-history (accessed November 22, 2026).

[43] Bilderberg Meetings, "Frequently Asked Questions," https://bilderbergmeetings.org/frequently-asked-questions (accessed November 22, 2026).

[44] Same source. The page describes the practice without naming the Chatham House Rule; the rule is named by Reuters and other reporting.

[45] Same source.

[46] Same source. Wikipedia's "Bilderberg Meeting" article lists Henri de Castries as a co-chair from 2025; the group's own page, which governs here, names Halberstadt and Kravis. The chapter on the Steering Committee discusses the current chair.

[47] Bilderberg Meetings, "Frequently Asked Questions."

[48] Same source.

[49] ProPublica Nonprofit Explorer, "American Friends Of Bilderberg Inc," EIN 51-0163715, https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/510163715 (accessed November 22, 2026). The listing, in New York, shows a Form 990-PF for the fiscal year ending December 2025, filed May 18, 2026, with revenue of $2,625,069, expenses of $151,532 and net assets of $3,707,314.

You might ask, "Why would billionaires pay for a meeting with no outcome?" That is a fair question, and the honest answer is that we only know what they say: that access to the room and the conversation is worth it. Chapter 7 looks at what the filings can and cannot tell us.

Oosterbeek, May 1954

Now go back seventy-two years.

The first meeting was held May 29 to 31, 1954, at the Hotel de Bilderberg in Oosterbeek, a village in the Netherlands. The group still takes its name from that hotel.[51]

The idea came from Jozef Retinger, a Polish politician living in exile. He was worried that Western Europeans were turning against the United States just as the Cold War was heating up. He found a powerful sponsor in Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, the husband of Queen Juliana. Paul van Zeeland, a former prime minister of Belgium, and Paul Rijkens, the head of the Unilever company, helped promote it.[52]

To get Americans to the table, Bernhard went to the head of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Walter Bedell Smith, who passed the project to C.D. Jackson, a special assistant to President Dwight Eisenhower.[53] [Not verified: this chain is reported by historian Valerie Aubourg in a 2003 study and is cited here through a secondary summary. Chapter 3 sets out what the records do and do not confirm.]

So the CIA was there at the start. That part is not a theory. CIA records released to the public show the agency's leaders discussing the conference at a meeting on May 21, 1954, a week before it opened. They show CIA Director Allen Dulles corresponding about Bilderberg in 1958 and 1959 and saying he could not attend. A 1975 CIA staff note reported that Margaret Thatcher had been invited to that year's meeting in Turkey. And a memo from about 1982 on a Reagan administration program called "Project Truth" proposed appearances at "the May 13-16 Bilderberg Meeting" as a way to make the U.S. case overseas.[54]

Does that mean the CIA created Bilderberg and runs it? Here the historians push back. Thomas Gijswijt, a historian at the University of Tubingen in Germany, wrote the first history based on the group's own archive. His publisher describes the book as arguing against the claim that the CIA created the group and against theories that it is a secret world government.[55] A 2003 article in the journal Diplomacy and

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[50] Friedman, Cal Coast News, April 12, 2026.

[51] Bilderberg Meetings, "Brief History."

[52] Wikipedia, "Bilderberg Meeting," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bilderberg_Meeting (accessed November 22, 2026), citing Valerie Aubourg, "Organizing Atlanticism: the Bilderberg Group and the Atlantic Institute 1952-1963," Intelligence and National Security 18, no. 2 (2003): 92-105, also published as a chapter in The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-1960 (London: Frank Cass, 2003) [Not verified: book title and publisher], https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203485811-8/organizing-atlanticism-bilderberg-group-atlantic-institute-1952%E2%80%931963-valerie-aubourg; only the abstract was available to me [Not verified: not checked against Aubourg's full article].

[53] Same source.

[54] "A look through CIA's declassified Bilderberg files," MuckRock, 2017, https://www.muckrock.com/news/archives/2017/feb/27/bilderberg-cia/ (accessed November 22, 2026), summarizing documents released by the CIA. The underlying files are in the CIA's Freedom of Information Act reading room, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom [Not verified: individual CIA document numbers are not listed here; search the CIA reading room for "Bilderberg"].

[55] Thomas W. Gijswijt, Informal Alliance: The Bilderberg Group and Transatlantic Relations during the Cold War, 1952-1968 (London: Routledge, 2019), publisher's description, https://www.routledge.com/Informal-Alliance-The-Bilderberg-Group-and-Transatlantic-Relations-during/Gijswijt/p/book/9780815396741 (accessed November 22, 2026). The publisher calls it "the first archive-based history of the secretive Bilderberg Group."

Statecraft tested three popular theories about Bilderberg's origins, that it was a CIA plot, a socialist plot or a new world order, and concluded the group was "neither an entirely American nor European invention."[56]

So here is where the evidence stands, at least for now. The CIA knew about Bilderberg from the start, its leaders were in contact with it, and a later administration saw it as a useful place to make its case. Whether the agency did more than that is a question I take up in Chapter 3, with the documents in front of us.

The prince and the bribes

Prince Bernhard chaired Bilderberg from 1954 until 1976.[57] His exit is a story in itself.

In 1976, a Dutch government commission spent six months looking into reports that the American aircraft maker Lockheed had paid the prince bribes totaling $1.1 million to help sell its planes. The commission did not find firm proof he received that money. But it found he had "shown himself open to dishonorable requests and offers" and had "allowed himself to be tempted to take initiatives that were completely unacceptable." Bernhard gave up his post as inspector general of the Dutch armed forces and nearly all his other public roles. "I sincerely regret this," he said. The prime minister decided not to prosecute him, citing the possible consequences for the Queen.[58]

There was no Bilderberg meeting in 1976.[59] [Not verified: reported in secondary sources citing The New York Times of March 6, 1976; see Chapter 2.]

So the founding chairman of the meeting people call a secret government left in a real bribery scandal, found by his own government's investigators. That is a documented fact, and it is more damaging than most of the rumors.

What insiders have said

People who attended have said a few things on the record.

Denis Healey, a British Labour Party politician who later served as Chancellor of the Exchequer, was one of the founders and sat on the Steering Committee for about thirty years.[60] In his 1989 autobiography he wrote: "Of all these meetings, the most valuable to me while I was in opposition were the Bilderberg Conferences."[61]

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[56] "CIA plot, socialist conspiracy, or new world order? The origins of the Bilderberg group, 1952-55," Diplomacy and Statecraft 14, no. 3 (September 2003), abstract at https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/routledg/dip/2003/00000014/00000003/art00004 (accessed November 22, 2026) [Not verified: author name].

[57] Wikipedia, "Bilderberg Meeting," chairmen table.

[58] "The Netherlands: The Prince Errant Loses His Epaulets," Time, September 6, 1976, https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,918300,00.html (accessed November 22, 2026).

[59] Wikipedia, "Bilderberg Meeting," citing "U.S. to Urge Pact in U.N. to Combat Business Bribes," The New York Times, March 6, 1976.

[60] Wikipedia, "Bilderberg Meeting," citing Jon Ronson, "Who pulls the strings? (part 3)," The Guardian, March 10, 2001, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/mar/10/extract1 [Not verified: the Guardian page could not be opened during research].

[61] Denis Healey, The Time of My Life (London: Michael Joseph, 1989), pp. 195-196, as quoted in "Denis Healey on Bilderberg," Socialist Standard, July 2002, https://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/socialist-standard/2002/2000s/no-1175-july-2002/denis-healey-bilderberg/ (accessed November 22, 2026). Publisher name [Not verified].

In 2025, Reuters asked Christina Garsten, a professor who studies transnational think tanks, about the meeting. She said how much impact such groups have "is hard to judge." Reuters noted that groups like this aim to shape the broad political and corporate agenda, and that if they are seen as having too much influence they can be accused of being anti-democratic. "It's there that conspiracy theories can flower," Garsten said. But she called the idea of a shadowy world government "very much exaggerated."[62]

Hold on to that tension, because it runs through this whole book. A meeting can be private, influential and worth watching without being a world government. And a group that wants to be trusted could make that easier by telling the public more.

A first verdict

Claim: "Bilderberg is a secret meeting."

Verdict: Partly true. The meeting's location, dates, topics and participant list are published by the group itself, so the existence of the meeting and who goes are not secret.[63] What is said inside is kept private on purpose: no press, no quotes, no statement, no votes.[64] So "private" is accurate and "secret" is an overstatement. The part people worry about, what was discussed and whether it changed anything, is exactly the part that is hidden.

Two bad ways to read this story

There are two easy ways to get this story wrong.

The first is to treat every claim as true. That is what some popular books do. One widely sold book on the subject, by radio host Alex Jones, describes the Great Reset as "the global elite's international conspiracy to enslave humanity."[65] Writers have told the same kind of story about Bilderberg since at least 1964, from the political right and left, from foreign governments and from internet personalities.[66] Claims like that cannot be checked, so they cannot be proved, and they bury the real, documented things under a pile of fear. Worse, some versions online have picked up old antisemitic myths about a hidden group running the world. PolitiFact, a fact-checking site, noted that some versions of the Great Reset theory include antisemitic elements.[67] My earlier book in this series, "Secret Societies," traces those myths and shows where they fail. I do not repeat them here except to show where they came from.

The second wrong way is to say there is nothing to see. Some fact-checks did that. They were right that the scariest claims had no evidence. But the Great Reset was a real initiative, launched by real people,

[62] Reuters, "Bilderberg group meets in Sweden amid US-Europe tensions," June 12, 2025, as published by RTE, https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2025/0612/1518108-bilderberg-group-meets-in-sweden-amid-us-europe-tensions (accessed November 22, 2026).

[63] Bilderberg Meetings, "Frequently Asked Questions."

[64] Same source; Reuters, June 12, 2025.

[65] Publisher's description of Alex Jones, The Great Reset: And the War for the World (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2022), as listed by Barnes and Noble, https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-great-reset-alex-jones/1141115582, and Readings Books, https://www.readings.com.au/product/9781510774049/the-great-reset--alex-jones--2022--9781510774049 (both accessed November 22, 2026). The full phrase is "the global elite's international conspiracy to enslave humanity and all life on the planet."

[66] Wikipedia, "Bilderberg Meeting," citing Chip Berlet, Right Woos Left (Political Research Associates, 1994), which traces right-wing Bilderberg theories to Phyllis Schlafly's 1964 book A Choice Not an Echo. The chapter on where the theories came from covers this history from the original books.

[67] PolitiFact, fact-check of a claim by Liz Wheeler about the Great Reset, October 11, 2022, https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2022/oct/11/liz-wheeler/great-reset-not-conspiracy-force-changes-economic/ (accessed November 22, 2026). PolitiFact rated Wheeler's claim that the Great Reset is "mostly just fascism" False.

with real goals, published in their own words. The British fact-checking group Full Fact put it plainly: "the Great Reset is a real thing," and it "faced genuine criticism."[68] And Bilderberg is a real meeting, where a sitting NATO chief, kings and cabinet members sit in the same room as the heads of defense contractors, drug makers, banks and artificial intelligence companies. Lobbying rules, ethics rules and public-records laws in most democracies are built on the idea that the public gets to know when officials and companies meet. Asking what is said in those rooms is not paranoia. It is what citizens are supposed to do.

And the criticism does not come from only one side of politics. A year before the Great Reset, on June 13, 2019, the Forum and the United Nations signed a "Strategic Partnership Framework."[69] More than 200 civil society groups, most of them on the political left, signed a letter against it, warning that it would "permanently associate the U.N. with transnational corporations."[70] When the right says unelected billionaires are steering public policy, and the left says the same thing in different words, that is worth paying attention to.

How this book is built

This book brings together two books in my Fact Check Series, "The Great Reset on the Record" and "Behind Closed Doors," and adds what only shows up when you put them side by side. I wrote it the same way as every book in the series. Every factual sentence has a footnote. Every footnote gives you a source you can open: the Forum's own press releases and books, Bilderberg's own pages, declassified government files, tax filings, court records, parliamentary records, published research and news reporting.

I give more weight to some sources than others. The best source is the original: what an organization, a government or a person actually published or said on the record. Next come courts, parliaments and neutral government analysts. Then historians and published research. Then news reporting and fact-checks. Advocacy groups and books from either side come last, and when I use them I tell you who they are so you can weigh them.

When I could not confirm a fact, I say so with the tag [Not verified]. When sources disagree, I show you both.

I name names. If a person, company, government or group did something on the record, I say who and give you the source. Attending a meeting is a fact, and when a published list or a reliable report shows someone attended, I say so. But a claim that someone made a decision there, or was chosen there, needs more than attendance. For those, I show the evidence and give a verdict. Being fair to people I disagree with is the only way to be believed when I criticize them.

The verdicts

Part Six tests the most common claims about the Great Reset and Bilderberg and gives each one a verdict. Along the way, I give verdicts on the big claims as they come up. I use only four.

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[68] Grace Rahman, "The Great Reset: What is it?," Full Fact, April 14, 2022, https://fullfact.org/online/great-reset-conspiracy-theory/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[69] World Economic Forum, "World Economic Forum and UN Sign Strategic Partnership Framework," press release, June 13, 2019, https://www.weforum.org/press/2019/06/world-economic-forum-and-un-sign-strategic-partnership-framework/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[70] Common Dreams, news report on more than 200 groups opposing the UN-WEF agreement, September 27, 2019, https://www.commondreams.org/news/2019/09/27/200-groups-denounce-un-wef-agreement-entrenches-corporate-interests-driving-global (accessed November 22, 2026). Common Dreams is a progressive news site; the letter itself is posted by the Transnational Institute, https://www.tni.org/en/article/end-the-united-nationsworld-economic-forum-partnership-agreement.

Table P.1. The four verdicts used in this book

Verdict	What it means
True	Primary sources confirm it as usually stated.
Partly true	There is a real fact underneath, but the usual version leaves out or twists something important. I say exactly which part is true.
False (debunked)	Primary sources contradict it.
Inconclusive	The evidence is not strong enough to say either way, or an investigation is still open. I say what would settle it.

Some of the most interesting questions in this story land in "Partly true" or "Inconclusive." Those are the ones where the evidence leans one way but does not close the case. For each of those, you will find a short section called "Research It Yourself" with the records to look at and the questions to ask. I would rather hand you the tools than ask you to take my word.

Research It Yourself: The five words

- Read Ida Auken's original essay in full. It was republished by Futurism under its original title.[71] Ask yourself: is this written as a plan, a prediction or a warning?
- Find the Forum's "8 predictions for the world in 2030" video on its social media accounts and watch the full clip, not a screenshot.[72]
- Use the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine (web.archive.org) to see the Forum's original 2016 page and how it changed over time.
- Then read the Forum's own Great Reset launch release from June 3, 2020.[73] Compare the language. Does the 2020 launch say anything about owning nothing? What does it say instead?

Research It Yourself: The 2026 meeting

- Go to bilderbergmeetings.org and open the 2026 meeting page, the press release and the participant list.[74] Count the government officials. Count the business leaders. What share of the room holds public office?
- Look up American Friends of Bilderberg on ProPublica's Nonprofit Explorer and open the Form 990 filings.[75] Who is listed as an officer? How much was spent in a year the meeting was held in the United States?
- Read the CIA's released Bilderberg records through the CIA reading room at cia.gov/readingroom. Search for "Bilderberg." Ask: do these files show the CIA running the meeting, or watching and using it?
- For each U.S. official on the 2026 list, ask who paid for the trip and whether it shows up in that official's public financial disclosure or travel records.

[71] Auken, Futurism republication (note 19).

[72] World Economic Forum (@wef), April 9, 2018 (note 23).

[73] World Economic Forum, press release, June 3, 2020 (note 1).

[74] Bilderberg Meetings, 2026 meeting page (note 1).

[75] ProPublica Nonprofit Explorer (note 13).

How to read this book

You can read it straight through or jump to what you care about. Part One shows where the two rooms came from: Bilderberg in 1954, with its prince and its CIA question, and Davos in 1971, with the ideas that came before the Great Reset. Part Two shows how the rooms work today: who picks the guests, who pays, who attends, the rule of silence and the people who sit in both. Part Three lets the authors of the Great Reset speak in their own words, topic by topic: money, food, technology, cities and business. Part Four asks about power and accountability: the future leaders, the wars, the questions governments have had to answer in their own parliaments, the pushback and the scandals. Part Five traces the theories. Part Six puts fifty-nine claims to the test and gives you a method to check the next one yourself.

You will notice I quote these people a lot. That is on purpose. The strongest case anyone can make about either room, for it or against it, starts with what its own members wrote down and said.

Let's start where the older room started: in a Europe still in ruins, worried about losing America.

Part One: Where the Rooms Came From

Chapter 1: Retinger's Idea: Oosterbeek, 1954

A worried Pole in London

The best way to understand Bilderberg is to start with the man who dreamed it up, and with what he was afraid of.

Jozef Retinger was Polish-born and based in London. He had helped found the European Movement, which pushed for European unity after the Second World War. In the early 1950s, he was alarmed by something he saw growing in Western Europe: anti-American feeling. He believed it threatened the partnership between Europe and the United States and handed the Soviet Union a propaganda gift.[76]

The historian Thomas Gijswijt, who has worked in the Bilderberg archives, writes that this rising anti-Americanism "provided the initial ignition for the creation of the Bilderberg Group."[77]

The plan

In 1952, Retinger decided to bring European leaders together to study the problem, write a report and then ask for an American response.[78] His memorandum framing the project put it bluntly: "The fate of western civilization depends on the maintenance of accord between Europe and America."[79]

The Europeans he brought in came from both left and right. Gijswijt lists social democrats Max Brauer of Germany, Hugh Gaitskell of Britain and Guy Mollet of France; conservatives Ole Bjorn Kraft of Denmark, Antoine Pinay of France and Paul van Zeeland of Belgium; Paul Rijkens, chairman of the Unilever company; and Major-General Colin Gubbins, the former head of Britain's wartime sabotage service, the Special Operations Executive (SOE). Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands became the first chairman.[80]

Notice the mix. This was not a single party or a single class. It was the political center of Western Europe, left and right together, plus business and a wartime spymaster, united by one fear: losing America.

The Americans

On the American side, Gijswijt reports that Joseph E. Johnson, David Rockefeller, Dean Rusk and Walter Bedell Smith "agreed to help organize and fund the Bilderberg meetings."[81] Johnson led the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Rockefeller was a rising banker. Rusk later became Secretary of State. Bedell Smith was Director of Central Intelligence, the head of the Central Intelligence Agency

[76] Thomas W. Gijswijt, "Emotions and positive anti-communism during the early Cold War: the case of the Bilderberg Group," Journal of Transatlantic Studies 22 (2024): 11-24, pp. 11-12, https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1057/s42738-024-00117-3.pdf (accessed November 22, 2026).

[77] Same source, p. 11.

[78] Same source, p. 11.

[79] Same source, p. 12.

[80] Same source, p. 12.

[81] Same source, p. 13.

(CIA), from October 1950 to February 1953, and on February 9, 1953, he became Under Secretary of State.[82]

So from its first days, Bilderberg brought together European politicians, American bankers, foundation leaders and a man from the top of the U.S. intelligence world. That is not a theory. It is in the historian's footnotes.

The first meeting

The first meeting was held May 29 to 31, 1954, at the Hotel de Bilderberg in Oosterbeek, the Netherlands.[83] The group's own records list four topics:[84]

1. "The attitude towards communism and the Soviet Union"
2. "The attitude towards dependent areas and peoples overseas"
3. "The attitude towards economic policies and problems"
4. "The attitude towards European integration and the European Defence Community"

According to Gijswijt, the Europeans at that first meeting were frank about what bothered them about America. Gijswijt writes that they were troubled by "the excesses of McCarthyism in the United States." Italy's Alcide de Gasperi compared Senators Joseph McCarthy and Pat McCarran to fascism. Even an American, Paul Nitze, described "near-hysteria over domestic communism in the United States."[85]

That surprised me, and it may surprise you. The meeting that later became a symbol of hidden elite power began, in part, as a place where Europeans told Americans to their faces what they disliked about American politics.

Rockefeller's account

David Rockefeller, who later ran the Chase Manhattan Bank, wrote about that first meeting in his 2002 memoirs. "Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands convened the first conference in May 1954 at the urging of Joseph Retinger," he wrote. He described himself as one of eleven Americans invited to a meeting of about sixty participants.[86]

The mood in the room

Gijswijt's research gives a rare picture of the feelings in those early rooms. Colin Gubbins, the former wartime sabotage chief, reported that "the European will not allow himself to believe that a third world war will actually happen." Britain's Oliver Franks said "massive emotional states had arisen in the United States" that Britain and Europe did not share. Dean Rusk worried about "the lack of a moral rallying point

[82] U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, "Walter Bedell Smith," https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/people/smith-walter-bedell (accessed November 22, 2026); U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950-1955, The Intelligence Community, "Persons," which lists him as "Director of Central Intelligence from October 7, 1950 to February 20, 1953," https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950-55Intel/preface (accessed November 22, 2026).

[83] Bilderberg Meetings, "Brief History," https://www.bilderbergmeetings.org/background/brief-history (accessed November 22, 2026).

[84] Bilderberg Meetings, "Meetings overview: 1950s," https://www.bilderbergmeetings.org/meetings/meetings-overview/1950 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[85] Gijswijt, 2024, pp. 16-17.

[86] David Rockefeller, Memoirs (New York: Random House, 2002), Chapter 27, "Proud Internationalist," sections "Bilderberg" and "Populist Paranoia." Passages checked against a scanned copy; page numbers [Not verified].

for the youth of Western Europe." And Britain's Liberal leader, Clement Davies, said communism "could not be defeated by hatred and persecution."[87]

At the 1955 meeting in Barbizon, the French Socialist Guy Mollet put the Cold War in one line: "the communists are neither to the right, nor to the left, but to the East."[88]

These are not the voices of men plotting to rule the world. They are the voices of frightened, serious people in the first decade of the nuclear age, arguing about how to keep their alliance together. That does not make their meeting accountable. But it is the real history, and it is more human than the legends.

What came out of it

Gijswijt argues that the early meetings pushed participants toward what he calls "positive anti-communism": not just opposing the Soviets, but offering something better. The main expression of that, he concludes, was European integration, the drive to tie Western Europe's economies together.[89]

Here is a sample of what the meetings discussed in their first five years, from the group's own records:[90]

Table 1.1. Bilderberg meetings in the 1950s

Year	Place	Sample topics
1954	Oosterbeek, Netherlands	Communism and the Soviet Union; European integration
1955	Barbizon, France	"Communist infiltration in various Western countries"
1955	Garmisch-Partenkirchen, West Germany	Atomic energy; German reunification; "European unity"
1956	Fredensborg, Denmark	Anti-Western blocs at the UN; anti-colonialism; China
1957	St. Simons Island, Georgia, U.S.	Nationalism and neutralism in the Western Alliance; the Middle East
1957	Fiuggi, Italy	Modern weapons and disarmament
1958	Buxton, England	The future of NATO defense; the Western approach to Soviet Russia
1959	Yesilkoy, Turkey	Unity and division in Western policy

[87] Thomas W. Gijswijt, "Emotions and positive anti-communism during the early Cold War: the case of the Bilderberg Group," Journal of Transatlantic Studies 22 (2024): 11-24, pp. 15-18. Gijswijt describes Davies as "leader of the British Liberal Party" (p. 17).

[88] Same source, p. 20.

[89] Gijswijt, 2024, pp. 16-17, pp. 11, 21-23.

[90] Bilderberg Meetings, "Meetings overview: 1950s."

What this chapter shows

Bilderberg was born out of the Cold War. Its founders were frightened that Western Europe and America would drift apart and that communism would win. They brought together leaders from the center-left and center-right, business and intelligence, and they talked about the biggest questions of the day: the Soviets, colonies, trade, atomic weapons and European unity.

You may admire that or distrust it. Either way, the founding story is documented, and it is not the story of a cabal planning to rule the world. It is the story of a Western establishment trying to hold itself together. The question that follows, and that this book keeps asking, is what happened to that establishment's meeting after the Cold War ended and it kept going.

Chapter 2: The Prince: Bernhard of the Netherlands

The man in the chair

For the first twenty-two years, from 1954 to 1976, the man running the Bilderberg Meetings was Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, husband of Queen Juliana.[91] He was its face, its host and its door-opener. A royal chairman gave the meeting a kind of neutral prestige no politician could.

His life also contains two facts that any honest book about Bilderberg has to face.

The card he denied

Bernhard was born a German prince. For his whole life, he denied that he had ever been a member of Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party. Before his death in 2004, he told the Dutch newspaper de Volkskrant: "I can declare with my hand on the Bible: I was never a Nazi."[92]

The record says otherwise. In 1996, historians Gerard Aalders and Coen Hilbrink published a copy of his Nazi Party membership card, found in the United States, along with letters about cancelling his membership in 1936, the year he became engaged to Juliana. In October 2023, the former director of the Dutch Royal House Archives, Flip Maarschalkerweerd, revealed that he had found the original card in Bernhard's own private papers at Soestdijk Palace. A 1949 note from Lucius Clay, the American military governor in Germany, suggests the Americans had kept the original and sent it to him. "I kept this in my safe for years," Clay wrote.[93]

I want to be careful here. During the war Bernhard served on the Allied side. The Dutch Royal House says he earned his pilot's wings in London, was made an honorary air commodore in Britain's Royal Air Force in 1941, and in 1944 was named Supreme Commander of the Dutch Armed Forces and the military resistance.[94] His party membership in the early 1930s does not mean Bilderberg had anything to do with Nazism, and I found no evidence it did. But it does mean the founding chairman of the meeting kept a serious secret about his own past for his whole life. Conspiracy writers did not invent that. Archivists found it.

The bribes

The second fact is the one that ended his time at Bilderberg.

In 1976, a Dutch government commission of three investigators spent six months looking into claims that the American aircraft maker Lockheed had paid Bernhard bribes totaling $1.1 million to help sell its planes. Time magazine reported that the commission did not find firm proof he received that money. But

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[91] Wikipedia, "Bilderberg Meeting," chairmen table, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bilderberg_Meeting (accessed November 22, 2026); Thomas W. Gijswijt, "Emotions and positive anti-communism during the early Cold War," Journal of Transatlantic Studies 22 (2024): 11-24, p. 12.

[92] "Prince Bernhard's membership card for Hitler's party found in his own archives," NL Times, October 4, 2023, https://nltimes.nl/2023/10/04/prince-bernhards-membership-card-hitlers-party-found-archives (accessed November 22, 2026).

[93] Same source. NL Times spells the archivist's name "Maarschakerweerd"; other Dutch outlets spell it "Maarschalkerweerd" [Not verified: spelling].

[94] Royal House of the Netherlands, "Prince Bernhard: Public appointments," https://royal-house.nl/members-royal-house/in-memoriam/prince-bernhard/public-appointments (accessed November 22, 2026). The same page confirms he chaired the Bilderberg Group from 1954 to 1976.

$1 million, which Lockheed's European agent had proposed paying in cash, had gone astray, and the commission concluded that "His Royal Highness was the intended recipient." It found he had "shown himself open to dishonorable requests and offers" and had "allowed himself to be tempted to take initiatives that were completely unacceptable."[95]

Bernhard resigned as inspector general of the Dutch armed forces and gave up nearly all his public posts, including the chairmanship of the World Wildlife Fund. "I sincerely regret this," he said. Prime Minister Joop den Uyl announced that no legal action would be taken, citing possible "serious consequences" for Queen Juliana.[96]

His Bilderberg chairmanship ended that same year, and there was no Bilderberg meeting in 1976. The meeting planned for Hot Springs, Virginia, was canceled amid the Lockheed scandal.[97] [Not verified: the cancellation is reported in secondary sources citing The New York Times of March 6, 1976.]

The family stays in the room

Bernhard left the chair in 1976. His family did not leave the meeting.

His daughter, Queen Beatrix, became a regular guest. In June 2012, while she was still queen, Dutch news reported that she was at that year's meeting in Chantilly, Virginia, along with Prime Minister Mark Rutte. A Socialist member of Parliament, Harry van Bommel, objected to the cost of the prime minister's trip: "After all, the trip is paid for by the taxpayer."[98]

Her son came too. When the Dutch public broadcaster NOS reported in June 2016 that King Willem-Alexander and Prime Minister Rutte would attend that year's meeting in Dresden, Germany, it noted that Willem-Alexander had attended with his mother in 2001 and 2008, and that Princess Beatrix, who had stepped down as queen, would not be there "for the first time in years."[99] Beatrix gave up the throne to her son on April 30, 2013.[100] In 2019, the King and Rutte attended again, in Montreux, Switzerland.[101] And in 2026, the Dutch government confirmed in writing to Parliament that the King, the Queen and the Prime Minister had all attended the meeting in Washington (Chapter 25).

So for more than seventy years, from the founder to his daughter to his grandson, a member of the Dutch royal family has been a regular presence at Bilderberg. That is not a secret. The Dutch press reports it, and the Dutch government confirms it when asked. But it does raise a question the Dutch are entitled to ask:

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[95] "The Netherlands: The Prince Errant Loses His Epaulets," Time, September 6, 1976, https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,918300,00.html (accessed November 22, 2026).

[96] Same source.

[97] Wikipedia, "List of Bilderberg meetings" and "Bilderberg Meeting," citing "U.S. to Urge Pact in U.N. to Combat Business Bribes," The New York Times, March 6, 1976.

[98] "Prime minister and queen Beatrix at Bilderberg conference," DutchNews.nl, June 1, 2012, https://www.dutchnews.nl/news/2012/06/prime_minister_and_queen_beatr/ (accessed November 22, 2026), citing the Volkskrant.

[99] NOS, "Koning en premier naar Bilderbergconferentie" (King and prime minister to Bilderberg conference), June 7, 2016, https://nos.nl/l/2109643 (accessed November 22, 2026). Quotation translated from Dutch.

[100] Royal House of the Netherlands, "Abdication," https://royal-house.nl/members-royal-house/princess-beatrix/abdication (accessed November 22, 2026); "Queen Beatrix steps down after 33 years on the throne," DutchNews.nl, April 30, 2013, https://www.dutchnews.nl/2013/04/queen_beatrix_steps_down_after/ (accessed November 22, 2026) [Not verified: royal-house.nl page not opened; date from search listings].

[101] "Dutch King, PM attend Bilderberg Meetings," NL Times, May 30, 2019, https://nltimes.nl/2019/05/30/dutch-king-pm-attend-bilderberg-meetings (accessed November 22, 2026).

in a constitutional monarchy where the king is supposed to stay above politics, what is the king doing at a private meeting about politics?

What this chapter shows

Claim: "The founding chairman was corrupt."

Verdict: True. A Dutch government commission found in 1976 that Prince Bernhard had been "open to dishonorable requests and offers" from Lockheed and that he was the "intended recipient" of $1 million in cash. He gave up his public posts, and his government chose not to prosecute him to protect the Queen.[102]

Here is what strikes me about this chapter. The two worst facts about Bilderberg's founder, his hidden Nazi Party card and the Lockheed bribes, were not uncovered by theorists. They were uncovered by a government commission, by historians and by the Royal House's own archivist. That is how hidden things usually come to light: through records, patiently checked.

[102] Time, September 6, 1976.

Chapter 3: The CIA Question

The most common claim

The most common historical claim about Bilderberg is that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) created it. This chapter puts that claim next to the documents.

What the CIA's own files show

The CIA has released records mentioning Bilderberg through its Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) reading room. A February 2017 article by MuckRock, a nonprofit that files public records requests, gathered and described them. Here is what those files show, year by year:[103]

Table 3.1. Bilderberg in released CIA records[104]

Date	What the CIA record shows
May 21, 1954	A formerly top secret record of a meeting of CIA Director Allen Dulles and his deputies discusses the upcoming conference. It lists several first-meeting attendees and the general location, without naming Bilderberg.
1954	A CIA reference lists Paul Nitze among attendees; MuckRock notes he was under contract with the agency from January 21, 1954.
May 1958	Joseph Johnson of the Carnegie Endowment sends Dulles a summary of a Bilderberg Steering Committee discussion.
1959	Johnson asks about inviting Dulles; Dulles replies he cannot attend but hopes to someday.
1975	A formerly secret CIA staff note says the meeting will be held in Turkey in April, will discuss inflation and has invited Margaret Thatcher.
About 1982	A memo on the Reagan administration's "Project Truth," involving the State Department, the U.S. Information Agency, the National Security Council and the CIA, proposes "appearances at overseas events; e.g. the May 13-16 Bilderberg Meeting." (The group's own records give the 1982 dates as May 14 to 16.)
1984	A memo says a speech will draw on "the previously distributed Bilderberg speech."

[103] "A look through CIA's declassified Bilderberg files," MuckRock, February 27, 2017 (date from the web address), https://www.muckrock.com/news/archives/2017/feb/27/bilderberg-cia/ (accessed November 22, 2026). The page shows no author byline; it is marked "Edited by JPat Brown," and its support line names the researcher Emma Best.

[104] Same source. Individual CIA document numbers [Not verified: not listed here; search the CIA reading room for "Bilderberg"].

The founding chain

Secondary accounts based on historian Valerie Aubourg's 2003 study say that Prince Bernhard brought the project to Walter Bedell Smith, then head of the CIA, who handed it to C.D. Jackson, an adviser to President Eisenhower on psychological warfare.[105] Thomas Gijswijt's 2024 article lists Bedell Smith among the Americans who "agreed to help organize and fund the Bilderberg meetings."[106] The State Department's historians record that Bedell Smith was Director of Central Intelligence from October 7, 1950, to February 20, 1953, and became Under Secretary of State on February 9, 1953.[107] So depending on when he was approached, he may have been acting as a former CIA director serving at the State Department, not as head of the CIA. That detail matters, and it is one the archives should settle.

What the historians conclude

Two scholarly works tested the CIA claim directly.

Gijswijt's book "Informal Alliance" (Routledge, 2019), which his publisher calls "the first archive-based history of the secretive Bilderberg Group," argues against the claim that the CIA created the group.[108]

A 2003 article in the journal Diplomacy and Statecraft examined three theories: that the CIA created Bilderberg to weaken the European left, that it was a socialist plot against American capitalism, and that it was a hidden world government. Using newly opened archives, it concluded that Bilderberg was "neither an entirely American nor European invention," but grew out of interaction between people on both sides.[109]

Weighing it

So what do we have?

On one side: the idea came from a Polish exile in London (Chapter 1). The Europeans recruited first were politicians from left and right. The historians who have read the archives say the CIA did not create it.

On the other side: a former CIA director helped organize and fund it. The CIA director's deputies discussed the first meeting before it happened. A man under contract with the CIA attended. A later

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[105] Wikipedia, "Bilderberg Meeting," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bilderberg_Meeting (accessed November 22, 2026), citing Valerie Aubourg, "Organizing Atlanticism: the Bilderberg Group and the Atlantic Institute 1952-1963," Intelligence and National Security 18, no. 2 (2003): 92-105, also published as a chapter in The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-1960 (London: Frank Cass, 2003) [Not verified: book title and publisher], https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203485811-8/organizing-atlanticism-bilderberg-group-atlantic-institute-1952%E2%80%931963-valerie-aubourg; only the abstract was available to me [Not verified: Aubourg article not opened].

[106] Thomas W. Gijswijt, "Emotions and positive anti-communism during the early Cold War: the case of the Bilderberg Group," Journal of Transatlantic Studies 22 (2024): 11-24, p. 13, https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1057/s42738-024-00117-3.pdf (accessed November 22, 2026).

[107] U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, "Walter Bedell Smith," https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/people/smith-walter-bedell, and Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950-1955, The Intelligence Community, "Persons," https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950-55Intel/preface (both accessed November 22, 2026).

[108] Thomas W. Gijswijt, Informal Alliance: The Bilderberg Group and Transatlantic Relations during the Cold War, 1952-1968 (London: Routledge, 2019), publisher's description, https://www.routledge.com/Informal-Alliance-The-Bilderberg-Group-and-Transatlantic-Relations-during/Gijswijt/p/book/9780815396741 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[109] "CIA plot, socialist conspiracy, or new world order? The origins of the Bilderberg group, 1952-55," Diplomacy and Statecraft 14, no. 3 (September 2003), abstract, https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/routledg/dip/2003/00000014/00000003/art00004 (accessed November 22, 2026). Author [Not verified].

administration saw Bilderberg as a useful venue for its overseas messaging campaign. And that is only what has been released.

Claim: "The CIA created Bilderberg."

Verdict: False (debunked) as usually stated. The idea and the first organizing came from Europeans, and archive-based histories reject the claim that the CIA created the group.[110]

Claim: "The CIA was involved with Bilderberg from the start."

Verdict: True. Released CIA records show the agency's leadership discussing the first meeting a week before it opened, and a historian of the group lists a former CIA director among those who helped organize and fund it.[111]

Claim: "The CIA funded the early meetings."

Verdict: Inconclusive. Gijswijt says Bedell Smith, with Johnson, Rockefeller and Rusk, agreed to help fund the meetings, but that is not the same as CIA money, and I found no released record showing CIA funds paid for a meeting.[112] What would settle it: financial records from the early meetings, or further CIA releases.

Research It Yourself: The CIA files

- Go to the CIA reading room at cia.gov/readingroom and search "Bilderberg." Read each record in full.
- Request records yourself. Anyone can file a Freedom of Information Act request with the CIA, and MuckRock helps people do it.
- Read Gijswijt's 2024 article, which is free to read online, and look at his footnotes to the archives.[113]

[110] Gijswijt, 2019; Diplomacy and Statecraft, 2003; Gijswijt, 2024.

[111] MuckRock, 2017; Gijswijt, 2024, p. 13.

[112] Gijswijt, 2024, p. 13.

[113] Gijswijt, 2024 (note 4).

Chapter 4: Davos, 1971: Klaus Schwab and the Forum He Built

A ski town and a management seminar

In February 1971, about 450 business people from 31 countries met in Davos, a ski resort town in the Swiss Alps. The meeting was called the European Management Forum. It was organized by Klaus Schwab, then a young business professor, who set it up as a not-for-profit foundation under the supervision of the Swiss government.[114]

The point at first was simple. European companies wanted to learn American management methods, and Schwab brought the teachers and the students to one place. Nothing about it looked like a plan to change the world. It looked like a business school seminar with better scenery.

That is worth remembering, because the Forum did not start as a political body. It grew into one.

The first manifesto, 1973

Two years later, at the third meeting, the participants drafted a code of ethics for business leaders. The Forum calls it the "Davos Manifesto."[115]

Its main line reads: "The purpose of professional management is to serve clients, shareholders, workers and employees, as well as societies." It adds that "profitability is the necessary means to enable the management to serve its clients, shareholders, employees and society."[116]

That idea has a name today: "stakeholder capitalism." It says a company does not exist only to make money for its owners. It also owes something to its workers, customers and the community. Schwab has pushed that idea for more than fifty years.

You might ask, "What's wrong with that?" On its face, nothing. Most small business owners I know would say they owe their customers and their employees something. The argument comes later, when the question becomes who decides what a company owes society, and who holds it to account. Keep that question in mind. It comes back in Chapter 16.

From European to World

In 1987, the European Management Forum changed its name to the World Economic Forum.[117] By then it had become a place where presidents, prime ministers and business leaders met each January.

The Forum's own timeline lists moments it is proud of from those years, including meetings between leaders of countries in conflict.[118] It became, in plain terms, the most famous networking event on earth.

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[114] World Economic Forum, "Davos at 50: A Timeline of Highlights," https://www.weforum.org/stories/forum-institutional/world-economic-forum-davos-at-50-history-a-timeline-of-highlights/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[115] Same source.

[116] Klaus Schwab, "Davos Manifesto 1973: A Code of Ethics for Business Leaders," World Economic Forum, December 2, 2019, https://www.weforum.org/stories/2019/12/davos-manifesto-1973-a-code-of-ethics-for-business-leaders/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[117] World Economic Forum, "Davos at 50: A Timeline of Highlights."

[118] Same source.

How the Forum makes its money

This is one of the most important facts in this whole book, so I want to be clear about it.

The World Economic Forum is not a government. Nobody votes for it. It is a private foundation, and its main income comes from companies that pay to be members and partners. In its 2024-2025 annual report, the Forum said its partnerships had grown to "a record 925 companies."[119] The Forum's financial statements are published each year as part of its annual report.[120]

So when you hear "the World Economic Forum says," what you are hearing is a foundation funded by about nine hundred of the world's largest companies. That is not a secret. It is in their own report. But it explains a lot about why critics on the left say the Forum speaks for big business, and why critics on the right say it gives big business a seat at the table where governments should sit alone.

A special status in Switzerland

On January 23, 2015, the Swiss government and Klaus Schwab signed an agreement giving the Forum formal status under Swiss law. The Forum's press release describes the new status as "an International Institution for Public-Private Cooperation."[121]

That status has been badly misreported. Social media posts claimed it gave the Forum diplomatic immunity. Full Fact, the British fact-checker, looked into it in 2023. A spokesperson for the Swiss mission said the agreement "does NOT grant immunity to the WEF nor its staff," and the Forum confirmed its staff do not have diplomatic immunity. What the agreement does do is exempt the Forum from Swiss direct federal tax and let it ask for help from Swiss embassies and consulates abroad.[122]

Claim: "The World Economic Forum has diplomatic immunity."

Verdict: False (debunked). The 2015 agreement gave the Forum formal status and a tax exemption, but the Swiss government and the Forum both say it does not grant immunity.[123]

In January 2020, the Swiss foreign minister, Ignazio Cassis, and Schwab signed a second agreement on "extended cooperation," which the Swiss foreign ministry describes as a memorandum of understanding.[124]

Who pays for Davos

Here is a fact most people do not know. Swiss taxpayers help pay for the Davos meeting.

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[119] World Economic Forum, Annual Report 2024-2025, President and CEO's Statement, https://www.weforum.org/publications/annual-report-2024-2025/in-full/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[120] World Economic Forum, Annual Report 2024-2025, "Financial Statements," https://www.weforum.org/publications/annual-report-2024-2025/financial-statements-2024-2025 (accessed November 22, 2026). [Not verified: total revenue figures appear only in a chart and the downloadable report; they are not quoted here.]

[121] World Economic Forum, "World Economic Forum Gains Formal Status in Switzerland," press release, January 23, 2015, https://www.weforum.org/media/world-economic-forum-gains-formal-status-in-switzerland/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[122] Full Fact, fact-check of claims that Switzerland granted the World Economic Forum diplomatic immunity, November 2, 2023, https://fullfact.org/online/WEF-diplomatic-immunity/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[123] Same source.

[124] Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, "Agreement between the FDFA and the World Economic Forum: the facts," https://www.eda.admin.ch/en/agreement-between-the-fdfa-and-the-world-economic-forum-the-facts (accessed November 22, 2026).

For 2025 through 2027, the Swiss parliament authorized up to 5,000 members of the armed forces to support security around the meeting, with an annual budget of 32 million Swiss francs for that deployment. The extra security costs of the 2026 meeting were estimated at about 9 million francs. The Forum pays half. The Swiss federal government pays a quarter. The canton of Graubunden, where Davos sits, and the towns of Davos and Klosters cover the rest.[125]

That is a normal arrangement for a big international event, and the Forum does pay its share. But it also means a private foundation's yearly meeting is guarded, in part, by a national army and paid for in part by the public.

Who comes to Davos

The Forum publishes its own head count each year, and the numbers are worth reading slowly. For the January 19 to 23, 2026, meeting, the Forum said it expected close to 3,000 leaders from more than 130 countries. That included close to 65 heads of state and government, six leaders of the Group of Seven (G7) wealthy democracies expected, and what it called "a record 400 top political leaders." On the business side, it listed nearly 850 top chief executives and chairs, and about 1,700 business leaders in all.[126]

Put those two numbers side by side. About 400 political leaders. About 1,700 business leaders. In the room where the Forum says the world's problems are discussed, business outnumbers government by about four to one.

Here is one more number from the Forum's own report. The Davos meeting itself is not where most of the money comes from. The Forum's 2023-2024 annual report says: "Annual meeting revenues in Davos represented 9% of the total revenues in 2024."[127] The rest comes mostly from the year-round memberships and partnerships described above. In plain terms, companies are not just buying a ticket to a January conference. They are paying for a year-round relationship.

The second manifesto, 2020

In December 2019, a few months before the pandemic, Schwab published an updated "Davos Manifesto 2020." It opens: "The purpose of a company is to engage all its stakeholders in shared and sustained value creation."[128]

Some of its lines would surprise people who think of the Forum only as a tool of big business. It says a good company "pays its fair share of taxes" and "has zero tolerance for corruption," and that "executive remuneration should reflect stakeholder responsibility."[129]

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[125] Swiss Federal Council, "WEF Davos Annual Meeting," https://www.admin.ch/en/wef-davos-annual-meeting (accessed November 22, 2026).

[126] World Economic Forum, "A Spirit of Dialogue Brings Record Numbers of World Leaders to Davos for World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2026," press release, January 13, 2026, https://www.weforum.org/press/2026/01/a-spirit-of-dialogue-brings-record-numbers-of-world-leaders-to-davos-for-world-economic-forum-annual-meeting-2026/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[127] World Economic Forum, Annual Report 2023-2024, "Financial Statements," https://www.weforum.org/publications/annual-report-2023-2024/in-full/financial-statements/ (accessed November 22, 2026). The yearly totals appear only as a chart image on that page [Not verified: totals in Swiss francs].

[128] Klaus Schwab, "Davos Manifesto 2020: The Universal Purpose of a Company in the Fourth Industrial Revolution," World Economic Forum, December 2, 2019, https://www.weforum.org/stories/2019/12/davos-manifesto-2020-the-universal-purpose-of-a-company-in-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[129] Same source.

So the man who launched the Great Reset was, on paper, asking companies to pay more tax and pay their bosses less. Did the companies who fund the Forum follow that advice? That is a fair question, and the Forum's own manifesto gives you the yardstick to measure them by.

What this chapter shows

By 2020, the World Economic Forum was a fifty-year-old Swiss foundation, funded by hundreds of the largest companies in the world, with formal status in Switzerland, its own security arrangement with the Swiss army, a tradition of hosting heads of state, and a founder who had been arguing for "stakeholder capitalism" since 1973.

None of that is secret. All of it is in the Forum's own records or the Swiss government's.

What it means is the real question. One way to read it is that the Forum is a convening service: it rents out a room where powerful people talk. Another way to read it is that the Forum has built a permanent private channel between the biggest companies and the world's governments, with no voters anywhere in the loop. Both readings fit the facts. The next chapters will help you decide which fits better.

But first, the Great Reset did not come out of nowhere in 2020. The idea of a global "reset" had been around for decades.

Chapter 5: Before the Reset: The Club of Rome, Agenda 21 and the First "Great Reset"

A computer model in 1972

In February 1972, a team at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) published a short book called "The Limits to Growth." Its authors were Donella Meadows, Dennis Meadows, Jorgen Randers and William Behrens III. It was written as a report for the Club of Rome, a private group of scientists, business people and officials worried about the future of the planet.[130]

The team used an early computer model to project what would happen if world population and industry kept growing at the rates of the time. Their conclusion, as the Club of Rome now summarizes it, was that the earth's resources probably could not support those growth rates much beyond the year 2100, even with better technology. They also wrote that the problem was "easily solvable if human society decided to act."[131]

Why does a 1972 book matter for the Great Reset? Because it set the pattern for everything that followed: a private group of experts, outside any government, studies a global problem, publishes a warning, and calls for the whole world to change course together. You do not have to think the warning was wrong to notice who wrote it and who did not vote on it.

The "common enemy" quote

If you have spent any time reading about the Great Reset online, you have probably seen this line attributed to the Club of Rome: "In searching for a new enemy to unite us, we came up with the idea that pollution, the threat of global warming, water shortages, famine and the like would fit the bill."

It comes from a real book, "The First Global Revolution," published in 1991 by Alexander King and Bertrand Schneider, two leaders of the Club of Rome.[132] So the quote is real. The question is what it means.

The Australian Associated Press (AAP) fact-checked a video using that line in July 2025. AAP pointed out that the video left out the paragraph that comes right after it. On page 115, the authors go on to say that "in designating them as the enemy, we fall into the trap about which we have already warned, namely mistaking symptoms for causes." They write: "All these dangers are caused by human intervention," and "The real enemy, then, is humanity itself."[133]

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[130] Club of Rome, "The Limits to Growth," https://www.clubofrome.org/publication/the-limits-to-growth/ (accessed November 22, 2026). The original is Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jorgen Randers and William W. Behrens III, The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind (New York: Universe Books, 1972); a full copy is hosted by Dartmouth College Library, https://www.library.dartmouth.edu/digital/digital-collections/limits-growth. Publisher [Not verified].

[131] Club of Rome, "The Limits to Growth."

[132] Alexander King and Bertrand Schneider, The First Global Revolution: A Report by the Council of the Club of Rome (1991), p. 115, as quoted in Australian Associated Press, "No, think tank did not 'invent' climate change in 1991," AAP FactCheck, July 11, 2025, https://www.aap.com.au/factcheck/no-think-tank-did-not-invent-climate-change-in-1991/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[133] Same source.

AAP also noted that the science of human-caused warming did not start with that book. Swedish scientist Svante Arrhenius studied carbon dioxide and temperature in 1896, and British engineer Guy Callendar linked rising carbon dioxide to warming in 1938.[134]

Claim: "The Club of Rome admitted in 1991 that it invented global warming as a fake enemy to unite the world."

Verdict: False (debunked). The quote is real, but the next paragraph of the same page says the opposite of what the claim suggests, and climate research goes back to 1896.[135]

I want to be fair to the people who share that quote. The full passage is still unsettling. "The real enemy, then, is humanity itself" is not a sentence most of us would want a planning body to work from. A reader can reject the "fake enemy" claim and still be uneasy with the worldview. Both things can be true.

Agenda 21: Rio, 1992

Twenty years after "The Limits to Growth," the United Nations held its Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from June 3 to 14, 1992. More than 178 governments adopted a document called Agenda 21. The United Nations describes it as "a comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally and locally."[136]

Agenda 21 is a long list of goals and suggestions on everything from forests to cities to poverty. Many local governments in the United States and elsewhere later adopted plans that used its language.

Agenda 21 is not a treaty. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency described it at the time as "a voluntary action plan," and the Congressional Research Service later noted that the Rio documents "were not legally binding, although they were negotiated word-for-word and adopted by a consensus resolution."[137] The United States did not ratify it, because it was never the kind of document that needs ratifying. That distinction matters. A treaty is law once a country ratifies it. A plan of action is a promise to try, and it is only as strong as what each government chooses to do with it.

Agenda 2030 and the goal about property

In September 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), seventeen goals for the year 2030. People call the package "Agenda 2030."

Here is one goal people should read for themselves before they believe what they have heard about it. Target 1.4 says that by 2030 governments should "ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance."[138]

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[134] Same source.

[135] Same source.

[136] United Nations, "Agenda 21," https://sdgs.un.org/publications/agenda21 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[137] Kathy Sessions, "Products of the 1992 Earth Summit," EPA Journal, April-June 1993, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency archive, https://www.epa.gov/archive/epa/aboutepa/products-1992-earth-summit.html (accessed November 22, 2026); Congressional Research Service, "World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD): Background and Summary," Report RL31385, updated October 25, 2002, via EveryCRSReport.com, https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL31385.html (accessed November 22, 2026).

[138] United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, Target 1.4, as published by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, https://agenda2030lac.org/en/sdg/1-no-poverty/targets/14 (accessed November 22, 2026).

Read that again. The United Nations goal on property is that more people own it, especially the poor. You may think the UN is the wrong body to promise that, or that it has no business setting goals for your country at all. Those are fair arguments. But a claim that "Agenda 2030 abolishes private property" runs straight into the text. I test that claim in full in Chapter 22.

The first "Great Reset," 2010

The words "Great Reset" did not start with Klaus Schwab.

In April 2010, Richard Florida, an urban studies professor at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, published a book called "The Great Reset: How New Ways of Living and Working Drive Post-Crash Prosperity."[139] Florida argued that after major crashes, economies reorganize around new ways of living and working. He compared the period after the 2008 financial crisis to the 1870s and the 1930s, when, he said, the economy was rebuilt around new industries, new cities and new transportation.[140]

Florida's book was about cities and jobs, not about a global plan. It has no connection to the World Economic Forum that I could find. But it shows that "reset" had been part of the economic vocabulary for a decade before 2020. When Schwab used it, he was borrowing a phrase business writers already knew.

What this chapter shows

The ideas behind the Great Reset were not new in 2020. A private think tank warned of global limits in 1972. The United Nations adopted a global plan of action in 1992 and global goals in 2015. An urban studies professor used the phrase "Great Reset" in 2010. Each step is documented, and each one can be read in the original.

The pattern is also clear. Each step was a plan, a warning or a goal. None was a law that bound a single citizen. Whatever power these ideas have had, they have had it through governments that chose to act on them. That is where the questions belong: not "who is secretly in charge," but "which elected officials adopted what, and did voters get a say?"

There is one more event before 2020 that people point to as proof the pandemic was planned. It happened in New York in October 2019, it had the World Economic Forum's name on it, and it is the subject of Chapter 13.

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[139] Richard Florida, The Great Reset: How New Ways of Living and Working Drive Post-Crash Prosperity (New York: Harper, April 27, 2010), ISBN 9780061937194; publisher and date from Porchlight Books, https://porchlightbooks.com/products/great-reset-richard-florida-9780061937194, and Wikipedia, "The Great Reset (book)," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Reset_(book) (both accessed November 22, 2026).

[140] Wikipedia, "The Great Reset (book)."

Part Two: How the Rooms Work

Chapter 6: Who Picks the Guests: The Steering Committee and the Chairmen

Who decides who comes

Every year, someone decides which roughly 130 people get invited to Bilderberg. That someone is the Steering Committee. The group's own answer to the question is direct: "Participation is for invitees only, as curated by the Steering Committee."[141]

That makes the Steering Committee the real center of Bilderberg. Whoever picks the guests shapes the conversation.

The chairmen

Here is the list of the men and women who have led the Steering Committee, as compiled from public sources:[142]

Table 6.1. Chairs of the Bilderberg Steering Committee[143]

Chair	Country	Years
Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands	Netherlands	1954 to 1976
Alec Douglas-Home (Lord Home)	United Kingdom	1977 to 1980
Walter Scheel	West Germany	1981 to 1985
Eric Roll (Lord Roll)	United Kingdom	1986 to 1989
Peter Carington (Lord Carrington)	United Kingdom	1990 to 1998
Etienne Davignon	Belgium	1999 to 2011
Henri de Castries	France	2012 to 2019
Victor Halberstadt and Marie-Josee Kravis (co-chairs)	Netherlands and United States	2020 onward

Look at who these people were:

- **Lord Home** (Alec Douglas-Home) was British Prime Minister from 1963 to 1964 and Foreign Secretary twice, from 1960 to 1963 and from 1970 to 1974.[144]

[141] Bilderberg Meetings, "Frequently Asked Questions," https://bilderbergmeetings.org/frequently-asked-questions (accessed November 22, 2026).

[142] Wikipedia, "Bilderberg Meeting," chairmen table, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bilderberg_Meeting (accessed November 22, 2026). Used as a compiled list; each entry should be checked against the group's own records [Not verified].

[143] Same source; Bilderberg Meetings, "Frequently Asked Questions," for the current co-chairs.

[144] GOV.UK, "Past Prime Ministers: Sir Alec Douglas-Home," https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers/alec-douglas-home (accessed November 22, 2026).

- **Walter Scheel** was West Germany's Foreign Minister and deputy chancellor from 1969 to 1974, then President of the Federal Republic from 1974 to 1979, just before he took the Bilderberg chair.[145]
- **Lord Carrington** became British Foreign Secretary in May 1979 and resigned in 1982 during the Falklands crisis. He was Secretary General of NATO from June 1984 to 1988, then chaired Bilderberg.[146]
- **Lord Roll** (Eric Roll) was a senior British Treasury and economics official who became chairman and later president of the investment bank S. G. Warburg, and a director of the Bank of England from 1968 to 1977.[147]
- **Etienne Davignon** was a Belgian diplomat who joined the European Commission in 1977 and served as its Vice-President for industry, research and energy until 1985. He died on May 18, 2026.[148]
- **Henri de Castries** led the French insurance and investment company AXA until he retired in September 2016.[149]

So the chair has passed from a prince to a former British prime minister, a former German president, a banker, a former NATO chief, a former European commissioner and the former head of one of the world's largest insurers. Bilderberg has been led by former heads of government and foreign ministers more often than by anyone else.

That is a fact about who holds the door, and it is worth knowing.

The current chair question

There is a small puzzle here, and I want to be honest about it.

The group's own Frequently Asked Questions page, as of the newest version I could read, says: "Its current co-chairs are Victor Halberstadt and Marie-Josee Kravis."[150] Some other sources list Henri de Castries as a co-chair from 2025.[151]

The group's Steering Committee page, which I was able to open on November 22, 2026, lists Halberstadt first, as "Chair Foundation Bilderberg Meetings," and Kravis second, as "President, American Friends of Bilderberg Inc." De Castries is not on it.[152] That points toward Halberstadt and Kravis. But the page

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[145] Office of the Federal President of Germany, "Walter Scheel," https://bundespraesident.de/EN/role-and-functions/the-german-federal-presidents/walter-scheel/walter-scheel_node.html (accessed November 22, 2026).

[146] NATO, "Lord Carrington," https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/organization/who-we-are/nato-secretaries-general/lord-carrington (accessed November 22, 2026).

[147] "Roll, Eric 1907-2005," obituary entry, Encyclopedia.com, https://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/educational-magazines/roll-eric-1907-2005 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[148] Jacques Delors Institute, "The Jacques Delors Institute pays tribute to Etienne Davignon," May 18, 2026, https://institutdelors.eu/en/publications/the-jacques-delors-institute-pays-tribute-to-etienne-davignon/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[149] AXA, "Henri de Castries to retire in September 2016," press release, March 21, 2016, https://www.axa.com/en/press/press-releases/henri-de-castries-retire-on-september-2016 (accessed November 22, 2026). The release says he would retire on September 1, 2016.

[150] Bilderberg Meetings, "Frequently Asked Questions."

[151] Wikipedia, "Bilderberg Meeting." Its chairmen table, as of November 22, 2026, ends Halberstadt's co-chair term in 2024 and lists de Castries as co-chair from 2025, without a source from the group itself.

carries no date, and at least two entries on it look out of date (see below), so I cannot be sure it is current. [Not verified: whether the page reflects the committee as of November 2026.]

This kind of gap is typical of Bilderberg. The group publishes enough to show it is not hiding its existence, but not enough to answer basic questions easily.

Who sits on the committee

Here is the committee as the group's own page listed it when I checked. I have written out each job in plain words, as the page gives it, without abbreviations.[153]

Table 6.2. The Bilderberg Steering Committee as listed on the group's website, checked November 22, 2026 (accents removed)

Name	Country	Job as listed
Victor Halberstadt	Netherlands	Chair, Foundation Bilderberg Meetings; professor emeritus of economics, Leiden University
Marie-Josee Kravis	United States	President, American Friends of Bilderberg; chair, Museum of Modern Art
Stacey Abrams	United States	Chief executive, Sage Works Production
Marco Alvera	Italy	Co-founder and chief executive, TES
Patricia Barbizet	France	Chair and chief executive, Temaris and Associes
Jose Manuel Barroso	Portugal	Chair, Goldman Sachs International; former president, European Commission
Valerie Baudson	France	Chief executive, Amundi
Ana Botin	Spain	Group executive chair, Banco Santander
Borge Brende	Norway	President, World Economic Forum (he resigned that post in February 2026)
Mark Carney	Canada	Chair, Brookfield Asset Management (Prime Minister of Canada since March 2025)
Mathias Dopfner	Germany	Chair and chief executive, Axel Springer
Connie Hedegaard	Denmark	Chair, KR Foundation; former European commissioner
Andre Hoffmann	Switzerland	Vice chair, Roche Holding
Mellody Hobson	United States	Co-chief executive and president, Ariel Investments
Alex Karp	United States	Chief executive, Palantir Technologies
Omer Koc	Turkey	Chair, Koc Holding
Thomas Leysen	Belgium	Chair, Mediahuis and Umicore; chair, dsm-firmenich
Erkki Liikanen	Finland	Chair, IFRS Foundation Trustees
John Micklethwait	United States	Editor-in-chief, Bloomberg
Zanny Minton Beddoes	Britain	Editor-in-chief, The Economist

[152] Bilderberg Meetings, "Steering Committee," https://bilderbergmeetings.org/background/steering-committee/steering-committee (accessed November 22, 2026).

[153] Bilderberg Meetings, "Steering Committee," https://bilderbergmeetings.org/background/steering-committee/steering-committee (accessed November 22, 2026).

Name	Country	Job as listed
Satya Nadella	United States	Chief executive, Microsoft
Michael O'Leary	Ireland	Group chief executive, Ryanair
Dimitri Papalexopoulos	Greece	Treasurer, Foundation Bilderberg Meetings; chair, TITAN Cement
John Sawers	Britain	Executive chair, Newbridge Advisory
Nadia Schadlow	United States	Senior fellow, Hudson Institute
Eric Schmidt	United States	Former chief executive and chair, Google
Peter Thiel	United States	President, Thiel Capital
Marcus Wallenberg	Sweden	Chair, Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken
Gerhard Zeiler	Austria	President, Warner Bros. Discovery International

Now look at what that list tells you.

It is mostly business. Bankers, money managers, chief executives and investors make up most of the committee. Apart from the Carney question below, none is listed with a public office.

The media sits on it. The editors-in-chief of The Economist and Bloomberg, and the head of the German publisher Axel Springer, help choose who is invited. That is worth knowing the next time you read those outlets' coverage of the meeting, or notice its absence.

Davos sits on it. Andre Hoffmann, who became an interim co-chair of the World Economic Forum's board in 2025, is listed. So is Borge Brende, under the title of Forum president, a post he held from 2017 until he resigned in February 2026 after records showed contacts with Jeffrey Epstein (Chapter 27).[154] The two private networks critics most often link are, at the top, partly the same people.

Some entries are stale. Brende's title is one. Another: the page lists Mark Carney as chair of Brookfield Asset Management. But Carney was sworn in as Prime Minister of Canada on March 14, 2025.[155] Either the page has not been updated, or a sitting prime minister is still on the committee. I could not find out which, and that is itself a fair question for Canadian voters to ask.

The funders are on it. Peter Thiel, Eric Schmidt and Alex Karp, the largest reported U.S. donors (Chapter 7), all sit on the committee that picks the guests. Reporting on the 2026 meeting noted Thiel's absence from that year's guest list as a surprise.[156]

That is worth noticing. The people who help pay for the meeting also help choose who gets into the room.

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[154] World Economic Forum, "Press Statement from Co-Chairs Andre Hoffmann and Larry Fink [on behalf of the Board of Trustees]," February 26, 2026, https://www.weforum.org/press/2026/02/press-statement-from-co-chairs-andre-hoffmann-and-larry-fink-on-behalf-of-the-board-of-trustees/ (accessed November 22, 2026); "World Economic Forum head Borge Brende quits after Epstein links revealed," Al Jazeera, February 26, 2026, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/2/26/world-economic-forum-head-borge-brende-quits-after-epstein-links-revealed (accessed November 22, 2026).

[155] "Carney sworn in as Canada's new prime minister as country deals with Trump's trade war," PBS NewsHour (Associated Press), March 14, 2025, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/carney-sworn-in-as-canadas-new-prime-minister-as-country-deals-with-trumps-trade-war (accessed November 22, 2026).

[156] "Bilderberg ja comecou em Washington," Pagina Um, April 10, 2026, https://paginaum.pt/2026/04/10/bilderberg-ja-comecou-em-washington-sem-antonio-costa-na-lista-oficial-mas-guta-mantem-se (accessed November 22, 2026); Josh Friedman, Cal Coast News, April 12, 2026, https://calcoastnews.com/2026/04/california-funding-pours-into-bilderberg-despite-tech-elites-fleeing-the-state/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

What the Steering Committee does not do

According to the group, the Steering Committee does not issue statements, does not run votes and does not set policy for anyone. The meeting "does not support any political party or viewpoint" and has "no desired outcome."[157]

You can believe that or doubt it. What you cannot do, from the public record, is prove the opposite. The committee's own discussions about whom to invite are not published. That is one of the places in this book where the honest verdict is "we don't know."

Research It Yourself: The committee

- Find the Steering Committee page on bilderbergmeetings.org and compare it with Table 6.2. Note who has been added or removed since November 2026.
- For each member, look up their company or government role. Ask: what interests do they bring to choosing the guest list?
- Compare the Steering Committee list with the donor names in the American Friends of Bilderberg tax filings (Chapter 7).

[157] Bilderberg Meetings, "Frequently Asked Questions."

Chapter 7: Who Pays: Host Countries, Tax Filings and the Police Bill

Davos and Bilderberg are paid for in very different ways. The World Economic Forum runs on fees from about 925 partner and member companies, and its own figures, covered in Chapter 4, show that the January meeting is only a small slice of its income. Bilderberg is smaller and quieter, and its money is harder to follow. This chapter follows it as far as the records go.

The group's answer

Bilderberg's own answer to "who pays?" is short. Hospitality is covered by the Steering Committee member or members from the host country. Participants pay their own travel and hotel, and "there is no attendance fee."[158]

That answer leaves out two things: where the host-country money comes from, and who pays for the police.

The American money

In the United States, the money runs through a nonprofit called American Friends of Bilderberg, Inc., registered with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) under Employer Identification Number 51-0163715.[159] U.S. nonprofits file a public tax return each year called a Form 990, and anyone can read it.

In April 2026, Cal Coast News reporter Josh Friedman reviewed those filings and reported:[160]

Table 7.1. Reported donors to American Friends of Bilderberg

Donor	Reported giving
Peter Thiel	$500,000 in 2022 and again in 2024; well over $1 million over the past decade
Eric Schmidt	$900,000 between 2015 and 2024
Alex Karp	More than $350,000 between 2015 and 2024
Palantir (company)	$300,000 each in 2017 and 2019

He also reported that the nonprofit had net assets of $1.23 million at the end of 2024, and that in 2022, a year the meeting was held in the United States, it spent more than $3 million and ran a loss of $1.32 million.[161]

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[158] Bilderberg Meetings, "Frequently Asked Questions," https://bilderbergmeetings.org/frequently-asked-questions (accessed November 22, 2026).

[159] ProPublica Nonprofit Explorer, "American Friends Of Bilderberg Inc," EIN 51-0163715, https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/510163715 (accessed November 22, 2026). The listing, in New York, shows a Form 990-PF for the fiscal year ending December 2025, filed May 18, 2026, with revenue of $2,625,069, expenses of $151,532 and net assets of $3,707,314.

[160] Josh Friedman, "California funding pours into Bilderberg despite tech elites fleeing the state," Cal Coast News, April 12, 2026, https://calcoastnews.com/2026/04/california-funding-pours-into-bilderberg-despite-tech-elites-fleeing-the-state/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[161] Same source.

Notice the pattern in that table. The biggest reported U.S. donors are tied to Silicon Valley and to one company in particular, Palantir, a data analysis firm whose own annual report says its software has served "global defense agencies" and "the intelligence community," and which earned 54 percent of its $4.5 billion in 2025 revenue from governments.[162] Chapter 17 looks at how the tech industry's presence at Bilderberg has grown.

What the filings show

The reporter's account of 2022 can be checked against the filings. The tax filings themselves can be read through Grantable, a grants database that publishes figures from the nonprofit's yearly IRS returns. Those returns are Form 990-PF, the version filed by private foundations. Grantable lists the following, by filing year:[163]

Table 7.2. American Friends of Bilderberg, figures as published by Grantable from IRS filings

Filing year	Total assets	Revenue	Expenses
2020	$1,301,691	$389,484	$104,942
2021	$1,467,909	$280,504	$114,286
2022	$146,656	$1,684,509	$3,005,762
2023	$242,231	$227,106	$131,531
2024	$1,258,377	$1,152,774	$156,628
2025	$3,731,914	$2,625,069	$151,532

Notice the 2022 line. Expenses jumped to just over $3 million, the year the meeting was held in Washington, D.C. That matches the Cal Coast News report.[164] Then notice 2025: assets climbed to about $3.7 million, a year before the 2026 meeting came back to Washington.

Who sits on the board

The same filings list the nonprofit's officers and directors. On the most recent return Grantable shows, none reported being paid:[165]

Table 7.3. Officers and directors of American Friends of Bilderberg on its latest filing

Name	Role on the filing	Known for
Marie-Josee Kravis	President and Director	Co-chair of the Bilderberg Steering Committee (Chapter 6)
Eric E. Schmidt	Treasurer	Former chief executive of Google
Peter A. Thiel	Director	Co-founder of PayPal and

[162] Palantir Technologies Inc., Form 10-K for fiscal year 2025, filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/0001321655/000132165526000011/pltr-20251231.htm (accessed November 22, 2026).

[163] Grantable, "American Friends of Bilderberg Inc," https://grantable.co/funders/american-friends-of-bilderberg-inc-morg_bb2e88dd5f14430ca57cd84214cee3dd (accessed November 22, 2026), drawing on IRS Form 990-PF filings for filing years 2020 to 2025. Individual donor gifts are not shown there [Not verified: the donor amounts in Table 7.1 remain as reported by Cal Coast News].

[164] Same source; Friedman, Cal Coast News.

[165] Grantable (note 8).

Name	Role on the filing	Known for
		Palantir
Alex Karp	Director	Chief executive of Palantir
Satya Nadella	Director	Chief executive of Microsoft
John Micklethwait	Director	Editor-in-chief, Bloomberg[166]
Mellody Hobson	Director	Co-chief executive and president, Ariel Investments[167]
Nadia Schadlow	Director	Senior fellow, Hudson Institute[168]
Stacey Abrams	Director	Democratic candidate for governor of Georgia in 2018 and 2022[169]

Filings from 2020 to 2022 also list Henry Kissinger and Craig Mundie as directors, and Roger C. Altman served as treasurer and director from 2020 to 2023.[170] [Not verified: Mundie's and Altman's careers outside the filings.]

Look at the range of that board. The heads of Microsoft and Palantir. Peter Thiel, who gave $15 million to a super PAC backing Republican JD Vance's 2022 Senate run,[171] sitting on the same board as Stacey Abrams, one of the best-known Democrats in Georgia. A senior figure from one of the world's largest financial news organizations. This is not a partisan club. It is a cross-party, cross-industry board of very powerful people who fund a private meeting together.

That last point deserves attention for a reason Chapter 10 raised. If the editor of a major news organization sits on the board that funds Bilderberg, readers of that news organization deserve to know it when it covers the meeting, or chooses not to.

Who pays for the police

Here is the part of the bill that falls on the public.

When Bilderberg met at The Grove hotel in Watford, England, in June 2013, the trade publication Police Professional reported that Hertfordshire police faced a possible "seven figure bill." The force would not disclose the exact cost "for operational reasons." The Bilderberg Group agreed to contribute to policing

[166] Bilderberg Meetings, "Steering Committee," https://bilderbergmeetings.org/background/steering-committee/steering-committee (accessed November 22, 2026), which lists these titles.

[167] Bilderberg Meetings, "Steering Committee," https://bilderbergmeetings.org/background/steering-committee/steering-committee (accessed November 22, 2026), which lists these titles.

[168] Bilderberg Meetings, "Steering Committee," https://bilderbergmeetings.org/background/steering-committee/steering-committee (accessed November 22, 2026), which lists these titles.

[169] "Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp beats Stacey Abrams in rematch," PBS NewsHour (Associated Press), November 9, 2022, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/georgia-gov-brian-kemp-beats-stacey-abrams-in-rematch (accessed November 22, 2026).

[170] Grantable (note 8).

[171] Daniel Klaidman, CBS News, updated July 16, 2024, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/jd-vance-trump-vp-peter-thiel-billionaire/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

costs, the organizers paid a private security firm to secure the venue, and the Home Office would decide on any compensation after the force submitted its costs.[172]

Two other host countries left official records.

Austria, 2015. That year Bilderberg met at the Interalpen-Hotel Tyrol, near Telfs, in the same weeks that the G7 leaders met just across the border in Bavaria, Germany. Austrian members of Parliament asked the interior minister about the police operation for both events. Her written answer, dated August 2015, said up to 2,100 police officers were deployed at the peak, working more than 417,000 hours in all across the two events, and that police helicopter flights alone cost 177,207 euros. She said the costs were borne by the Interior Ministry, and that "the actual final costs for the operation cannot yet be quantified."[173] Because the answer covers the G7 summit and Bilderberg together, it does not tell you what Bilderberg alone cost. But it shows the scale: a private meeting in a mountain hotel became part of one of the largest police operations in the country that year, paid for from a public budget.

Switzerland, 2019. When the meeting came to Montreux, the police of the canton of Vaud reported that they coordinated between 100 and 370 staff per day, around the clock, joined by city police, civil protection, transport police, the Swiss Air Force, the federal police and officers from other cantons, "not counting the substantial private security force hired by the organizer." The protests, the canton said, drew "at most about twenty people," peacefully.[174] The canton's statement did not give a cost.

So the honest answer is mixed. Bilderberg's hosts pay for the hotel and the hospitality. Participants pay their own way. The group sometimes contributes to policing. But the police who guard the roads and handle protests are public servants, and at least part of that cost falls on taxpayers in the host country.

You might ask, "Isn't that true of any big event?" It is. Taxpayers help pay for security at football games and political conventions too. The difference is that those events are public. Bilderberg asks the public to help protect a meeting the public is not allowed to hear.

What this chapter shows

Claim: "Bilderberg is funded by billionaires."

Verdict: Partly true. The U.S. support nonprofit's reported donors include billionaires such as Peter Thiel and Eric Schmidt.[175] But host-country hospitality and participants' own travel spending also pay for the meeting, and public police budgets carry part of the security cost.[176]

Research It Yourself: The money

- Look up American Friends of Bilderberg on ProPublica's Nonprofit Explorer (EIN 51-0163715). Open each Form 990. List the officers, the income, the expenses and any large gifts by year.

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[172] Liam Barnes, "Herts facing huge bill for Bilderberg summit," Police Professional, June 6, 2013, https://policeprofessional.com/?p=107862 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[173] Austrian Parliament, Anfragebeantwortung 5279/AB (XXV. GP) to question 5512/J, "Polizeieinsatz bei G7-Gipfel und Bilderbergtreffen," answered by Federal Minister of the Interior Johanna Mikl-Leitner, August 2015, https://www.parlament.gv.at/dokument/XXV/AB/5279/imfname_456289.pdf (accessed November 22, 2026). Quotation translated from German; the total hours are my sum of the three periods listed.

[174] Police cantonale vaudoise, "Montreux: bilan securitaire positif pour la reunion de Bilderberg," June 2, 2019, https://www.vd.ch/actualites/actualite/news/11740i-montreux-bilan-securitaire-positif-pour-la-reunion-de-bilderberg (accessed November 22, 2026). Quotations translated from French.

[175] Friedman, Cal Coast News.

[176] Bilderberg Meetings, "Frequently Asked Questions"; Police Professional, June 2013.

- For the year the meeting is held in your country, search for police or government statements on security costs, and file a public records request if none are published.

Chapter 8: The Guest Lists, 1954 to 2026

From leaked to published

For most of its history, Bilderberg did not publish who attended. Lists from earlier decades that circulate today were often gathered by outsiders. The website Public Intelligence, which compiled meeting lists from 1954 to 2013, marks many of its older lists "Unofficial" and labels only one year, 2011, "Official."[177] [Not verified: the year Bilderberg began publishing its own participant lists on its website.]

Today, the group says its participant list "is published on this website a few days before each annual Meeting."[178] That is a real change. Anyone can now see who was invited.

A look at four rooms

Here is who was reported in four meetings. These are samples, not full lists.

Montreux, Switzerland, May 30 to June 2, 2019. Swissinfo, the international service of the Swiss public broadcaster, reported that nearly 130 people attended, about a quarter of them women, and that except for ten guests from Turkey, Poland, Bulgaria and Estonia, everyone came from North America or Western Europe. Named participants included U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, French finance minister Bruno Le Maire, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, then-German defense minister Ursula von der Leyen, Jared Kushner, executives from the Bank of England, Google, Microsoft and NATO, and Swiss President Ueli Maurer.[179]

Sweden, June 2025. Reuters reported that guests included NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, Microsoft chief executive Satya Nadella, U.S. Army General Christopher Donahue, commander of U.S. Army Europe and Africa, and Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson. Top topics were trans-Atlantic relations, Ukraine, critical raw materials and artificial intelligence.[180]

Washington, D.C., April 9 to 12, 2026. Reported guests included NATO's Mark Rutte and former NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg, King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands and Dutch Prime Minister Rob Jetten, U.S. Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, Army Secretary Daniel Driscoll, Admiral Samuel Paparo, and the chief executives of Pfizer, Deutsche Bank, Siemens, Stripe, TotalEnergies and Palantir, along with Eric Schmidt.[181] The group's published list also included Demis Hassabis of Google DeepMind and Mira Murati.[182]

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[177] Public Intelligence, "Bilderberg," https://publicintelligence.net/bilderberg/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[178] Bilderberg Meetings, "Frequently Asked Questions," https://bilderbergmeetings.org/frequently-asked-questions (accessed November 22, 2026).

[179] "What - and who - is Bilderberg?," Swissinfo, May 29, 2019, https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/politics/secretive-montreux-meeting_what-and-who-is-bilderberg/44997466 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[180] Reuters, "Bilderberg group meets in Sweden amid US-Europe tensions," June 12, 2025, via RTE, https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2025/0612/1518108-bilderberg-group-meets-in-sweden-amid-us-europe-tensions (accessed November 22, 2026).

[181] Josh Friedman, Cal Coast News, April 12, 2026, https://calcoastnews.com/2026/04/california-funding-pours-into-bilderberg-despite-tech-elites-fleeing-the-state/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[182] Bilderberg Meetings, "Participants 2026," as summarized in Wikipedia, "2026 Bilderberg Conference," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2026_Bilderberg_Conference (accessed November 22, 2026) [Not verified: official list would not load].

Hertfordshire, England, near Watford, June 6 to 9, 2013. This meeting left an unusual public record, because the British House of Commons debated it the next day. In that debate, Kenneth Clarke, a cabinet minister who had attended, told the House that "the Prime Minister was there." The opposition's finance spokesman, Ed Balls, said he had attended too.[183] (The full exchange is in Chapter 25.) So in 2013, the head of the British government, a member of his cabinet and the man who hoped to run the Treasury under the opposition were all in the same private room.

What the lists show

Even from these samples, some patterns stand out:

- **NATO's leader is a regular guest.** Mark Rutte attended in 2019 as Dutch prime minister and in 2025 and 2026 as NATO's head.
- **Sitting officials attend.** A U.S. Secretary of State in 2019, a U.S. cabinet member and an Army secretary in 2026, prime ministers and a king.
- **The guest list is still overwhelmingly Western.** Swissinfo's 2019 count found almost everyone came from North America or Western Europe.
- **The business guests track the times.** Banks and oil in earlier decades; Microsoft, Google, Palantir and artificial intelligence companies today (Chapter 17).

Are the lists complete?

Wikipedia's page on the 2026 meeting says the list "may not be complete," citing a 2013 report in The Daily Telegraph in which a source connected to the group said some attendees do not have their names published.[184] The group's own press release counted 128 participants from 23 countries and territories.[185] Portuguese outlet Pagina Um compared a provisional list with the official one and found the official list dropped some names, including European Council President Antonio Costa, while confirming others.[186]

Claim: "The participant lists are fake or incomplete."

Verdict: Inconclusive. The group publishes lists that match independent reporting for the people reporters can see. But there is no way for an outsider to confirm that every attendee is listed, and at least one 2026 provisional list differed from the official one.[187] What would settle it: independent verification of everyone entering the venue.

Research It Yourself: The lists

- Download the official participant list for each year you can find on bilderbergmeetings.org.
- Build a simple spreadsheet: name, country, sector (government, business, military, media, academic) and job.

[183] House of Commons, "Bilderberg Conference," urgent question, June 10, 2013, as reproduced by Parallel Parliament from the official Hansard, https://parallelparliament.co.uk/debate/2013-06-10/commons/commons-chamber/bilderberg-conference (accessed November 22, 2026). Meeting dates: Bilderberg Meetings, "Meetings overview: 2010s," https://www.bilderbergmeetings.org/meetings/meetings-overview/2010 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[184] Wikipedia, "2026 Bilderberg Conference."

[185] Bilderberg Meetings, "Participants 2026," as summarized in Wikipedia, "2026 Bilderberg Conference," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2026_Bilderberg_Conference (accessed November 22, 2026) [Not verified: official list would not load].

[186] Pagina Um, April 10, 2026, https://paginaum.pt/2026/04/10/bilderberg-ja-comecou-em-washington-sem-antonio-costa-na-lista-oficial-mas-guta-mantem-se (accessed November 22, 2026).

[187] Same source.

- Count, for each year, how many participants held public office at the time. Watch how the mix changes.

Chapter 9: Young Global Leaders and the Davos Guest List

"We penetrate the cabinets"

On September 20, 2017, Klaus Schwab spoke at Harvard's John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum in a conversation moderated by David Gergen, a former White House adviser to presidents of both parties.[188] A one-minute clip from that conversation has been shared millions of times since.

In it, Schwab talks about the Forum's Young Global Leaders program. "What we are very proud of now is the young generation like Prime Minister Trudeau, President of Argentina and so on," he says, "that we penetrate the cabinets." He goes on to say that "half of this cabinet or even more than half of this cabinet are actually Young Global Leaders," and when Gergen says "And that's true in Argentina as well," Schwab answers: "It's true in Argentina and it's true in France now, I mean with the President, with Young Global Leaders."[189]

Harvard's Institute of Politics has posted a video of the full event.[190] [Not verified: I could not play the video to match the clip to it; the clip and transcript are widely shared, and I found no report that it was altered.] I also found no denial from Schwab or the Forum that he said it.

So let's take it at face value and ask the honest question. What did he mean, and was he right?

What the program is

The Forum says the Forum of Young Global Leaders was "established in 2004 to unite outstanding leaders under the age of 40" from around the world. It grew out of an earlier program from 1992 called Global Leaders for Tomorrow, which was for leaders under 43. By 2024, about 1,400 people from more than 120 nationalities had been named Young Global Leaders. The program offers "immersive education modules, global summits and collaborative projects."[191]

The Forum's article marking the program's twentieth year does not list individual alumni.[192] Public lists compiled by others name people including French President Emmanuel Macron, former New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, former Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, former German

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[188] Harvard Kennedy School Institute of Politics, "Strengthening Collaboration in a Fractured World - Featuring Special Guest, Yo-Yo Ma," event page with video, September 20, 2017, https://iop.harvard.edu/events/strengthening-collaboration-fractured-world-featuring-special-guest-yo-yo-ma (accessed November 22, 2026); "Kennedy School Forum Spotlights Path Forward for Global Economy," The Harvard Crimson, September 21, 2017, https://thecrimson.com/article/2017/9/21/Schwab-economy-kennedy-forum (accessed November 22, 2026).

[189] Transcript of a clip from a 2017 conversation between Klaus Schwab and David Gergen at the Harvard John F. Kennedy School of Government, as posted at http://ratical.org/PandemicParallaxView/KlausSchwabPenetrateCabinets.html (accessed November 22, 2026). Ratical is an independent site that hosts the clip; it is used here only for the transcript.

[190] Harvard Kennedy School Institute of Politics, "Strengthening Collaboration in a Fractured World - Featuring Special Guest, Yo-Yo Ma," event page with video, September 20, 2017, https://iop.harvard.edu/events/strengthening-collaboration-fractured-world-featuring-special-guest-yo-yo-ma (accessed November 22, 2026); "Kennedy School Forum Spotlights Path Forward for Global Economy," The Harvard Crimson, September 21, 2017, https://thecrimson.com/article/2017/9/21/Schwab-economy-kennedy-forum (accessed November 22, 2026).

[191] World Economic Forum, "Two decades of impact: The Forum for Young Global Leaders turns 20," January 13, 2024, https://www.weforum.org/stories/social-innovation/young-global-leaders-ygl-20/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[192] Same source.

Chancellor Angela Merkel and Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg. [Not verified: I could not confirm each name and year against the Forum's own announcements; these names come from a secondary list.][193]

The other side of the guest list

Here is something the viral clip does not tell you. Young Global Leaders come from across politics.

Michelle Rempel Garner, a Canadian Conservative member of Parliament who sat in opposition to Trudeau's government, was named a Young Global Leader in 2016. She has written that the 2017 meeting she attended felt like an academic conference.[194]

That matters. If the program were a pipeline for one party or one ideology, it would not pick a leading opponent of the government it supposedly controls.

How a program like this works

You might ask, "If it's not a secret society, why does it bother people?"

Because of how influence actually works. The Young Global Leaders program does not hand out orders. It picks people who are already rising, flies them to meetings with each other and with powerful people, teaches them a shared way of looking at the world, and keeps them in touch for years. Experts quoted on the subject note that members must already hold powerful positions to be picked, and that membership does not mean members will obey anyone.[195]

That is how elite networks have always worked, from Oxford colleges to West Point to Rhodes Scholarships. The question is not whether they are secret. It is whether the people inside them start to share assumptions that the rest of us never got to vote on.

Schwab's own words make that question fair. He did not say "we train leaders." He said "we penetrate the cabinets." He was proud of it. A man who says that about governments should expect people to ask what he meant.

The verdicts

Claim: "Schwab bragged that his Young Global Leaders penetrated government cabinets."

Verdict: True. The clip shows Schwab saying "we penetrate the cabinets" and that "more than half" of Trudeau's cabinet were Young Global Leaders.[196] Whether his count of Trudeau's cabinet was accurate is a separate question that I could not confirm.

Claim: "Trudeau, Macron, Ardern and other leaders were trained by the WEF."

Verdict: Partly true. Several heads of government have been named Young Global Leaders, and the program does include education modules.[197] But "trained by" suggests orders or a curriculum they follow

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[193] Wikipedia, "Young Global Leaders," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Young_Global_Leaders (accessed November 22, 2026). Used as a pointer only.

[194] Michelle Rempel Garner, "I went to Davos. The World Economic Forum is not running Canada," The Line, February 24, 2022, https://www.readtheline.ca/p/michelle-rempel-garner-i-went-to (accessed November 22, 2026).

[195] Wikipedia, "Young Global Leaders," summarizing comments by academics and commentators.

[196] Ratical transcript (note 1).

[197] World Economic Forum, January 13, 2024; Wikipedia, "Young Global Leaders."

in office, and there is no evidence of that. The program also includes people from opposing parties, such as Michelle Rempel Garner.

Claim: "The WEF controls governments."

Verdict: Inconclusive. The Forum has deep, documented ties to political leaders, and its founder said in his own words that it "penetrates" cabinets. But I found no record of the Forum directing a government decision, and governments, including Canada's, have often done things the Forum did not want. "Influence" is well documented. "Control" is not proven. What would settle it: internal records showing Forum instructions to officials and officials carrying them out.

Research It Yourself: The network

- Search the Forum's press releases for each year's "Young Global Leaders class" announcement. Make your own list of names, countries and jobs.
- Pick a country. Compare the cabinet's members with the Young Global Leaders lists. Do your count, not someone else's.
- Watch the full September 20, 2017, event on the Harvard Institute of Politics website, not just the clip, and find where the "penetrate the cabinets" line comes.
- For any official who is a Young Global Leader, ask whether they disclosed it, and whether the program paid for any travel.

Chapter 10: The Rule of Silence and the Reporters Outside

The rule

Bilderberg runs on a rule of silence. The group says participants "agree not to quote each other" so that everyone can "speak freely in an environment of trust."[198]

That practice is usually called the Chatham House Rule, after the London think tank that created it. Here is the rule in Chatham House's own words: "When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed."[199]

Read the last part again: "nor that of any other participant." Under the strict rule, even the guest list would be private. Bilderberg goes further than the rule on one side, by publishing its list, and further on the other side, by keeping out the press entirely.

No press, no statement

The group says the meeting is closed to journalists "in order to encourage the highest level of openness and dialogue," that it "does not seek any public attention," and that "there is no closing statement, there are no resolutions proposed or votes taken." It adds that "each year journalists have attended a titre personnel," meaning in a personal capacity, not as reporters.[200] [Not verified: names of journalists who attended in a personal capacity in recent years.]

That last line deserves attention. Newspaper editors and columnists have sat in the room as participants. They have agreed not to report what they heard. A reader of their papers has no way of knowing what they learned there, or how it shaped what they later wrote.

The reporters outside

For decades, a handful of reporters covered Bilderberg from outside the gates. Their names come up again and again: Jim Tucker of the American Free Press, Daniel Estulin, author of "The True Story of the Bilderberg Group," and Charlie Skelton of The Guardian, who covered the meeting for years with dry humor and close attention to the guest lists and agendas. [Not verified: specific articles by Tucker and Skelton. Estulin's books are cited in Chapter 28.]

Their work had a real effect. The group's gradual move from quasi-secret to merely discreet, including publishing guest lists, came after years of outside attention. Swissinfo described the change in 2019: the club has moved from quasi-secret to discreet.[201]

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[198] Bilderberg Meetings, "Frequently Asked Questions," https://bilderbergmeetings.org/frequently-asked-questions (accessed November 22, 2026).

[199] Chatham House, "Chatham House Rule," https://www.chathamhouse.org/about-us/chatham-house-rule (accessed November 22, 2026).

[200] Bilderberg Meetings, "Frequently Asked Questions."

[201] Swissinfo, May 2019, https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/politics/secretive-montreux-meeting_what-and-who-is-bilderberg/44997466 (accessed November 22, 2026).

What one insider wrote

Few participants have written about Bilderberg at length. Denis Healey, the British Labour politician who later served as Chancellor of the Exchequer, is an exception. In his 1989 memoir, "The Time of My Life," he explained why Prince Bernhard was chosen as chairman: the founders "rightly thought it would be difficult to find a politician whose objectivity would be above suspicion, and who could call Cabinet ministers from any country without causing offence."[202]

Healey wrote that he was invited to the first meeting and "later acted as convenor of the British who attended," and that "I wrote a paper for most conferences." He was frank about what he got out of it: "My years at the Bilderberg meetings also brought me many contacts in the financial world which now proved of great value." He named one of them: "David Rockefeller, whom I had known since the very first Bilderberg meeting," who by then headed the Chase Manhattan Bank.[203]

He also described a meeting that shows how the private setting worked. "At Megeve in April, 1974, I met Helmut Schmidt, who was now once again my colleague, as Germany's Finance Minister." Healey was then Britain's Chancellor, its finance minister.[204] Two of Europe's top finance officials meeting privately at Bilderberg is exactly the kind of contact the public never hears about.

And he named the problem himself: "The Bilderberg conferences inevitably aroused jealousy because they were exclusive and suspicion, because they were private."[205]

Why the silence breeds theories

Christina Garsten, a professor who studies transnational think tanks, told Reuters in 2025 that how much impact groups like Bilderberg have "is hard to judge." Reuters noted that such groups aim to shape the broad political and corporate agenda and can be accused of being anti-democratic if seen as too influential. "It's there that conspiracy theories can flower," she said, though she called the idea of a shadowy world government "very much exaggerated."[206]

That is the heart of it. When powerful people meet and say nothing, the public fills in the blank. Some of what gets filled in is wild. But the blank is real, and the group chose to leave it there.

The verdicts

Claim: "The media is banned and never reports on it."

Verdict: Partly true. Journalists are not accredited and cannot report from inside.[207] But major outlets such as Reuters, Swissinfo and The Guardian report on each meeting from the outside, using the published list and topics, and some journalists attend in a personal capacity under the rule of silence.

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[202] Denis Healey, The Time of My Life (London: Michael Joseph, 1989), pp. 195-196 and 414-415, as excerpted in "Denis Healey on Bilderberg," Socialist Standard, July 2002, https://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/socialist-standard/2002/2000s/no-1175-july-2002/denis-healey-bilderberg/ (accessed November 22, 2026). Publisher [Not verified].

[203] Same source.

[204] Same source.

[205] Same source.

[206] Reuters, June 12, 2025, via RTE, https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2025/0612/1518108-bilderberg-group-meets-in-sweden-amid-us-europe-tensions (accessed November 22, 2026).

[207] Bilderberg Meetings, "Frequently Asked Questions."

Claim: "Members swear an oath of secrecy."

Verdict: Partly true. Participants agree not to quote each other and not to attribute what was said.[208] I found no evidence of a formal oath. "Agree not to quote" is documented. "Swear an oath" is not.

Research It Yourself: The silence

- Read the Chatham House Rule on chathamhouse.org and compare it with Bilderberg's own description of its rules.
- Look for any participant who has written or spoken about what Bilderberg was like inside, in a memoir or interview. Note what they say and what they leave out.

[208] Same source.

Chapter 11: Where the Rooms Overlap

Two meetings, one crowd

Bilderberg and the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos are often lumped together. They are different, and the differences matter.

Table 11.1. Bilderberg and Davos compared[209]

	Bilderberg	**World Economic Forum, Davos**
Founded	1954	1971
Size	About 130 guests	Close to 3,000 participants in 2026
Press	No press	Hundreds of sessions streamed and covered
Statements	None	Reports, press releases, public speeches
Funding	Host-country hospitality; U.S. nonprofit donors	About 925 partner companies
Public status	Private	Formal status in Switzerland as an "international institution for public-private cooperation"

In short, Davos is big, loud and public. Bilderberg is small, quiet and private.

The overlap

The same people move between them. In 2026, NATO's Mark Rutte, the King of the Netherlands, U.S. cabinet members and leading tech and finance executives went to Bilderberg in April.[210] Many of the same kinds of leaders were at Davos in January. Larry Fink, BlackRock's chief, became interim co-chair of the World Economic Forum in 2025. [Not verified: whether Fink has attended Bilderberg.][211]

The overlap reaches the top. Bilderberg's own Steering Committee page, the committee that chooses its guests, lists Andre Hoffmann, vice chair of Roche and, since 2025, an interim co-chair of the Forum's board alongside Fink. It also lists Borge Brende with the title of Forum president, a post he left in

[209] Bilderberg Meetings, "Frequently Asked Questions," https://bilderbergmeetings.org/frequently-asked-questions; World Economic Forum, "A Spirit of Dialogue Brings Record Numbers of World Leaders to Davos," January 2026, https://www.weforum.org/press/2026/01/a-spirit-of-dialogue-brings-record-numbers-of-world-leaders-to-davos-for-world-economic-forum-annual-meeting-2026/; World Economic Forum, Annual Report 2024-2025, https://www.weforum.org/publications/annual-report-2024-2025/in-full/; World Economic Forum, "World Economic Forum Gains Formal Status in Switzerland," January 23, 2015, https://www.weforum.org/media/world-economic-forum-gains-formal-status-in-switzerland/ (all accessed November 22, 2026).

[210] Josh Friedman, Cal Coast News, April 12, 2026, https://calcoastnews.com/2026/04/california-funding-pours-into-bilderberg-despite-tech-elites-fleeing-the-state/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[211] World Economic Forum, "News Release," August 15, 2025, https://www.weforum.org/press/2025/08/news-release/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

February 2026.[212] So one of the people running Davos today, and the man who ran its staff for about eight and a half years, are on the committee that decides who is invited to Bilderberg (Chapter 6, Table 6.2).

The verdict

Claim: "Bilderberg and the World Economic Forum are the same people."

Verdict: Partly true. Many of the same political and business leaders attend both, the topics overlap, and a co-chair of the Forum's board sits on Bilderberg's Steering Committee.[213][214] But they are separate organizations with separate founders, funding and rules, and Davos is largely public while Bilderberg is private.

Claim: "Bilderberg planned the COVID response."

Verdict: False (debunked) as stated. No Bilderberg meetings were held in 2020 or 2021 because of the pandemic.[215] I found no evidence Bilderberg planned the pandemic response. The pandemic exercise people often confuse with this claim, Event 201 in October 2019, was run by Johns Hopkins, the World Economic Forum and the Gates Foundation, and is covered in Chapter 13.

Name by name

Here are the people I could document in both rooms at the top level, as of November 22, 2026. "Top level" means they help run one of the two organizations, not just attend.

[212] Bilderberg Meetings, "Steering Committee," https://bilderbergmeetings.org/background/steering-committee/steering-committee (accessed November 22, 2026); World Economic Forum, Annual Report 2024-2025, Preface, https://www.weforum.org/publications/annual-report-2024-2025/in-full/ (accessed November 22, 2026), which names Laurence D. Fink and Andre Hoffmann as interim co-chairs of the Board of Trustees.

[213] Bilderberg Meetings, "Frequently Asked Questions," https://bilderbergmeetings.org/frequently-asked-questions; World Economic Forum, "A Spirit of Dialogue Brings Record Numbers of World Leaders to Davos," January 2026, https://www.weforum.org/press/2026/01/a-spirit-of-dialogue-brings-record-numbers-of-world-leaders-to-davos-for-world-economic-forum-annual-meeting-2026/; World Economic Forum, Annual Report 2024-2025, https://www.weforum.org/publications/annual-report-2024-2025/in-full/; World Economic Forum, "World Economic Forum Gains Formal Status in Switzerland," January 23, 2015, https://www.weforum.org/media/world-economic-forum-gains-formal-status-in-switzerland/ (all accessed November 22, 2026); Josh Friedman, Cal Coast News, April 12, 2026, https://calcoastnews.com/2026/04/california-funding-pours-into-bilderberg-despite-tech-elites-fleeing-the-state/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[214] Bilderberg Meetings, "Steering Committee," https://bilderbergmeetings.org/background/steering-committee/steering-committee (accessed November 22, 2026); World Economic Forum, Annual Report 2024-2025, Preface, https://www.weforum.org/publications/annual-report-2024-2025/in-full/ (accessed November 22, 2026), which names Laurence D. Fink and Andre Hoffmann as interim co-chairs of the Board of Trustees.

[215] Bilderberg Meetings, "Meetings overview: 2020s," https://www.bilderbergmeetings.org/meetings/meetings-overview/2020 (accessed November 22, 2026), which says the 2020 and 2021 meetings were canceled because of travel and meeting restrictions.

Table 11.2. People with leadership roles in both rooms[216]

Person	Role at the World Economic Forum	Role at Bilderberg
Andre Hoffmann	Co-chair of the Board of Trustees since August 2025 (named on an interim basis)	Listed on the Steering Committee
Borge Brende	President and chief executive, 2017 to February 2026	Listed on the Steering Committee under his Forum title
Larry Fink	Co-chair of the Board of Trustees since August 2025 (named on an interim basis)	[Not verified: whether he has attended]

That is a short table, and I want to be honest about why. Bilderberg publishes its committee and its guest lists. The Forum publishes its board. But the Forum does not publish a full, searchable list of everyone at Davos, so a complete name-by-name comparison of the two guest lists is not something I could do from public records. If you want to try, start with the Bilderberg participant list for a given year and search each name in news coverage of that January's Davos meeting.

What the short table does show is enough. The board that runs the world's most public business meeting and the committee that runs the world's most private one share at least one member today, and shared a second until February 2026.

Was the Great Reset planned at Bilderberg?

The Great Reset was launched in June 2020, the same summer the Bilderberg meeting was cancelled because of the pandemic, as covered earlier in this chapter. Some of the same business and political leaders attend both Davos and Bilderberg. But they are separate organizations with separate histories. I found no document showing Bilderberg wrote, approved or directed the Great Reset.

The pattern

Each of these groups is real. Each one gathers powerful people in private or semi-private settings. Each one publishes something about itself: founding dates, purposes, and in Bilderberg's case, a guest list. None of them, on the evidence I could find, wrote or ran the Great Reset.

So what is the honest takeaway? It is that the same small circle of people moves between all of them. A banker might go to Davos in January, Bilderberg in the spring and a Trilateral meeting in the fall, and sit on a CFR task force in between. That is not one secret government. It is a revolving set of rooms where the same people talk to each other and nobody else is invited. You can find that troubling without believing any of the wilder stories. I do.

Claim: "The Great Reset was planned at Bilderberg."

Verdict: Inconclusive. Bilderberg's discussions are private by design, so we cannot rule out that the topic came up. But I found no participant account, document or record showing it was planned there. What would settle it: a participant's notes or testimony.

[216] Bilderberg Meetings, "Steering Committee," https://bilderbergmeetings.org/background/steering-committee/steering-committee (accessed November 22, 2026); World Economic Forum, Annual Report 2024-2025, "Leadership and Governance," https://www.weforum.org/publications/annual-report-2024-2025/leadership-and-governance-2024-2025 (accessed November 22, 2026), which lists the Board of Trustees and notes the election of Laurence D. Fink and Andre Hoffmann as co-chairs on August 15, 2025; World Economic Forum, "Press Statement from Co-Chairs Andre Hoffmann and Larry Fink," February 26, 2026, https://www.weforum.org/press/2026/02/press-statement-from-co-chairs-andre-hoffmann-and-larry-fink-on-behalf-of-the-board-of-trustees/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

Chapter 12: The Cousins: The Trilateral Commission, the Council on Foreign Relations and Bohemian Grove

Bilderberg and Davos are not the only private rooms. Three older clubs come up in almost every book on this subject. Each is real, each publishes something about itself, and each overlaps with the people in this book.

The Trilateral Commission

Rockefeller's second club

David Rockefeller helped organize and fund the first Bilderberg meetings (Chapter 1).[217] In 1973, he founded a second group. The Trilateral Commission says it was "Founded in 1973 by David Rockefeller." It describes itself as a global membership organization that brings together senior policymakers, business leaders and people from media and universities to discuss and propose solutions to major international problems, and to reaffirm "a commitment to the rule of law, open economies and societies, and democratic principles." It has three regional groups: North America, Europe and the Asia Pacific.[218]

The name says what was new. Bilderberg was about Europe and North America. The Trilateral Commission added Japan and, later, the wider Asia Pacific region.

In Rockefeller's own words

Rockefeller answered his critics directly in his 2002 memoirs, in a chapter he titled "Proud Internationalist." He wrote that "some even believe we are part of a secret cabal working against the best interests of the United States." His answer: "If that's the charge, I stand guilty, and I am proud of it."[219]

That line is often quoted as a confession. Read in context, it is a man saying he believes in international cooperation and is not ashamed of it. You can disagree with his view of the world. But the quote is an open statement of belief, published under his own name, not a slip of the tongue.

How it differs from Bilderberg

Table 12.1. Bilderberg and the Trilateral Commission compared[220]

	Bilderberg	**Trilateral Commission**
Founded	1954	1973
Regions	Europe and North America	North America, Europe, Asia Pacific
Model	Invitation to one annual meeting	Ongoing membership
Publishes guest or member list	Yes, each year	Lists leadership, members and

[217] Thomas W. Gijswijt, "Emotions and positive anti-communism during the early Cold War," Journal of Transatlantic Studies 22 (2024): 11-24, p. 13, https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1057/s42738-024-00117-3.pdf (accessed November 22, 2026).

[218] Trilateral Commission, "About," https://www.trilateral.org/about/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[219] David Rockefeller, Memoirs (New York: Random House, 2002), Chapter 27, "Proud Internationalist," sections "Bilderberg" and "Populist Paranoia." Passages checked against a scanned copy; page numbers [Not verified].

[220] Trilateral Commission, "About," https://www.trilateral.org/about/ (accessed November 22, 2026); Bilderberg Meetings, "Frequently Asked Questions," https://bilderbergmeetings.org/frequently-asked-questions (accessed November 22, 2026).

	Bilderberg	Trilateral Commission
		fellows on its website [Not verified: whether the full member list is published]
Publishes reports	No closing statement	Yes, including task force reports

Overlap

The two groups share a founder figure in David Rockefeller and overlap in their guest and member lists. [Not verified: a name-by-name overlap count; this is a good research project for a reader with the lists in hand.] That overlap is the basis of claims that they are parts of one machine.

Claim: "The Trilateral Commission and Bilderberg are the same organization."

Verdict: False (debunked). They have different founding dates, structures and regions, and each publishes its own history.[221] They do share people and a founding generation, which is documented and fair to point out.

The Council on Foreign Relations

The oldest of the three

The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) is older than Bilderberg by more than thirty years. It says it was founded in 1921 and describes itself as "a nonpartisan, independent national membership organization, think tank, educator, and publisher." It has published the journal Foreign Affairs since 1922.[222]

Unlike Bilderberg, the CFR is mostly public. It holds on-the-record events, publishes research, and its journal is sold on newsstands.

Where it came from

The CFR tells its own origin story. During World War I, President Woodrow Wilson gathered a group of scholars, known as "The Inquiry," to prepare for the peace talks in Paris. After the war, the U.S. Senate rejected the Treaty of Versailles and, with it, American membership in the League of Nations. A group of internationally minded Americans concluded that their fellow citizens needed to be better prepared for world affairs, and they set up the CFR to "afford a continuous conference on international questions affecting the United States."[223]

How big it is and who belongs

In January 2021, marking its hundredth year, the CFR said it had more than 5,000 members and a staff of nearly 400. It also listed, with obvious pride, its past members: seven U.S. presidents, 37 secretaries of state, 22 secretaries of defense, 25 secretaries of the treasury, 21 national security advisors and six Supreme Court justices.[224]

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[221] Same source.

[222] Council on Foreign Relations, "About CFR," https://www.cfr.org/about (accessed November 22, 2026).

[223] Council on Foreign Relations, "Council on Foreign Relations Marks Its One Hundredth Anniversary," January 5, 2021, https://www.cfr.org/articles/council-foreign-relations-marks-its-one-hundredth-anniversary (accessed November 22, 2026); Council on Foreign Relations, "About CFR."

[224] Council on Foreign Relations, "Council on Foreign Relations Marks Its One Hundredth Anniversary."

Read that list again. That is the CFR's own count, not a critic's. When people say the CFR is the home of the American foreign policy establishment, the CFR does not really disagree. It calls that a record of service.

You do not apply to the CFR the way you apply for a job. The CFR says that "New CFR members are elected twice a year by the Board of Directors," after being nominated and seconded by existing members. It also runs a program for younger members, ages 28 to 36, who serve fixed five-year terms.[225] Its president, as of November 2026, is Michael Froman, who served as U.S. Trade Representative in President Barack Obama's cabinet from June 2013 to January 2017 and later as a vice chairman at Mastercard.[226]

That is a closed door, but not a secret one. Membership is by invitation, and the rules for getting in are published.

Why it comes up

The CFR comes up in Bilderberg stories for two reasons. First, many Americans who attend Bilderberg are also CFR members. Second, the CFR is where much of the American foreign policy establishment of both parties has trained, published and networked for a century.

Two men tie the groups together. Joseph E. Johnson, who helped organize the first Bilderberg meetings, led the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. David Rockefeller, who attended Bilderberg from its start in 1954, chaired the CFR from 1970 to 1985 and helped found the Trilateral Commission in 1973.[227][228]

The verdict

Claim: "The Council on Foreign Relations secretly runs U.S. foreign policy."

Verdict: Inconclusive. Many U.S. foreign policy officials of both parties have been CFR members, and its journal and task forces shape debate.[229] But the CFR publishes most of its work, does not set policy, and has members who disagree with each other. I found no record of the CFR directing a government decision. What would settle it: records showing CFR instructions carried out by officials.

What this chapter shows

If you want to understand the American side of Bilderberg, start with the CFR. It is where the people who later sit in Bilderberg's private rooms build their careers in public. Much of what they think is in Foreign Affairs for anyone to read. Reading it is one of the best ways to know what the establishment is likely talking about behind closed doors.

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[225] Council on Foreign Relations, "Membership," https://www.cfr.org/membership (accessed November 22, 2026).

[226] Council on Foreign Relations, "About CFR"; Council on Foreign Relations, "Michael Froman," expert page, https://www.cfr.org/expert/michael-froman (accessed November 22, 2026).

[227] Thomas W. Gijswijt, "Emotions and positive anti-communism during the early Cold War," Journal of Transatlantic Studies 22 (2024): 11-24, p. 13, https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1057/s42738-024-00117-3.pdf (accessed November 22, 2026); Trilateral Commission, "About," https://www.trilateral.org/about/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[228] Rockefeller Archive Center, "David Rockefeller, 1915-2017," https://rockarch.org/resources/about-the-rockefellers/david-rockefeller/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[229] Council on Foreign Relations, "About CFR."

The Bohemian Club and Bohemian Grove

A camp in the redwoods

North of San Francisco, near the small town of Monte Rio, California, is a private redwood forest of about 2,700 acres called Bohemian Grove. Each summer, members of the Bohemian Club, a private San Francisco men's club founded in 1872 by a group of San Franciscans, most of them journalists, gather there for a retreat. The first encampment at the Grove was in 1878.[230]

The club's motto is "Weaving Spiders Come Not Here," meaning members are supposed to leave business outside.[231]

What is documented

- **Membership is all-male.** No woman has ever been a full member. Women may visit only as daytime guests and are not allowed at the main summer encampment.[232]
- **Presidents have attended.** Former President Herbert Hoover was a long-time member. In July 1950, Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon met for the first time as Hoover's guests at the Grove's Cave Man Camp.[233]
- **The "Cremation of Care."** Since 1881, the summer encampment has opened with a theatrical ceremony in front of a large owl statue, in which an effigy representing "Care" is burned. [Not verified: the ceremony's meaning as described by the club.][234]
- **Outsiders have gotten in.** In July 1989, journalist Philip Weiss spent seven days inside posing as a guest and wrote about it for Spy magazine in November 1989. On July 15, 2000, Alex Jones and a cameraman entered and secretly filmed the Cremation of Care.[235]
- **A 1942 science meeting.** In September 1942, physicists J. Robert Oppenheimer and Ernest Lawrence hosted a meeting at the club related to early planning of the Manhattan Project, the program that built the atomic bomb, according to historian Gregg Herken's book "Brotherhood of the Bomb."[236] [Not verified: Herken's book not opened; whether the meeting was at the San Francisco clubhouse or the Grove.]

The local paper's account

The best plain history I found comes from the local paper. A column in the Santa Rosa Press Democrat says the club was founded in 1872 by nine San Franciscans, including a Shakespearean actor, a winemaker, two merchants and five journalists, with a mission of supporting the arts on the Pacific Coast. The first encampment, in 1878, was a farewell party on Lagunitas Creek in Marin County. The club

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[230] Wikipedia, "Bohemian Grove," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bohemian_Grove (accessed November 22, 2026). Used as a pointer to the sources it cites; individual facts were not each checked against those sources.

[231] Same source.

[232] Same source.

[233] Same source.

[234] Same source.

[235] Same source, citing Philip Weiss, "Masters of the Universe Go to Camp: Inside the Bohemian Grove," Spy, November 1989, and The New York Times, September 7, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/07/us/politics/alex-jones-business-infowars-conspiracy.html.

[236] Same source, citing Gregg Herken, Brotherhood of the Bomb, chapter 4.

moved its camp several times before settling in the canyon near what became Monte Rio, and it began buying that land in pieces starting in 1901.[237]

The same column says Herbert Hoover "became a regular and a champion of the Grove," and that after he became president he brought his political associates there. It also says that during World War II, government officials picked the Grove's Lodge as a meeting place for physicists discussing what became the Manhattan Project.[238] That is a second source for the 1942 meeting, though it does not settle the exact details.

Protests at the gate are not new either. According to the column, they began in 1980 under the Bohemian Grove Action Network, led by a local activist, Mary Moore.[239]

The White House files

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library has put a folder of White House files about the Bohemian Club online. It holds letters and phone messages from 1981 to 1985, most of them about invitations to the Grove for top aides Edwin Meese and Michael Deaver. One phone message from June 1981 asks whether a presidential visit that July was "a possibility or no chance at all." A June 27, 1983, letter from the White House scheduling office declines an invitation to the President, saying "regrettably, it will not be possible for him to attend."[240]

These are not explosive documents. They are ordinary scheduling paperwork. But they show something worth knowing: invitations to the Grove went to the very top of the White House, and they were handled like any other important invitation, through official channels, with copies kept for history.

What is not documented

Alex Jones described the Cremation of Care as a "ritual sacrifice." Other reporting on the ceremony does not support that description.[241] It is a staged play with a burning effigy, not a human sacrifice.

Claim: "Human sacrifices are performed at Bohemian Grove."

Verdict: False (debunked). The ceremony burns an effigy, and the only footage, filmed by a critic in 2000, shows a staged performance.[242]

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[237] "LeBaron: The story behind Bohemian Grove," The Press Democrat (Santa Rosa, California), https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/news/lebaron-the-story-behind-bohemian-grove/ (accessed November 22, 2026). Publication date [Not verified].

[238] "LeBaron: The story behind Bohemian Grove," The Press Democrat (Santa Rosa, California), https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/news/lebaron-the-story-behind-bohemian-grove/ (accessed November 22, 2026). Publication date [Not verified].

[239] "LeBaron: The story behind Bohemian Grove," The Press Democrat (Santa Rosa, California), https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/news/lebaron-the-story-behind-bohemian-grove/ (accessed November 22, 2026). Publication date [Not verified].

[240] Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, White House Office of Records Management (WHORM) Alpha File, "Bohemian Grove/Bohemian Club," digitized folder, https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/2022-06/40-816-198416-B-bohemiangroveclub-2022.pdf (accessed November 22, 2026).

[241] Wikipedia, "Bohemian Grove," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bohemian_Grove (accessed November 22, 2026). Used as a pointer to the sources it cites; individual facts were not each checked against those sources, citing Philip Weiss, "Masters of the Universe Go to Camp: Inside the Bohemian Grove," Spy, November 1989, and The New York Times, September 7, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/07/us/politics/alex-jones-business-infowars-conspiracy.html, citing Gregg Herken, Brotherhood of the Bomb, chapter 4.

[242] Same source.

Claim: "Powerful men make deals at Bohemian Grove."

Verdict: Inconclusive. The club's motto says business stays outside, and its gatherings are private. But presidents, future presidents and business leaders have spent time together there, and the 1942 Manhattan Project planning meeting shows serious work has happened at the club.[243] What would settle it: participant records or memoirs describing specific decisions.

Connection to Bilderberg

I found no organizational connection between the Bohemian Club and Bilderberg. They are often grouped together because both bring powerful men together in private. The difference is that Bilderberg is about policy by design. The Bohemian Club, at least on paper, is about getting away from it.

What the cousins have to do with the Great Reset

The Trilateral Commission uses the same "public-private" model as the Forum: private leaders and officials working together on global problems.[244] The Council on Foreign Relations publishes Foreign Affairs, where Klaus Schwab first published his 2016 essay on the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Chapter 17).[245] And David Rockefeller, as shown above, tied the older clubs together. I found no document tying the Trilateral Commission, the CFR or the Bohemian Club to the Great Reset as such.

[243] Same source.

[244] Trilateral Commission, "About," https://www.trilateral.org/about/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[245] Klaus Schwab, "The Fourth Industrial Revolution: What It Means and How to Respond," first published in Foreign Affairs, republished by GE Reports, https://www.ge.com/news/reports/the-4th-industrial-revolution-what-it-means-how-to-respond (accessed November 22, 2026).

Part Three: The Great Reset

Chapter 13: Event 201: The Pandemic Exercise Before the Pandemic

The Pierre Hotel, October 18, 2019

On the morning of Friday, October 18, 2019, about fifteen people sat around a table at the Pierre, a luxury hotel in New York City. Nearly 130 invited guests watched from the room, and the event was streamed live online. For the next three and a half hours, the people at the table played out a pandemic.[246]

The event was called Event 201. It was run by three partners: the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, the World Economic Forum and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. It was paid for by the Open Philanthropy Project.[247]

The scenario was a new coronavirus that jumped from bats to pigs to people and then spread easily from person to person. The exercise ended at the eighteen-month point, with 65 million people dead.[248]

Ten weeks later, the world heard about a new coronavirus in Wuhan, China.

You can see why people noticed.

Who was at the table

The players were named on the Johns Hopkins website. Among them were Avril Haines, then a senior research scholar at Columbia University and a former deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA); George Gao, Director-General of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention; Christopher Elias of the Gates Foundation; Stephen Redd of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); a representative of the Monetary Authority of Singapore; and executives from Marriott, Lufthansa, Johnson and Johnson, Henry Schein, the UPS Foundation and the ANZ Bank board.[249] In January 2021, Haines became the U.S. Director of National Intelligence.[250]

That is a remarkable list. A future head of American intelligence and the head of China's disease agency played out a coronavirus pandemic together, two and a half months before a real one began in China.

What they recommended

At the end, the three partners issued a "call to action" with seven recommendations. Among them:[251]

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[246] Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, "Event 201 Pandemic Tabletop Exercise," https://centerforhealthsecurity.org/our-work/tabletop-exercises/event-201-pandemic-tabletop-exercise (accessed November 22, 2026).

[247] Same source.

[248] Same source.

[249] Same source, participant list.

[250] Office of the Director of National Intelligence, "ODNI Welcomes Avril Haines as Director of National Intelligence," News Release No. 05-21, January 2021, https://dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/press-releases/press-releases-2021/3511-odni-welcomes-avril-haines-as-director-of-national-intelligence (accessed November 22, 2026). Player titles: Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, "Players for Event 201," October 15, 2019, https://centerforhealthsecurity.org/2019/players-for-event-201-a-pandemic-exercise-include-global-business-leaders-and-prominent-government-and-public-health-leaders-livestream-open-to-all (accessed November 22, 2026).

- Plan ahead for how businesses' logistics, social media and distribution can support a pandemic response.
- Build up international stockpiles of medical supplies.
- Keep travel and trade running during severe pandemics.
- Support surge manufacturing of vaccines, treatments and tests.
- Make reducing economic damage a priority, including more flexible emergency funding.
- Give "a greater priority to developing methods to combat mis- and disinformation."

That last recommendation deserves attention. In 2019, a public-private group including the World Economic Forum recommended that governments and companies work together to counter what they judged to be false information during a pandemic. During COVID, that is roughly what happened, and it became one of the most fought-over issues of the pandemic. The U.S. Supreme Court took up a case on government pressure on social media companies, Murthy v. Missouri. On June 26, 2024, by a 6 to 3 vote, it ruled that the challengers did not have standing to sue, so it never decided whether the government had violated the First Amendment. Justices Alito, Thomas and Gorsuch dissented.[252] I am not saying Event 201 caused that. I am saying the idea was on paper, under the Forum's name, before the pandemic began.

What Johns Hopkins said

As the real virus spread in January 2020, posts went viral claiming Event 201 had "predicted" 65 million deaths, or that it proved the pandemic was planned.

On January 24, 2020, the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security put out a statement. "To be clear," it said, "the Center for Health Security and partners did not make a prediction during our tabletop exercise. For the scenario, we modeled a fictional coronavirus pandemic, but we explicitly stated that it was not a prediction." It added: "We are not now predicting that the nCoV-2019 outbreak will kill 65 million people."[253]

FactCheck.org, a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center, reported that the Center also said the inputs it used for its fictional virus "are not similar to nCoV-2019."[254]

Why run an exercise like that?

You might ask, "Isn't it suspicious that they practiced a coronavirus pandemic right before one happened?"

It is a fair question, and here is the honest answer. Public health experts had warned for years that a new respiratory virus could cause a pandemic. Coronaviruses were an obvious candidate, because two of them had already caused deadly outbreaks this century: SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) in 2002 and 2003, and MERS (Middle East respiratory syndrome), which the World Health Organization says was

[251] Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, "Event 201 Pandemic Tabletop Exercise," https://centerforhealthsecurity.org/our-work/tabletop-exercises/event-201-pandemic-tabletop-exercise (accessed November 22, 2026), participant list, "Public-private cooperation for pandemic preparedness and response: A call to action."

[252] Murthy v. Missouri, No. 23-411 (U.S. June 26, 2024), as summarized by the National Constitution Center, "The Supreme Court rules on government pressure on websites to moderate content," https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/the-supreme-court-rules-on-government-pressure-websites-to-moderate-content (accessed November 22, 2026). The opinion is at supremecourt.gov.

[253] Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, statement, January 24, 2020, https://centerforhealthsecurity.org/group/6/content/6396 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[254] Angelo Fichera, "New Coronavirus Wasn't 'Predicted' in Simulation," FactCheck.org, January 29, 2020, https://www.factcheck.org/2020/01/new-coronavirus-wasnt-predicted-in-simulation/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

first identified in Saudi Arabia and Jordan in 2012.[255] Planning for the most likely threat is what emergency planners do. Fire departments drill for fires.

None of that makes the timing comfortable. But practicing for a likely event is not the same as causing it.

The verdicts

Claim: "Event 201 predicted the COVID-19 pandemic and its death toll."

Verdict: False (debunked). The organizers said before and after that the scenario was fictional and not a prediction, and the 65 million figure was for a made-up virus with different features.[256]

Claim: "Event 201 proves the pandemic was planned."

Verdict: False (debunked). An exercise that imagined a pandemic is not evidence that anyone caused one. No investigation I found links Event 201 to the origin of the virus. Where the virus came from is a separate and still-debated question, which I point you to in Chapter 30.

Claim: "The World Economic Forum and Gates Foundation helped plan a pandemic response, including fighting 'misinformation,' before COVID began."

Verdict: True. That is exactly what Event 201's published call to action says.[257]

Research It Yourself: Event 201

- Watch the full Event 201 recordings on the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security website, not clips.[258] Note who said what.
- Read the seven recommendations in full. Ask: which were adopted during COVID, by whom, and with what results?
- Look up each player and what job they held in 2019 and later.
- For the origin of COVID-19 itself, read the assessments published by U.S. intelligence agencies and congressional committees, which disagree with each other. That is a different question from Event 201, and it deserves its own book.

What this chapter shows

Event 201 was real, public and streamed live. It brought together the World Economic Forum, the Gates Foundation, Johns Hopkins, a future U.S. intelligence chief and China's top disease official to practice for a coronavirus pandemic. Its organizers recommended that business and government work together on supply chains, vaccines and "misinformation."

It did not predict COVID, and nothing in the record shows it caused it. But it does show that the people who later shaped the pandemic response had already sat at the same table and agreed on a playbook. That

[255] World Health Organization, "Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)," fact sheet, https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/middle-east-respiratory-syndrome-coronavirus-(MERS-CoV) (accessed November 22, 2026); World Health Organization, "Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)," https://www.who.int/health-topics/severe-acute-respiratory-syndrome (accessed November 22, 2026), which says cases "were detected as early as November 2002" and the virus was identified as a coronavirus in February 2003.

[256] Johns Hopkins statement, January 24, 2020; Fichera, FactCheck.org.

[257] Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, Event 201 page, call to action.

[258] Same source.

is not a conspiracy. It is a network. And in the summer of 2020, the same Forum would take the next step and announce the Great Reset.

Chapter 14: June 3, 2020: The Launch

A golden opportunity

The Prologue told you who announced the Great Reset. This chapter lets them speak, because what they said is the best evidence of what they meant.

The Forum's own write-up of the June 3, 2020 launch quoted each speaker. Here is what they said, in their words:[259]

- The Prince of Wales: "There is a golden opportunity to seize something good from this crisis." He also warned, "Unless we take the action necessary, and build in a greener and more inclusive and sustainable way," the world would see more pandemics.
- Kristalina Georgieva, head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF): "The best memorial we can build for those who lost their lives in the pandemic is that greener, smarter, fairer world."
- Sharan Burrow, head of the International Trade Union Confederation: "We can never again allow our health, education and care systems to be under-funded."
- Bradford L. Smith, president of Microsoft: "broadband has become the electricity of the 21st century."
- Bernard Looney, chief executive of the oil company BP: "We need our imagination here: we're seeing every day the arc of the possible."
- Ajay Banga, chief executive of Mastercard: "The time for cynicism is a little behind us.... Being an armchair critic is really not acceptable."

Look at who is in that list. A future king. The head of the world's emergency lender to governments. The world's biggest union federation. A tech giant. An oil major. A global payments company. On the same day, in the same video meeting, they all said the pandemic was a chance to remake things.

Some of what they wanted, most people would agree with. Better-funded hospitals. Internet access for everyone. But one line from that day stuck with me: "Being an armchair critic is really not acceptable." That came from the head of a company that processes a large share of the world's card payments. In a free country, criticizing powerful people is not just acceptable. It is the job of citizens.

"Normal wasn't working"

Three weeks later, on June 24, 2020, the Forum hosted one of a series of online "Great Reset Dialogues." This one was called "Redesigning Social Contracts in Crisis." The opening speaker was John Kerry, the former U.S. Secretary of State, who in January 2021 became President Biden's special presidential envoy for climate.[260]

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[259] World Economic Forum, "'A golden opportunity' - HRH the Prince of Wales and other leaders on the Forum's Great Reset," June 3, 2020, https://www.weforum.org/stories/health-and-healthcare-systems/great-reset-launch-prince-charles-guterres-georgieva-burrow-cn (accessed November 22, 2026). The Clarence House transcript of the same remarks reads "We have a golden opportunity"; the Forum's write-up, quoted here, reads "There is."

[260] "U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Special_Presidential_Envoy_for_Climate (accessed November 22, 2026), which lists Kerry in the post from January 20, 2021, to March 6, 2024. The State Department's archived biography, https://2021-2025.state.gov/biographies/john-kerry/, could not be opened.

"Normal was a crisis; normal wasn't working," Kerry said. "We must not think of it in terms of pushing a button and going back to the way things were." He added: "The world is coming apart, dangerously, in terms of global institutions and leadership."[261]

The Forum put "Normal wasn't working" in the headline of its own article about the session.[262] That phrase became one of the slogans of the whole effort.

You might ask, "What's wrong with saying things weren't working?" Nothing, by itself. Lots of Americans thought things weren't working in 2019, from every political side. The question is who decides what replaces "normal," and whether ordinary people get a vote on it.

The councils

The Forum did not stop at speeches. On October 6, 2020, it launched forty "Global Future Councils" with more than 1,000 experts from 81 countries and 31 industries. The Forum said the councils were meant to help shape "The Great Reset" in the post-COVID era, and that members would feed ideas into its Great Reset Initiative.[263]

So by the fall of 2020, the Great Reset had a launch, a book, a website, a podcast series, a planned summit and more than a thousand advisers working on it.[264]

The media partner

TIME magazine ran a collection of articles under the title "The Great Reset." Its own description says: "TIME partnered with the World Economic Forum to ask leading thinkers" to share ideas for how to transform the way we live and work. The collection also names a Japanese insurance company, Sompo Holdings, as a partner.[265] [Not verified: the collection's original 2020 publication dates; the page now shows a 2026 date in its code.]

There is nothing illegal about a magazine partnering with a foundation. But readers deserve to know when a news outlet's coverage of an idea is produced in partnership with the group selling that idea. TIME said so on the page. Many people sharing those articles did not.

What the launch did not say

To be fair, here is what I did not find in the launch materials.

I did not find any call to abolish private property, to force people to eat insects, to end national borders or to reduce the population. I did not find a timeline, a budget or a binding commitment by any government.

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[261] World Economic Forum, "'Normal wasn't working' - John Kerry, Phillip Atiba Goff and others on the new social contract post-COVID," June 24, 2020, https://www.weforum.org/stories/all/great-reset-social-contract-john-kerry-phillip-goff/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[262] Same source.

[263] World Economic Forum, "40 Global Future Councils Launched to Help Shape the Great Reset," press release, October 6, 2020, https://www.weforum.org/media/40-global-future-councils-launched-to-help-shape-the-great-reset/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[264] Same source; World Economic Forum, press release, "The Great Reset: A Unique Twin Summit to Begin 2021," June 3, 2020, https://www.weforum.org/press/2020/06/the-great-reset-a-unique-twin-summit-to-begin-2021/; the Forum's "Great Reset" podcast archive, https://thegreatreset.libsyn.com/2020/06 (accessed November 22, 2026) [Not verified: podcast host page not opened].

[265] TIME, "The Great Reset" collection, https://time.com/collection/great-reset/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

What I found was a set of goals ("greener, smarter, fairer"), a sense of urgency ("we simply can't waste more time"), and an invitation for governments, companies and unions to act together.[266]

That vagueness cut both ways. The Forum could say, truthfully, that it had no secret plan. But the vagueness also left room for people to fill in the blanks with their worst fears. As PolitiFact noted, the BBC reported that the plan's vague nature, combined with where it came from, gave conspiracy theories room to grow.[267]

A verdict

Claim: "Prince Charles launched the Great Reset."

Verdict: True. The Forum's press release says the announcement was made by the Prince of Wales and Klaus Schwab.[268]

What this chapter shows

The launch was public, recorded and written up by the Forum itself. It brought together royalty, the IMF, labor unions, oil, tech and finance behind one message: use the crisis to remake the economy. Within months it had advisers, a media partner and a planned summit.

It did not have a law behind it. Whether any of it became law depended on what governments did next. But the next document, Schwab and Malleret's book, would spell out in far more detail what the authors thought should change.

[266] World Economic Forum, press release, June 3, 2020; World Economic Forum, "'A golden opportunity'," June 3, 2020.

[267] PolitiFact, fact-check of a claim by Liz Wheeler about the Great Reset, October 11, 2022, https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2022/oct/11/liz-wheeler/great-reset-not-conspiracy-force-changes-economic/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[268] World Economic Forum, "The Great Reset: A Unique Twin Summit to Begin 2021," press release, June 3, 2020, https://www.weforum.org/press/2020/06/the-great-reset-a-unique-twin-summit-to-begin-2021/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

Chapter 15: What "COVID-19: The Great Reset" Actually Says

A book more quoted than read

"COVID-19: The Great Reset" by Klaus Schwab and Thierry Malleret is probably the most quoted and least read book of the pandemic. People on one side quote a few lines as proof of a plot. People on the other side wave it away without opening it. So let's open it.

The book has three main parts, which the authors call three "resets":[269]

Table 15.1. How the book is organized

Part	What it covers
1. Macro reset	The economy, society, world politics, the environment and technology
2. Micro reset	Industry and business, including supply chains and "stakeholder capitalism"
3. Individual reset	How people's priorities, mental health and habits may change

It closes with a short conclusion. All quotes in this chapter are from the 2020 Forum Publishing edition.[270]

The big claim: no going back

The authors' central point is that the pandemic is a turning point, not a pause. In the introduction they write that "the world as we knew it in the early months of 2020 is no more," and that "nothing will ever return to the 'broken' sense of normalcy that prevailed prior to the crisis."[271]

Notice the word "broken." The authors do not just predict that the old normal is gone. They say it was broken and should not come back. That is an opinion, and an important one, because the rest of the book follows from it.

Bigger government

In a section titled "The return of 'big' government," the authors write: "The COVID-19 pandemic has made government important again." They also write: "Good government is the difference between living and dying."[272]

They are not shy about it. The book expects governments to take a bigger role in the economy and in daily life after the pandemic, and it mostly welcomes that.

At the same time, in a section on the social contract, the authors write that "a state emergency can only be justified when a threat is public, universal and existential," and that "extraordinary powers require

[269] Klaus Schwab and Thierry Malleret, COVID-19: The Great Reset (Geneva: Forum Publishing, 2020), table of contents.

[270] Same source.

[271] Same source, Introduction.

[272] Same source, Section 1.3.3, "The return of 'big' government."

authorization from the people and must be limited in time and proportion." They warn against "permanent surveillance societies."[273]

So the book argues for a stronger state and also warns about emergency powers that last too long. Critics usually quote the first part. Defenders usually quote the second. Both are in the book.

Surveillance and tracking

This is the part of the book that worries people most, so here it is in the authors' own words.

In the section on contact tracing, they write: "Contact tracing and tracking are therefore essential components of our public-health response to COVID-19." They add: "The most effective form of tracking or tracing is obviously the one powered by technology." They also say "digital tracing has become one of the most sensitive issues in terms of public health."[274]

Then comes a section titled "The risk of dystopia." There the authors write that "the pandemic could open an era of active health surveillance made possible by location-detecting smartphones."[275]

Earlier in the book, they also write that containing the virus "will necessitate a global surveillance network."[276]

How should we read this? Fairly, the authors are describing a risk as well as a tool. They named the danger themselves. But they also called technology-powered tracking "the most effective" and "essential." When the head of the World Economic Forum tells governments that phone-based tracking of citizens is essential, it is reasonable for citizens to ask who will hold the data, for how long, and who decides when the emergency is over.

Claim: "The Great Reset book calls for a global surveillance network."

Verdict: Partly true. The book says containing the virus "will necessitate a global surveillance network" and calls technology-based tracing "essential." But it is talking about disease surveillance during a pandemic, and it also warns about "permanent surveillance societies" and the "risk of dystopia."[277] The line is real; the usual version leaves out the warnings.

Business and "stakeholder capitalism"

In the part on business, the authors predict that "ESG will therefore become more fully integrated and internalized into the core strategy and governance of a company." ESG stands for environmental, social and governance standards, a way of scoring companies on more than profit. They write that "companies will have to prove that they treat their workers well," and that "businesses will be judged for years to come by their actions."[278]

That is the 1973 Davos Manifesto (Chapter 4) brought up to date. Chapter 16 looks at what happened when the world's biggest money managers tried to put it into practice, and the backlash that followed.

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[273] Same source, Section 1.3.4, "The social contract."

[274] Same source, Section 1.6.2, "Contact tracing, contact tracking and surveillance."

[275] Same source, Section 1.6.3, "The risk of dystopia."

[276] Same source, Section 1.1.3, "Complexity."

[277] Same source, Sections 1.1.3, 1.3.4, 1.6.2 and 1.6.3.

[278] Same source, Section 2.1.4, "Stakeholder capitalism and ESG."

The individual reset

The last part is about people. The authors predict that the pandemic will change what we value. In a section on consumption, they write that "overconsumption does not equate to happiness."[279]

Many readers, including people of faith, would agree with that sentence. The concern is not the idea. It is who gets to decide how much is too much, and whether that is a personal choice or a policy.

The conclusion

The authors end with a clear call. "The verdict seems clear: we need to change; we should change." They write that "the absolute prerequisite for a proper reset is greater collaboration and cooperation within and between countries." And: "To do nothing is not a viable option."[280]

What the book is, and what it is not

Here is how I would sum up the book after reading it for myself.

It is an argument by two men, published by the organization one of them founded, that the pandemic should be used to push the world toward bigger government, more international cooperation, more digital technology, greener policies and companies judged by more than profit. It openly says the old way was "broken." It openly discusses phone-based tracking and calls it effective, while warning about the risks.

It is not a law, a treaty, a secret plan or a list of orders. It does not call for abolishing property or reducing the population. It does not bind any government.

You might ask, "If it's just a book, why does it matter?" Because of who wrote it and who listens. A book by a retired professor is an opinion. A book by the man who hosts presidents and chief executives every January is an agenda, offered to the people with the power to carry it out. That is why it is worth reading in full, and why it is worth reading carefully rather than in clips.

Research It Yourself: The book

- Get the book from a library or bookseller and read sections 1.3.3, 1.3.4, 1.6.2 and 1.6.3 yourself.
- Write down every sentence where the authors predict something, and every sentence where they recommend something. They are different.
- Compare what the book recommends with what your own state and national government actually did in 2020 and 2021. Where do they match? Where do they not?

[279] Same source, Section 3.3, "Changing priorities."

[280] Same source, Conclusion.

Chapter 16: Stakeholder Capitalism, ESG and the Biggest Money Managers on Earth

A letter that moved markets

Every January, Larry Fink, chairman and chief executive of BlackRock, writes a letter to the heads of the companies his firm invests in. On January 16, 2020, two months before the pandemic shut down the world, his letter carried a headline that turned heads on Wall Street: "A Fundamental Reshaping of Finance."[281]

"Climate risk is investment risk," Fink wrote. "We are on the edge of a fundamental reshaping of finance." He told companies that BlackRock would be "increasingly disposed to vote against management and board directors" when they did not make enough progress on reporting their environmental risks.[282]

That letter matters to this book for one reason: in August 2025, Larry Fink became interim co-chair of the World Economic Forum (the Prologue). The man who, more than any other financier, tried to put "stakeholder capitalism" into practice now helps run the organization that invented the term.

What ESG means

ESG stands for environmental, social and governance. It is a way of scoring companies on more than their profits: their pollution and carbon emissions (environmental), how they treat workers and communities (social), and how their boards are run (governance).

In "COVID-19: The Great Reset," Schwab and Malleret predicted that "ESG will therefore become more fully integrated and internalized into the core strategy and governance of a company."[283] For a few years, that looked right.

Why BlackRock's vote matters so much

To understand why people worry about this, you have to understand index funds.

When you buy an index fund in your 401(k) or IRA, you are buying a small slice of hundreds of companies at once. Three firms manage most of that money: BlackRock, Vanguard and State Street. Researchers call them the "Big Three."

In 2017, three researchers, Jan Fichtner, Eelke Heemskerk and Javier Garcia-Bernardo, published a study in the journal Business and Politics. They found that, together, the Big Three "constitute the largest shareholder in 88 percent of the S&P 500 firms." They found the three firms "generally vote with management, except at director (re-)elections," and warned that they may also have influence through private meetings with company leaders.[284]

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[281] Larry Fink, "A Fundamental Reshaping of Finance," letter to CEOs, January 2020, as posted on the Harvard Law School Forum on Corporate Governance, January 16, 2020, https://corpgov.law.harvard.edu/2020/01/16/a-fundamental-reshaping-of-finance/ (accessed November 22, 2026). BlackRock's copy: https://www.blackrock.com/us/individual/larry-fink-ceo-letter.

[282] Same source.

[283] Klaus Schwab and Thierry Malleret, COVID-19: The Great Reset (Geneva: Forum Publishing, 2020), Section 2.1.4.

[284] Jan Fichtner, Eelke M. Heemskerk and Javier Garcia-Bernardo, "Hidden power of the Big Three? Passive index funds, re-concentration of corporate ownership, and new financial risk," Business and Politics 19, no. 2 (2017): 298-326, https://doi.org/10.1017/bap.2017.6 (accessed November 22, 2026).

By mid-2026, BlackRock alone managed more than $15 trillion.[285]

Here is the part most people miss. The money is yours. It belongs to teachers, firefighters and retirees. But the votes that come with those shares are usually cast by the fund manager. So when BlackRock decides to vote against a board over climate reporting, it is using the voting power of millions of ordinary savers, many of whom never knew.

Claim: "BlackRock and Vanguard own everything."

Verdict: Partly true. Together with State Street, they are the largest shareholder in most large U.S. companies, and they vote those shares.[286] But they mostly hold the shares on behalf of savers and pension funds, who are the real owners. "Control a lot of votes" is accurate. "Own everything" is not.

The backlash

The pushback came mainly from Republican-led states.

In 2021, Texas passed Senate Bill 13. It requires the state comptroller to keep a list of financial companies that "boycott" fossil fuel firms and generally bars state agencies from investing with them. In 2022, Texas put BlackRock on that list, citing its role in Climate Action 100+, an investor group pushing companies to cut greenhouse gas emissions.[287]

In November 2024, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton sued BlackRock, State Street and Vanguard, accusing them of forming an "investment cartel" that bought shares in coal companies and used that position to reduce coal output. In late May 2025, the Federal Trade Commission and the Department of Justice filed a joint statement of interest in the case.[288] By then the suit had ten states, led by Texas. On August 1, 2025, U.S. District Judge Jeremy Kernodle denied the three firms' motion to dismiss the federal antitrust claims, so the case can go forward. He did dismiss three state consumer-protection claims against BlackRock. He noted that "at this stage in the proceeding, the court must assume that Plaintiffs' allegations are true."[289]

On February 26, 2026, Vanguard settled with the states for $29.5 million. It agreed to withdraw from climate commitments and to follow what the settlement calls "Passivity Commitments," including not using the threat of selling shares, or of voting against directors, to push companies on environmental and social conduct. As of an April 2026 analysis by New York University's Stern Center for Business and Human Rights, BlackRock and State Street had not settled and were still fighting the case.[290] [Not verified: any ruling after April 2026.]

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[285] "BlackRock tops $15tn: Where does the world's largest asset manager put it all?," Euronews, July 17, 2026, https://www.euronews.com/2026/07/17/blackrock-tops-15tn-where-does-the-worlds-largest-asset-manager-put-it-all (accessed November 22, 2026).

[286] Fichtner, Heemskerk and Garcia-Bernardo, 2017.

[287] Texas Tribune, "Texas allows state agency investment in BlackRock after firm steps away from climate initiatives," June 3, 2025, https://www.texastribune.org/2025/06/03/texas-comptroller-blackrock-boycott-energy/ (accessed November 22, 2026); Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, "Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar Announces List of Financial Companies That Boycott Energy Companies," August 24, 2022, https://comptroller.texas.gov/about/media-center/news/20220824-texas-comptroller-glenn-hegar-announces-list-of-financial-companies-that-boycott-energy-companies-1661267815099.

[288] Texas Tribune, June 3, 2025.

[289] "BlackRock, Vanguard, State Street bid to dismiss coal antitrust case fails," ESG Dive, August 11, 2025, https://www.esgdive.com/news/blackrock-vanguard-state-street-motion-to-dismiss-coal-antitrust-case-denied-texas-ag/757336/ (accessed November 22, 2026); the court's order is posted by the Texas Attorney General, https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/sites/default/files/images/press/Order%20on%20MTD%20-%20Blackrock.pdf.

The retreat

The first big crack came on February 15, 2024. JPMorgan Asset Management and State Street Global Advisors announced they were leaving Climate Action 100+, an investor group with more than 700 members. State Street said the group's new requirements were "not consistent with our independent approach to proxy voting and portfolio company engagement." BlackRock stayed in, but moved its membership to a smaller international arm.[291]

The backlash worked, at least on the label.

On June 25, 2023, at the Aspen Ideas Festival, Fink said: "I'm not going to use the word ESG because it's been misused by the far left and the far right." He also said, "I'm ashamed of being part of this conversation," a line he later walked back: "I'm not ashamed. I do believe in conscientious capitalism."[292]

On January 10, 2025, BlackRock told clients it was leaving the Net Zero Asset Managers initiative, a group of about 325 asset managers committed to net-zero emissions by 2050. BlackRock said membership had "caused confusion regarding BlackRock's practices and subjected us to legal inquiries from various public officials." Vanguard had already left in 2022. Six of the largest U.S. banks had left a similar banking alliance in the weeks before.[293]

In June 2025, Texas took BlackRock off its boycott list, citing its exit from Net Zero Asset Managers and its step back from Climate Action 100+. The comptroller called it a "meaningful victory" for the state's energy economy.[294]

The letters, then and now

You can watch the whole arc in Fink's own letters.

In January 2018, two years before the climate letter, Fink wrote a letter he titled "A Sense of Purpose." "Society is demanding that companies, both public and private, serve a social purpose," he wrote. "Without a sense of purpose, no company, either public or private, can achieve its full potential." Companies, he said, "must benefit all of their stakeholders, including shareholders, employees, customers," and the communities where they operate.[295] That is Schwab's stakeholder idea from 1973, written by the man who controlled more shareholder votes than almost anyone alive.

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[290] NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights, "Vanguard Settles on ESG - BlackRock and State Street Fight On," April 7, 2026, https://bhr.stern.nyu.edu/quick-take/vanguard-settles-on-esg-blackrock-and-state-street-fight-on/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[291] "JPMorgan, State Street exit climate coalition; BlackRock scales back," Banking Dive, February 15, 2024, https://www.bankingdive.com/news/jpmorgan-state-street-exit-climate-coalition-blackrock-scales-back/707740/ (accessed November 22, 2026). Headline wording [Not verified].

[292] "BlackRock CEO Larry Fink, who faced intense backlash for championing ESG, says he's 'ashamed' the topic has become politicized," Fortune, June 26, 2023, https://fortune.com/2023/06/26/blackrock-ceo-larry-fink-esg-political-crossfire-ashamed/ (accessed November 22, 2026), quoting Axios.

[293] "BlackRock leaves climate group amid Wall Street exodus," Fortune, January 10, 2025, https://fortune.com/2025/01/10/blackrock-leaves-climate-group-amid-wall-street-exodus/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[294] Texas Tribune, June 3, 2025; Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, "Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar Announces Update to List of Financial Companies that Boycott Energy Companies," June 3, 2025, https://comptroller.texas.gov/about/media-center/news/20250603-texas-comptroller-glenn-hegar-announces-update-to-list-of-financial-companies-that-boycott-energy-companies-1746731924320.

[295] Larry Fink, "A Sense of Purpose," letter to CEOs, as posted on the Harvard Law School Forum on Corporate Governance, January 17, 2018, https://corpgov.law.harvard.edu/2018/01/17/a-sense-of-purpose/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

Now jump ahead eight years. In his 2026 letter to investors, posted in March 2026, the words "ESG," "climate" and "stakeholder" do not appear at all. Instead, Fink wrote, "For several years, I've argued for energy pragmatism." The letter's big themes were bringing "private markets to more investors" and "a broadening of retirement savings."[296] (The letter has no date line; BlackRock's page data dates it March 23, 2026.)

So, did the idea die, or did it change its clothes? That is a fair question, and I do not think anyone can answer it from the letters alone. What the letters do prove is that the most powerful investor in the world stopped saying the words in public. That happened because elected officials, voters and courts pushed back.

What this shows

Here is the story of ESG in four lines. The Forum promoted stakeholder capitalism for fifty years. The biggest money manager on earth put it into practice and used savers' votes to push it. Elected state officials pushed back with laws and lawsuits. The money manager stepped back from the label and the climate groups.

That last step is important. It shows that elected governments could and did push back on a Davos idea when voters' representatives disagreed. Whatever you think of ESG, that is how it is supposed to work in a democracy.

The open question is whether the practice changed or only the name. Fink said he dropped the word. Did BlackRock change how it votes? That can be checked, because funds must report their votes.

Research It Yourself: ESG and your money

- Look up which funds hold your 401(k) or IRA. Find out which company manages each fund.
- Look up that manager's proxy voting record. U.S. funds report how they vote each year on a public form called Form N-PX, filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and searchable on sec.gov.[297]
- Read Fink's letters to chief executives from 2018 through the most recent year. Track how the language changed.
- Follow the Texas case against BlackRock, State Street and Vanguard in the court records.

[296] BlackRock, "Larry Fink's 2026 Annual Chairman's Letter to Investors," https://www.blackrock.com/corporate/investor-relations/larry-fink-annual-chairmans-letter (accessed November 22, 2026).

[297] U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, EDGAR filings, example of a Form N-PX annual proxy voting record, https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1216907/000116204423000712/pinnaclenpx2023.htm (accessed November 22, 2026).

Chapter 17: Technology, Data and Artificial Intelligence in Both Rooms

Schwab's warning, in his own words

In January 2016, as the Davos meeting opened, Klaus Schwab put out a book and an essay on the same subject, both called "The Fourth Industrial Revolution." In the essay he described it as "a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres."[298]

Most people who quote Schwab on technology quote him as a cheerleader. But read this sentence from the same essay: governments "will gain new technological powers to increase their control over populations, based on pervasive surveillance systems."[299]

That is not a conspiracy theorist writing. That is the founder of the World Economic Forum, in 2016, warning that governments would use new technology to watch and control people. Hold on to that sentence. It is the fairest yardstick I know for judging what the Forum did next.

The third part of the Great Reset agenda, as Schwab laid it out in June 2020, was to "harness the innovations of the Fourth Industrial Revolution."[300]

The travel ID that never flew

In 2018, the Forum launched a program called the Known Traveller Digital Identity (KTDI). The idea was to replace paper passports with a digital identity stored on travelers' phones, built on blockchain technology and linked to biometrics such as face scans. In June 2019, the Forum announced a pilot between Canada and the Netherlands.[301] The partners named at launch included Air Canada, KLM, three airports, Accenture, Vision-Box and Idemia.[302]

It never really got off the ground. Biometric Update, a trade publication, reported in October 2022 that the pilot was "an early casualty of the COVID-19 pandemic." The Dutch migration minister said in September 2022 there were "no concrete plans to implement the KTDI pilot." Canada had budgeted $105 million but spent only about $430,000.[303]

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[298] Klaus Schwab, "The Fourth Industrial Revolution: What It Means and How to Respond," first published in Foreign Affairs and republished by the World Economic Forum on January 14, 2016, https://www.weforum.org/stories/2016/01/the-fourth-industrial-revolution-what-it-means-and-how-to-respond/, and by GE Reports on January 17, 2016, https://www.ge.com/news/reports/the-4th-industrial-revolution-what-it-means-how-to-respond (both accessed November 22, 2026). The book, The Fourth Industrial Revolution, was published by the World Economic Forum in Geneva in 2016 (British Library catalog record, https://eld.bl.uk/catalog/018522636); Crown Business published a U.S. edition in 2017. [Not verified: the exact Foreign Affairs publication date.]

[299] Same source.

[300] Klaus Schwab, "Now is the time for a 'great reset'," World Economic Forum, June 3, 2020, https://www.weforum.org/stories/2020/06/now-is-the-time-for-a-great-reset/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[301] World Economic Forum, "World Economic Forum Consortium Launches Paperless Canada-Netherlands Travel Pilot," press release, June 26, 2019, https://www.weforum.org/media/world-economic-forum-consortium-launches-paperless-canada-netherlands-travel-pilot/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[302] World Economic Forum, June 26, 2019 (note 4); "No plans to revive World Economic Forum's user-controlled airport digital ID pilot," Biometric Update, October 7, 2022, https://www.biometricupdate.com/202210/no-plans-to-revive-world-economic-forums-user-controlled-airport-digital-id-pilot (accessed November 22, 2026).

So the Forum did push a digital identity system for travelers, with real governments signed on. That is documented. And it stalled. That is documented too.

Digital ID comes home

Digital identity did not go away. It moved to national governments, where voters could see it and fight about it.

In September 2025, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced a national digital ID scheme. He presented it as a way to curb illegal immigration by requiring employers to use a government app for right-to-work checks.[304] It drew strong opposition. Within months, the government dropped the requirement that the app be compulsory for those checks, though a spokesperson said the government was still "committed to mandatory digital right-to-work checks."[305] On March 10, 2026, the government opened an eight-week public consultation on the scheme.[306] Then, after the consultation closed on May 5, the King's Speech of May 13, 2026, announced a Digital Access to Services Bill to create the legal framework for a government digital ID: "My Ministers will also proceed with the introduction of Digital ID that will modernise how citizens interact with public services." Under the plan as reported, employers must carry out right-to-work checks digitally by 2029, but workers will not be required to hold the government's digital ID. They can use physical documents or a private-sector ID instead.[307]

Is the British plan part of the Great Reset? I found no record that the Forum designed it. What I found is that the idea the Forum promoted in 2018 for travelers showed up in a national government's plan in 2025, and voters pushed back hard enough to change it. That is the pattern again: the Forum floats an idea, governments decide, and voters can still have a say.

Artificial intelligence

By 2023, artificial intelligence (AI) had taken over the Forum's agenda, as it took over nearly every boardroom. On June 15, 2023, the Forum launched an "AI Governance Alliance" to produce recommendations on how generative AI should be designed, built and regulated. Its launch announcement quoted Microsoft president Brad Smith, Google's Kent Walker, Meta's Nick Clegg and IBM vice chairman Gary Cohn. Clegg said: "It's vital that powerful new technologies are developed openly, not just behind-closed-doors in Silicon Valley."[308]

Read the member list again. The companies building the most powerful AI systems joined a Forum group to recommend how AI should be governed. Smith said "we must be clear-eyed about both the promise and the perils of generative AI."[309] Nobody would argue with that. But when the companies being regulated help write the recommendations for their own regulation, under a private foundation's banner, the public is entitled to ask whose interests come first.

The worry here is not a secret plot. It is the open one Schwab described himself: that whoever controls the data and the systems will have new power over everyone else. In 2026, the companies building the most powerful AI systems are among the Forum's partners and among the guests at Bilderberg, as the second half of this chapter shows.

Brain chips and implants

You may have seen claims that Schwab or the Forum wants to put chips in people's brains or skin. Fact-checkers at Lead Stories have rated several such claims as false, including a 2022 claim that the Forum would force people to wear brain implants so elites could read their minds.[310]

[303] Biometric Update, October 7, 2022.

What is true is that the Forum has written about implants as a coming trend. In September 2015, a Forum council published a survey report called "Deep Shift." Its first "shift" was "Implantable Technologies," and it said: "Devices are not just being worn, but also being implanted into bodies." The tipping point it described was "the first implantable mobile phone available commercially," and 82 percent of the experts it surveyed expected that by 2025.[311] That is a prediction about products people might buy, not a plan to force them on anyone. Schwab's 2016 book drew on the same list of shifts. [Not verified: the matching passages in the book, which would not load during research.]

Claim: "The WEF plans to force people to get microchip implants."

Verdict: False (debunked). No Forum policy, government agreement or law requires implants, and fact-checkers traced the viral versions to edited or misdescribed videos.[312] The Forum did publish predictions about implants as a consumer trend.

Claim: "Schwab warned that new technology would let governments watch and control people."

Verdict: True. His 2016 essay says governments "will gain new technological powers to increase their control over populations, based on pervasive surveillance systems."[313]

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[304] "UK government backtracks on plans for mandatory digital ID," Computer Weekly, 2026, https://www.computerweekly.com/news/366637189/UK-government-backtracks-on-plans-for-mandatory-digital-ID (accessed November 22, 2026); "UK backtracks on digital ID requirement for right to work," The Register, January 14, 2026, https://www.theregister.com/2026/01/14/uk_digital_id_climbdown/.

[305] Same source.

[306] Lewis Silkin LLP, "UK government opens consultation on digital ID scheme," March 23, 2026, https://www.lewissilkin.com/insights/2026/03/23/uk-government-opens-consultation-on-digital-id-scheme-102mnlk (accessed November 22, 2026). The consultation document was published March 10, 2026, and responses closed May 5, 2026.

[307] "King's Speech paves the way for digital ID," Computer Weekly, 2026, https://www.computerweekly.com/news/366643097/Kings-Speech-paves-the-way-for-digital-ID (accessed November 22, 2026); "The King's Speech 2026," GOV.UK, May 13, 2026, https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-kings-speech-2026 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[308] World Economic Forum, "World Economic Forum Launches AI Governance Alliance Focused on Responsible Generative AI," press release, June 15, 2023, https://www.weforum.org/media/world-economic-forum-launches-ai-governance-alliance-focused-on-responsible-generative-ai/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[309] Same source.

[310] Lead Stories, "Fact Check: WEF To Force Public To Wear Brain Implants So The Elite Can Read Their Minds," October 11, 2022, https://leadstories.com/hoax-alert/2022/10/fact-check-wef-to-force-public-to-wear-brain-implants-so-the-elite-can-read-their-minds.html; Lead Stories, "Fact Check: Video Does NOT Show Klaus Schwab And 'Elites' Planning 'New World Order' And 'To Microchip The Human Race'," November 10, 2022, https://leadstories.com/hoax-alert/2022/11/fact-check-video-does-not-show-klaus-schwab-elites-planning-new-world-order.html (both accessed November 22, 2026).

[311] World Economic Forum, Global Agenda Council on the Future of Software and Society, "Deep Shift: Technology Tipping Points and Societal Impact," Survey Report, September 2015, p. 8, as posted by the European Commission, https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/46-wef_gac15_technological_tipping_points_report_2015-toconnected.pdf (accessed November 22, 2026).

[312] Lead Stories, "Fact Check: WEF To Force Public To Wear Brain Implants So The Elite Can Read Their Minds," October 11, 2022, https://leadstories.com/hoax-alert/2022/10/fact-check-wef-to-force-public-to-wear-brain-implants-so-the-elite-can-read-their-minds.html; Lead Stories, "Fact Check: Video Does NOT Show Klaus Schwab And 'Elites' Planning 'New World Order' And 'To Microchip The Human Race'," November 10, 2022, https://leadstories.com/hoax-alert/2022/11/fact-check-video-does-not-show-klaus-schwab-elites-planning-new-world-order.html (both accessed November 22, 2026).

[313] Schwab, "The Fourth Industrial Revolution: What It Means and How to Respond."

What this chapter shows

The Forum has pushed digital identity and new technology for a decade. Its founder openly warned that the same technology could help governments control people. Its own digital travel ID pilot stalled. National governments that tried mandatory digital ID, like Britain, ran into public resistance and changed course.

The real risk is not a chip in your arm. It is the ordinary, voluntary-seeming systems that become hard to live without: the app you need for work, the ID you need to travel, the payment system you need to buy groceries. That last one, money, is where people's fears about the Great Reset run deepest. It is the subject of the next chapter.

Research It Yourself: Digital ID

- Read Schwab's 2016 essay "The Fourth Industrial Revolution: What It Means and How to Respond" in full.[314]
- Look up whether your state or country has a digital ID program, whether it is voluntary, and who holds the data.
- Read the Forum's own report on lessons from the KTDI pilot and compare it with the news reports on why it stalled.[315]

Artificial intelligence in the other room

A new kind of guest

For its first half century, Bilderberg's business guests came mostly from banks, oil companies, carmakers and heavy industry. That has changed.

In May 2023, at the meeting in Lisbon, Portugal, "Artificial intelligence will top the agenda," the Greek outlet Proto Thema reported. Guests included Sam Altman of OpenAI, Satya Nadella of Microsoft, Demis Hassabis of Google DeepMind and former Google chief Eric Schmidt.[316]

In 2025, in Sweden, artificial intelligence was again on the agenda, and Nadella attended.[317] In 2026, in Washington, reported guests included Palantir chief Alex Karp, Eric Schmidt, Hassabis, Mira Murati, Alexandr Wang and Stripe's Patrick Collison, and "AI" was on the published topic list, which is in alphabetical order.[318]

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[314] Same source.

[315] World Economic Forum, "Accelerating the Transition to Digital Credentials for Travel: Lessons from KTDI," https://www.weforum.org/publications/accelerating-the-transition-to-digital-credentials-for-travel-lessons-from-ktdi-a-public-private-collaboration-for-secure-and-seamless-travel/ [Not verified: report not opened].

[316] Proto Thema, report on the 2023 Bilderberg meeting in Lisbon, May 18, 2023, https://en.protothema.gr/2023/05/18/bilderberg-group-meeting-in-lisbon-artificial-intelligence-will-top-the-agenda/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[317] Reuters, June 12, 2025, via RTE, https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2025/0612/1518108-bilderberg-group-meets-in-sweden-amid-us-europe-tensions (accessed November 22, 2026).

[318] Josh Friedman, Cal Coast News, April 12, 2026, https://calcoastnews.com/2026/04/california-funding-pours-into-bilderberg-despite-tech-elites-fleeing-the-state/; Wikipedia, "2026 Bilderberg Conference," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2026_Bilderberg_Conference (both accessed November 22, 2026).

A decade of warnings on the agenda

The group's own topic lists show how early artificial intelligence arrived. "Artificial Intelligence" was a listed topic in 2015, "Artificial intelligence" again in 2018, and "The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence" in 2019.[319] After the pandemic break, the 2024 meeting in Madrid listed "State of AI," "AI Safety" and "Future of Warfare" among its topics.[320]

Put those topic lists next to the guest lists and a picture forms. Years before most voters had heard of the technology, the people building it were explaining it, in private, to the people who would one day regulate it, buy it for their militaries and invest in it.

The money behind it

The shift shows up in the money too. Chapter 7 showed that the largest reported donors to Bilderberg's U.S. nonprofit in recent years were Peter Thiel, Eric Schmidt, Alex Karp and the company Palantir.[321] The group's own Steering Committee page lists Thiel, Schmidt and Karp, along with Microsoft's Satya Nadella.[322]

So the people who build the most powerful data and artificial intelligence systems on earth are not only guests at Bilderberg. Some of them help pay for it and help choose who else is invited.

Why this matters

Think about who else is in that room: NATO's leadership, U.S. military commanders, cabinet ministers, central bankers and a king (Chapters 8 and 24). And think about what artificial intelligence is now used for: intelligence analysis, military targeting, financial markets, surveillance and the flow of news.

A private, unrecorded conversation between the people who build these systems and the officials who buy and regulate them is exactly the kind of meeting that democratic rules on lobbying and transparency were written for. It is also exactly the kind of meeting Bilderberg was designed to keep off the record.

The verdict

Claim: "Big Tech now runs Bilderberg."

Verdict: Partly true. Technology leaders are now among the most prominent guests, the biggest reported U.S. donors, and four of them (Thiel, Schmidt, Karp and Nadella) are listed on the Steering Committee.[323][324] But the meeting still includes heads of government, military leaders, bankers and other industries, and no record shows the tech guests directing it.

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[319] Bilderberg Meetings, "Meetings overview: 2010s," https://www.bilderbergmeetings.org/meetings/meetings-overview/2010 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[320] Bilderberg Meetings, "Meetings overview: 2020s," https://www.bilderbergmeetings.org/meetings/meetings-overview/2020 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[321] Friedman, Cal Coast News.

[322] Bilderberg Meetings, "Steering Committee," https://bilderbergmeetings.org/background/steering-committee/steering-committee (accessed November 22, 2026).

[323] Friedman, Cal Coast News; Pagina Um.

[324] Bilderberg Meetings, "Steering Committee," https://bilderbergmeetings.org/background/steering-committee/steering-committee (accessed November 22, 2026).

Research It Yourself: Tech at Bilderberg

- Using the official participant lists, count technology and artificial intelligence guests for each year since 2015.
- For each, look up whether their company holds government or military contracts in the countries whose officials attended.
- Compare the dates of Bilderberg meetings with later government decisions on artificial intelligence regulation or contracts. Note that timing alone proves nothing, but a pattern is worth asking about.

Chapter 18: Your Money: Digital Currency, Central Banks and the Bankers in the Room

The fear

Of all the fears tied to the Great Reset, this one runs deepest: that cash will disappear, replaced by digital money issued by the government, and that the government will then be able to see every purchase, limit what you buy or switch off your money if you step out of line.

That fear has a name attached: a central bank digital currency, or CBDC. So let's start with what a CBDC is, then look at what the Forum did, what the United States did, and what Europe is doing right now.

What a CBDC is

A U.S. executive order signed in January 2025 gives a plain definition. A CBDC is "a form of digital money or monetary value, denominated in the national unit of account," that is "a direct liability of the central bank."[325]

In everyday terms: the money in your bank account today is a promise from your bank. A CBDC would be a digital dollar that is a promise directly from the Federal Reserve. That difference is why people worry. If the central bank issues the money directly, the central bank could, depending on how it is designed, see the transactions.

What the Forum did

In November 2021, the World Economic Forum published an eight-part white paper series from its Digital Currency Governance Consortium. The Forum said the series "explores numerous critical topics related to CBDC and stablecoins" and was meant for policymakers, digital currency issuers, financial firms and civil society groups.[326]

So the Forum did study and promote thinking about CBDCs, and it brought central banks, companies and others together to do it. That is documented. I found no Forum document that orders or requires any country to adopt one. Like everything else in this story, the decision belonged to governments.

What the United States did

The United States went the other way.

On January 23, 2025, President Trump signed Executive Order 14178, "Strengthening American Leadership in Digital Financial Technology." Section 5 says: "Except to the extent required by law, agencies are hereby prohibited from undertaking any action to establish, issue, or promote CBDCs within the jurisdiction of the United States or abroad."[327]

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[325] Executive Order 14178, "Strengthening American Leadership in Digital Financial Technology," January 23, 2025, Sec. 2(c), Federal Register 90, no. 20 (January 31, 2025), https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2025-01-31/html/2025-02123.htm (accessed November 22, 2026).

[326] World Economic Forum, "Digital Currency Governance Consortium White Paper Series," November 19, 2021, https://www.weforum.org/publications/digital-currency-governance-consortium-white-paper-series/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[327] Executive Order 14178, Sec. 5(a).

On July 17, 2025, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Anti-CBDC Surveillance State Act by a vote of 219 to 210. The bill would bar the Federal Reserve from researching, designing, building, testing or issuing a CBDC without approval from Congress.[328] House leaders then added the ban to the 2026 defense bill, but it was dropped from the final version. Rep. Keith Self of Texas, who had pushed for it, said Republicans had been promised it would be included: "That promise was broken." The standalone bill stalled in the Senate.[329]

Then the ban came back by a side door. Congress attached it to a large bipartisan housing bill, the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act. The provision bars the Federal Reserve from issuing or creating a CBDC, or any digital asset "substantially similar" to one, until December 31, 2030. The House passed the final bill 358 to 32 on June 23, 2026, the day after the Senate approved it.[330] President Trump announced he would not sign the housing bill, but he did not veto it either. Under the Constitution's ten-day rule, it became law without his signature on July 11, 2026, as Public Law 119-101. The ban is Section 1101 of the act.[331]

So, as of November 22, 2026, a U.S. ban on a Federal Reserve CBDC is law, not just an executive order. But notice the date. It runs through 2030. After that, Congress will have to decide again.

On July 18, 2025, the day after the House vote on the CBDC ban, the president signed the GENIUS Act, which sets federal rules for stablecoins, digital tokens issued by private companies and backed by dollars. It passed the Senate 68 to 30 and the House 308 to 122.[332]

You might ask, "Isn't a stablecoin just a CBDC with a different name?" Not quite. A stablecoin is issued by a private company, not the central bank. But it is still digital money, and the privacy questions do not go away just because a company holds the records instead of the government. Keep an eye on how the GENIUS Act's rules are written and enforced.

Claim: "Central bank digital currencies will replace cash in the United States."

Verdict: False (debunked) as of November 22, 2026. A standing executive order bars federal agencies from creating or promoting a CBDC, and a law passed in 2026 bars the Federal Reserve from issuing one

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[328] Latham and Watkins, "US Crypto Policy Tracker: Legislative Developments," https://www.lw.com/en/us-crypto-policy-tracker/legislative-developments (accessed November 22, 2026). The bill is H.R. 1919, per the office of its sponsor, Rep. Tom Emmer: "Whip Emmer's CBDC Ban Legislation Sent to Senate," April 29, 2026, https://emmer.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/whip-emmer-s-cbdc-ban-legislation-sent-to-senate (accessed November 22, 2026).

[329] "House Passes Defense Bill Without Promised CBDC Ban," Cointelegraph, December 11, 2025, https://cointelegraph.com/news/gop-conservatives-angered-defense-bill-no-cbdc-ban (accessed November 22, 2026); America's Credit Unions, "Final NDAA text contains no credit union sought provisions," December 8, 2025, https://www.americascreditunions.org/node/23076 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[330] Danny Park, "Congress sends anti-CBDC housing bill to Trump's desk for final approval," The Block, June 23, 2026, https://www.theblock.co/news/regulation/2026-06-23-anti-cbdc-housing-bill-passes-congress-405915 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[331] Congressional Research Service, "The 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act (P.L. 119-101)," Report R49354, October 20, 2026, via EveryCRSReport.com, https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R49354.html (accessed November 22, 2026); "CBDC Ban Becomes Law Until 2030 After Trump Withholds His Signature," Yellow.com, July 2026, https://yellow.com/news/cbdc-ban-law-2030-trump-signature (accessed November 22, 2026).

[332] Latham and Watkins, "US Crypto Policy Tracker: Legislative Developments," https://www.lw.com/en/us-crypto-policy-tracker/legislative-developments (accessed November 22, 2026). The bill is H.R. 1919, per the office of its sponsor, Rep. Tom Emmer: "Whip Emmer's CBDC Ban Legislation Sent to Senate," April 29, 2026, https://emmer.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/whip-emmer-s-cbdc-ban-legislation-sent-to-senate (accessed November 22, 2026).

through 2030.[333][334] That could change with a future president or Congress, so it is worth watching, especially as 2030 approaches. But today, U.S. law points the other way.

What Europe is doing

Europe is moving toward a digital euro.

The European Central Bank (ECB) finished a two-year preparation phase in October 2025 and moved to its next phase. The ECB said that if European Union lawmakers adopted the necessary regulation during 2026, "the digital euro could be issued during 2029."[335]

On June 23, 2026, the European Parliament's Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee backed the digital euro by a vote of 43 to 14.[336] On July 9, 2026, the full Parliament voted 416 to 169, with 22 abstentions, to begin final negotiations with the Council and Commission.[337]

The final negotiations, between Parliament and the governments in the Council, ran overnight on November 18 and 19, 2026, without a deal. A report from the Brussels news service Agence Europe said a parliamentary source blamed a "too heavy" agenda rather than any real sticking point. One question still open was the holding limit, and specifically who gets to set it: the Council wants that power, based on a recommendation from the ECB. More talks were proposed for December 3 and 16, and the Council wants the matter settled before the end of 2026.[338]

The version Parliament backed includes several protections:[339]

- A limit on how many digital euros one person can hold.
- An offline option. Supporters say offline payments "cannot be tracked or retained by banks or the ECB."
- A requirement that euro countries keep cash available, and a ban on businesses refusing cash through "no cash" signs or standard contract terms.
- At least one public place in each country, such as a post office, where people can get digital euros without going through a private bank.

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[333] Executive Order 14178; Latham and Watkins tracker.

[334] Danny Park, "Congress sends anti-CBDC housing bill to Trump's desk for final approval," The Block, June 23, 2026, https://www.theblock.co/news/regulation/2026-06-23-anti-cbdc-housing-bill-passes-congress-405915 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[335] European Central Bank, "Progress on the preparation phase of a digital euro," October 30, 2025, https://www.ecb.europa.eu/euro/digital_euro/progress/html/index.en.html (accessed November 22, 2026).

[336] "Digital euro clears key hurdle as Europe seeks payment sovereignty," EU Perspectives, June 24, 2026, https://euperspectives.eu/2026/06/digital-euro-clears-key-hurdle-as-europe-seeks-payment-sovereignty/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[337] Positive Money Europe, "EU Parliament sends digital euro into final negotiations," July 9, 2026, https://positivemoney.org/eu/update/eu-parliament-sends-digital-euro-into-final-negotiations/ (accessed November 22, 2026). Positive Money is an advocacy group that supports the digital euro.

[338] "European Parliament and EU Council negotiators to meet in December to finalise digital euro arrangements," Agence Europe, November 19, 2026, https://agenceurope.eu/en/bulletin/article/13985/21/european-parliament-and-eu-council-negotiators-to-meet-in-december-to-finalise-digital-euro-arrangements (accessed November 22, 2026).

[339] Positive Money Europe, "EU Parliament sends digital euro into final negotiations," July 9, 2026, https://positivemoney.org/eu/update/eu-parliament-sends-digital-euro-into-final-negotiations/ (accessed November 22, 2026). Positive Money is an advocacy group that supports the digital euro; EU Perspectives, June 24, 2026.

The committee's lead negotiator, Fernando Navarrete Rojas, said: "The digital euro will complement cash, never replace it."[340]

That is the promise. Whether it holds depends on the final law and on every future change to it. A holding limit can be raised. Offline privacy rules can be amended. That is not a conspiracy theory. That is how laws work.

Research It Yourself: Digital money

- Read Executive Order 14178 in the Federal Register.[341] Note that an executive order can be undone by a future president.
- Look up the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act on congress.gov, find the CBDC section, and note its end date of December 31, 2030.
- Follow the digital euro negotiations through the European Parliament's and the ECB's websites. Watch especially for the final holding limit and the offline privacy rules.
- Read the GENIUS Act's provisions on what stablecoin issuers can see and share about users.

What this chapter shows

The Forum studied and promoted CBDCs. The United States has turned firmly against a U.S. CBDC, first by executive order and then, in 2026, by a law that runs through 2030. Europe is moving toward a digital euro with written protections for cash and privacy, and with final negotiations still under way as of November 2026.

The fear of a cashless, tracked economy is not foolish. Digital money can be designed to watch people, and China's central bank already runs one. The People's Bank of China reported that its digital yuan, the e-CNY, had handled 14.2 trillion yuan, about 2 trillion U.S. dollars, in cumulative transactions by the end of September 2025, with 225 million personal wallets opened.[342] But in the West, so far, the decision has been made in public, by elected bodies, with real debate. Your job, and mine, is to keep it that way.

The bankers in the other room

Money on the agenda

Money has been on Bilderberg's agenda from the start. The 1954 meeting discussed "the attitude towards economic policies and problems," and the 1955 meeting discussed "the political aspects of convertibility" and "East-West trade."[343]

[340] EU Perspectives, June 24, 2026.

[341] Executive Order 14178 (note 1).

[342] Xinhua, "China's digital RMB transactions top 14.2 trillion yuan," October 28, 2025, published by the Chinese government's English portal, https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/statistics/202510/29/content_WS6901a9c9c6d00ca5f9a0726a.html (accessed November 22, 2026), reporting figures given by People's Bank of China Governor Pan Gongsheng. Xinhua is China's state news agency.

[343] Bilderberg Meetings, "Meetings overview: 1950s," https://www.bilderbergmeetings.org/meetings/meetings-overview/1950 (accessed November 22, 2026).

Central bankers and bankers attend. In 2019, Swissinfo reported "top executives and directors" from the Bank of England, among others, attending.[344] In 2026, guests included the chief executive of Deutsche Bank.[345] The 2023 meeting in Lisbon listed "banking system" and "fiscal challenges" among its topics.[346]

The 2008 meeting

The claim that comes up most is that Bilderberg planned the 2008 financial crisis.

Here is what the records show. The 2008 meeting was held June 5 to 8, 2008, in Chantilly, Virginia. Its listed topics included "managing financial turbulence."[347] That was three months before the investment bank Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy on September 15, 2008.[348]

Does that mean they planned it? Look at the timing more closely. By June 2008, the financial system was already in trouble. In March 2008, with help from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, JPMorgan Chase took over the failing investment bank Bear Stearns.[349] Bankers and officials around the world were already talking about "financial turbulence." A meeting of bankers and officials discussing a crisis already under way is not evidence that they caused it.

Claim: "Bilderberg planned the 2008 financial crisis."

Verdict: False (debunked) as stated. The 2008 meeting discussed "managing financial turbulence" at a time when the crisis was already public.[350] I found no evidence that anyone at Bilderberg caused it.

After the crash

The topics after 2008 read like a running diary of the crisis. The 2009 meeting in Greece listed "Governments and Markets" and "After the G20: The Role of Institutions."[351] The 2010 meeting in Spain listed "The European Union and the Crisis of the Euro." The 2013 meeting in England listed "Jobs, Entitlements and Debt," and the 2014 meeting in Copenhagen asked, "Is the Economic Recovery Sustainable?"[352]

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[344] Swissinfo, May 29, 2019, https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/politics/secretive-montreux-meeting_what-and-who-is-bilderberg/44997466 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[345] Josh Friedman, Cal Coast News, April 12, 2026, https://calcoastnews.com/2026/04/california-funding-pours-into-bilderberg-despite-tech-elites-fleeing-the-state/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[346] Proto Thema, report on the 2023 Bilderberg meeting in Lisbon, May 18, 2023, https://en.protothema.gr/2023/05/18/bilderberg-group-meeting-in-lisbon-artificial-intelligence-will-top-the-agenda/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[347] Wikipedia, "List of Bilderberg meetings," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1954_Bilderberg_Conference (accessed November 22, 2026), citing the group's official meeting overview pages [Not verified: official 2000s overview page not opened].

[348] Federal Reserve History, "Support for Specific Institutions," https://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/support-for-specific-institutions (accessed November 22, 2026).

[349] Federal Reserve History, "Support for Specific Institutions," https://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/support-for-specific-institutions (accessed November 22, 2026).

[350] Wikipedia, "List of Bilderberg meetings," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1954_Bilderberg_Conference (accessed November 22, 2026), citing the group's official meeting overview pages [Not verified: official 2000s overview page not opened].

[351] Wikipedia, "List of Bilderberg meetings," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1954_Bilderberg_Conference (accessed November 22, 2026), citing the group's official pages [Not verified: official 2000s page would not load].

[352] Bilderberg Meetings, "Meetings overview: 2010s," https://www.bilderbergmeetings.org/meetings/meetings-overview/2010 (accessed November 22, 2026).

Again, the topics prove attention, not control. But they also show that while ordinary families were losing homes and jobs, the people managing the response were comparing notes in private, year after year.

Run by bankers?

Claim: "Bilderberg is run by bankers."

Verdict: Partly true. Bankers and financial executives have always been a large part of the guest list, and one long-serving chairman, Henri de Castries, ran the insurance and investment company AXA.[353] But the meeting has also been led by former heads of government and foreign ministers (Chapter 6), and its biggest reported U.S. donors in recent years have come from technology, not banking (Chapter 7).

What this chapter shows

Bilderberg is where people who run central banks, commercial banks and finance ministries talk privately with each other and with business leaders. That is a fact. The public has a real interest in that, because these are the people whose decisions move interest rates, bailouts and savings. But talking about a crisis is not causing one. The honest concern is not a secret plot. It is that when the next crisis comes, some of the first conversations about who gets rescued may happen in a room the public cannot hear.

[353] Wikipedia, "Bilderberg Meeting," chairmen table, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bilderberg_Meeting (accessed November 22, 2026); AXA, "Henri de Castries to retire in September 2016," March 21, 2016, https://www.axa.com/en/press/press-releases/henri-de-castries-retire-on-september-2016 (accessed November 22, 2026).

Chapter 19: Your Food: Farms, Fertilizer, Meat and Bugs

"You will eat bugs"

Next to "you'll own nothing," the most repeated line about the Great Reset is "you'll eat bugs." It is usually said as a joke and believed as a warning. So where did it come from?

What the Forum actually published

The Forum's website has published articles in favor of insects as food. In 2018 it ran a piece titled "Good grub: why we might be eating insects soon."[354] On July 12, 2021, it published "Why we need to give insects the role they deserve in our food systems." That one was written by Antoine Hubert, the president and chief executive of Ynsect, a French insect farming company. Hubert wrote that "insect farming for food and animal feed could offer an environmentally friendly solution to the impending food crisis" and that "insects are a credible and efficient alternative protein source requiring fewer resources than conventional breeding."[355]

The page carries the Forum's standard note: "The views expressed in this article are those of the author alone and not the World Economic Forum."[356]

So here is what is real. The Forum's website gave space to an insect farming executive to argue for insect farming. It is a little like a farm magazine running a column by a tractor dealer about why you need a new tractor. The column is real. It is also an advertisement for the writer's business.

What was faked

Some of the most shared "proof" was invented.

In September 2022, a screenshot spread on Facebook and Twitter that appeared to show a Forum tweet asking, "is it racist to not want to transition to a bug-based diet?" Full Fact found no evidence the Forum ever posted it. The link did not work, the screenshot appeared to be digitally altered, and a Forum spokesperson told Reuters it was "not an authentic social media post."[357]

That matters. When a real article and a fake tweet get shared side by side, the fake one makes the whole story easier to dismiss. People who want the truth have to separate them.

Claim: "The WEF wants you to eat bugs instead of meat."

Verdict: Partly true. The Forum's website has published several articles promoting insects as food, including one by an insect farming executive.[358] I found no Forum policy, government agreement or law

[354] World Economic Forum, "Good grub: why we might be eating insects soon," 2018, https://www.weforum.org/stories/industries-in-depth/good-grub-why-we-might-be-eating-insects-soon/ (accessed November 22, 2026), cited in Full Fact, September 16, 2022 (note 4).

[355] Antoine Hubert, "Why we need to give insects the role they deserve in our food systems," World Economic Forum, July 12, 2021, https://www.weforum.org/stories/2021/07/why-we-need-to-give-insects-the-role-they-deserve-in-our-food-systems/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[356] Same source.

[357] Full Fact, fact-check of a screenshot of an alleged Forum tweet on a "bug-based diet," September 16, 2022, https://fullfact.org/online/wef-eat-bugs-racist-tweet/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

that requires anyone to eat insects or bans meat, and some viral "proof," such as the "bug-based diet" tweet, was fabricated.[359]

The Netherlands: farmers versus the nitrogen plan

The real fight over food and the Great Reset did not happen on a website. It happened in the Netherlands, on tractors.

The Dutch government set a goal of cutting nitrogen emissions in half by 2030 to meet European Union rules on nitrogen levels in soil and water. Because farming, especially dairy and livestock, is a major source of those emissions, the plan meant fewer animals and, for some farmers, the end of their farms.[360]

The crisis began in a courtroom. In May 2019, the Council of State, the Netherlands' highest administrative court, ruled that the government's nitrogen program, known by its Dutch initials PAS, broke European Union rules protecting vulnerable natural areas. Almost every activity that released nitrogen, including home building and farming, suddenly needed a permit. DutchNews reported that "thousands of building projects were put on hold, threatening housing targets." The government cut the daytime speed limit on all roads to 100 kilometers per hour, and drew up plans to shrink intensive farming.[361]

So the farmers' fight was not only with politicians. It was with a court ruling enforcing European law, which then left the government scrambling for something to cut.

Farmers protested for months, blocking roads with tractors. Then they voted. In the March 2023 provincial elections, a new party called the Farmer-Citizen Movement (BoerBurgerBeweging, or BBB) was projected to win 15 of the 75 seats in the Dutch Senate, more than Prime Minister Mark Rutte's own party. "Nobody can ignore us any longer," said BBB leader Caroline van der Plas.[362] When the provincial councils elected the Senate on May 30, 2023, BBB won 16 seats.[363]

You might ask, "Was the Dutch nitrogen plan part of the Great Reset?" I found no record that the Forum wrote it or ordered it. The plan came from Dutch and European Union environmental law. But it fits the direction the Great Reset launch described: greener economies, faster. And the farmers' response shows the other side of the same coin. When ordinary people believed a policy would destroy their way of life, they organized and won seats. That is how a free country answers a plan it does not like.

Claim: "Farmers' protests in Europe were caused by Great Reset policies."

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[358] Hubert, World Economic Forum, July 12, 2021; World Economic Forum, "Good grub," 2018.

[359] Full Fact, September 16, 2022.

[360] "Dutch farmers protest party scores big election win, shaking up Senate," CNBC, March 16, 2023, https://www.cnbc.com/2023/03/16/dutch-farmers-protest-party-scores-big-election-win-shaking-up-senate.html (accessed November 22, 2026). Headline wording [Not verified]. On the plan's effect on livestock farming: DutchNews, "What's all the fuss about nitrogen in the Netherlands?," June 5, 2022.

[361] "What's all the fuss about nitrogen in the Netherlands?," DutchNews, June 5, 2022, https://dutchnews.nl/2022/06/whats-all-the-fuss-about-nitrogen-in-the-netherlands/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[362] "Dutch farmers protest party scores big election win, shaking up Senate," CNBC, March 16, 2023, https://www.cnbc.com/2023/03/16/dutch-farmers-protest-party-scores-big-election-win-shaking-up-senate.html (accessed November 22, 2026). Headline wording [Not verified]. On the plan's effect on livestock farming: DutchNews, "What's all the fuss about nitrogen in the Netherlands?," June 5, 2022.

[363] Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal (Dutch Senate), "Kiesraad stelt uitslag verkiezingen Eerste Kamer vast" (Electoral Council sets Senate election result), June 1, 2023, https://www.eerstekamer.nl/nonav/nieuws/20230601/kiesraad_stelt_uitslag (accessed November 22, 2026).

Verdict: Partly true. The Dutch protests were caused by real government plans to cut nitrogen emissions, which would have reduced livestock farming.[364] Those plans came from Dutch and European Union law, not from the Forum, though they match the "greener" goals the Forum promoted.

Sri Lanka: the organic experiment

Sri Lanka gives a harder lesson.

In May 2021, Sri Lanka's government banned imports of agricultural chemicals, including fertilizer, as part of a push by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to make the country's farming fully organic. Within months, prices for rice, vegetables and other staples had roughly doubled, and supermarkets limited rice sales to five kilograms per customer. In November 2021, the government lifted the ban, citing food security. "We will now allow chemical inputs that are urgently needed," said agriculture ministry secretary Udith Jayasinghe.[365]

Sri Lanka's crisis is often blamed on the Great Reset online. I found no evidence the Forum designed Sri Lanka's ban. [Not verified: claims online that Sri Lanka's government had ties to Forum programs. I found no reliable source either way.] What the case does show is what happens when a government forces a sudden green farming change without regard to how farmers actually grow food. It is a warning any planner, in Davos or anywhere else, should take seriously.

What this chapter shows

The Forum's website promoted insects as food. Some of the most shared proof was fake. The real fights over food policy happened in national governments, where Dutch farmers pushed back at the ballot box and Sri Lanka's government reversed a disastrous ban within months.

The lesson is the same one you will see throughout this book. Ideas floated in Davos do not become law by themselves. Governments adopt them, and citizens can, and do, fight back.

Research It Yourself: Food

- Search the Forum's website for "insects" and read every article you find. Check who wrote each one and what company they work for.
- Look up the Dutch government's nitrogen plan and follow what happened to it after the 2023 and later elections.
- Read the accounts of Sri Lanka's 2021 fertilizer ban from Sri Lankan news outlets, not just Western ones.

[364] "Dutch farmers protest party scores big election win, shaking up Senate," CNBC, March 16, 2023, https://www.cnbc.com/2023/03/16/dutch-farmers-protest-party-scores-big-election-win-shaking-up-senate.html (accessed November 22, 2026). Headline wording [Not verified]. On the plan's effect on livestock farming: DutchNews, "What's all the fuss about nitrogen in the Netherlands?," June 5, 2022.

[365] "Sri Lanka ends farm chemical ban as organic drive fails," Inquirer.net (AFP), November 22, 2021, https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1518333/sri-lanka-ends-farm-chemical-ban-as-organic-drive-fails (accessed November 22, 2026).

Chapter 20: Your Neighborhood: 15-Minute Cities and Car Rules

A professor's idea

Carlos Moreno is a professor at the University of Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne. He came up with the idea of the "15-minute city": a neighborhood where most of what you need day to day, such as groceries, school, a doctor, a park and maybe your job, is within a 15-minute walk or bike ride. He advised Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo, who embraced the idea while running for reelection in 2020.[366]

On its face, it sounds like the small towns many of us grew up in. You could walk to the store, the school and the church. Nobody needed a law to make that happen. It was just how towns were built before everyone had two cars.

So how did a planning idea from Paris become one of the most feared parts of the Great Reset?

What the Forum said

The Forum's website has published articles about 15-minute cities, both for and against. One, from November 2021, is titled "The 15-minute city meets human needs but leaves desires wanting. Here's why." Another, from March 2022, looks at why the idea has caught on.[367] [Not verified: the articles' authors; the Forum's pages would not load during research.]

So yes, the idea was discussed on the Forum's platform. But Moreno's concept did not start at Davos, and I found no Forum program that requires any city to adopt it.

Oxford, 2022

The fear took off in Oxford, England.

On November 29, 2022, Oxfordshire County Council's cabinet approved a trial of six "traffic filters." The council explains: "A traffic filter is a camera-enforced point on a road where certain types of traffic aren't allowed through at certain times." A car without a permit that passes through a filter during operating hours gets a fine of 70 pounds, cut to 35 pounds if paid within 21 days. Residents of Oxford can get a permit to drive through the filters on up to 100 days a year, and other Oxfordshire residents on up to 25 days a year. Only cars need a permit. Vans, trucks, motorcycles, coaches and buses are not covered, and emergency service vehicles are exempt.[368]

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[366] Adele Peters, "Paris's mayor has a dream of 'the 15-minute city'," Fast Company, January 29, 2020, https://www.fastcompany.com/90456312/pariss-mayor-has-a-dream-for-a-15-minute-city (accessed November 22, 2026); "It's a global climate solution, if it can get past conspiracy theories and NIMBYs," NPR, October 8, 2023, https://www.npr.org/2023/10/08/1203950823/15-minute-cities-climate-solution (accessed November 22, 2026).

[367] World Economic Forum, "The 15-minute city meets human needs but leaves desires wanting. Here's why," November 2021, https://www.weforum.org/stories/2021/11/15minute-city-falls-short/; World Economic Forum, March 2022, https://www.weforum.org/stories/2022/03/15-minute-city-stickiness/ (both accessed through search listings November 22, 2026).

[368] Oxfordshire County Council, "Six traffic filters to be trialled in Oxford," November 29, 2022, https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/six-traffic-filters-to-be-trialled-in-oxford/; Oxfordshire County Council, "About the traffic filters," https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/node/11728; Oxfordshire County Council, "Traffic filters: what you need to know," https://blogs.oxfordshire.gov.uk/traffic-filters/ (all accessed November 22, 2026).

The council says plainly: "You will be able to drive a car to any part of Oxford without going through a traffic filter." Drivers without a permit may need to take a longer route during operating hours.[369]

At a community meeting in West Oxfordshire in the fall of 2022, people raised the claim that the plan would lock residents into their neighborhoods. The claim spread online, boosted by popular podcasters. In February 2023, thousands protested in Oxford, and local councilors received threats. So did Moreno. He said the death threats were hard to bear because they reached "my wife, my daughters."[370]

At its 2023 party conference, Britain's Conservative transport secretary, Mark Harper, said he was "calling time on the misuse of so-called 15-minute cities."[371]

After several delays, the traffic filter trial started on Monday, September 28, 2026. It replaced a temporary congestion charge the council had run since October 29, 2025, which let drivers pay 5 pounds to pass a filter. The trial can run for up to 18 months, and the council opened a six-month public consultation on it.[372]

London's ULEZ

A second British fight shows how a clean-air rule can become a political earthquake.

London's Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) began in April 2019 in central London. Drivers of older, more polluting vehicles pay a daily charge, now 12.50 pounds, to drive inside it, every day of the year except Christmas. On August 29, 2023, it expanded to all 32 London boroughs, roughly the whole area inside the M25 ring road.[373]

The month before, in July 2023, the Conservatives narrowly held the outer London seat of Uxbridge and South Ruislip in a by-election where the ULEZ expansion was a key campaign issue. The Institute for Government, a nonpartisan think tank, describes the ULEZ plan as "a key factor in Labour's narrow loss."[374]

Unlike Oxford's filters, the ULEZ does not stop anyone driving anywhere. It charges them money to do it. That is a real cost to working people with older cars, and voters in Uxbridge showed what they thought of it. It is also a policy made by an elected mayor, in public, and challenged at the ballot box. Again, the fight happened where it should.

The verdict

Claim: "15-minute cities will lock people in their neighborhoods."

[369] Oxfordshire County Council, "Traffic filters: what you need to know."

[370] NPR, October 8, 2023.

[371] Same source.

[372] Oxfordshire County Council, "About the traffic filters," https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/node/11728 (accessed November 22, 2026); Oxfordshire County Council, "Traffic filter trial to begin on 28 September," https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/provider-engagement/news_feed/traffic-filters (accessed November 22, 2026); "Traffic filter trial confirmed in Oxford," ITV News Meridian, July 1, 2026, https://www.itv.com/news/meridian/2026-07-01/traffic-filter-trial-confirmed-in-oxford-how-will-people-be-affected (accessed November 22, 2026). On the temporary congestion charge: Oxfordshire County Council, "Oxford temporary congestion charge starts tomorrow," October 28, 2025, https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxford-temporary-congestion-charge-starts-tomorrow/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[373] Institute for Government, "ULEZ and its expansion," explainer, https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainer/ulez (accessed November 22, 2026).

[374] Same source.

Verdict: False (debunked). Oxford's plan uses camera-enforced filters on some roads at some times. Residents can still drive anywhere in the city at any time, sometimes by a longer route, and pedestrians, cyclists, buses and taxis can pass through freely.[375] Full Fact found that a viral claim that Oxford residents would need a permit to "leave their district" was not true.[376]

The fair worry

I want to be fair to people who are worried, because there is a real concern under the false one.

A city that fines drivers for using certain roads, and hands out a set number of passes, is a city using cameras and permits to steer how people move. Today the limit is 100 days. A future council could make it fewer. The cameras that read license plates for traffic filters could, in principle, be used for other things. These are honest questions about where a policy might go, and they deserve honest answers from local officials.

The answer is not to believe you will be locked in. The answer is to show up at your city council meeting, read the actual plan, and vote.

Research It Yourself: Your town

- Look up your own city's or county's long-range plan. Search it for "15-minute," "complete neighborhoods," "traffic calming," "congestion pricing" and "low emission zone."
- If your city uses license plate cameras, find out what the data is used for, who can see it and how long it is kept.
- Read Oxford's traffic filter questions-and-answers page in full.[377]

[375] Full Fact, "Oxford residents won't require a permit to 'leave their district'," February 28, 2023, updated March 6, 2023, https://fullfact.org/online/oxford-residents-permit-district/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[376] Same source. Full Fact's on-page verdict is "This isn't true"; for Facebook's fact-checking program it rated the post "missing context."

[377] Oxfordshire County Council, "Traffic filters: what you need to know," and "About the traffic filters" (note 3).

Chapter 21: "Build Back Better": Who Said It First

Three words, many leaders

In 2020, it seemed every leader in the English-speaking world said the same three words. In Britain, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said them. In America, presidential candidate Joe Biden made them the name of his economic plan. "Folks, it's not sufficient to build back, we have to build back better," he said in Dunmore, Pennsylvania, in July 2020.[378]

When different leaders in different countries all start using the same unusual phrase at the same time, people naturally ask: who handed it out? So let's trace "Build Back Better" back to where it started.

Born in a tsunami

The phrase started in disaster recovery.

After the Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004, the World Bank planned the rebuilding of Aceh and Nias in Indonesia. The term "build back better" appears in the World Bank's Preliminary Stocktake of May 2005. In July 2005, former President Bill Clinton, then serving as the United Nations Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, used it before the UN Economic and Social Council.[379] The idea was simple: when you rebuild after a disaster, build stronger and safer than before, so the next disaster does less damage.

In March 2015, the UN's Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, adopted by the UN General Assembly in June 2015, made "Build Back Better" one of its four priorities.[380]

So the phrase was not invented in 2020, and it did not come from Davos. It came from people who rebuild towns after floods and earthquakes.

2020: the pandemic as a disaster

When COVID hit, it was natural for leaders and advisers who knew disaster language to reach for it. The pandemic was treated as a disaster, and "build back better" was the disaster world's slogan for recovery.

On June 30, 2020, in a speech in Dudley, England, Boris Johnson said the crisis was a chance to "build back better" and "build back bolder," and listed "build back better / build back greener / build back faster."[381] Johnson was a Conservative. Biden was a Democrat. They used the same words within weeks of each other.

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[378] "Biden Counters Trump's 'America First' With 'Build Back Better' Economic Plan," NPR, July 9, 2020, https://www.npr.org/2020/07/09/889347429/biden-counters-trumps-america-first-with-build-back-better-economic-plan (accessed November 22, 2026).

[379] Wikipedia, "Building Back Better," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Building_Back_Better (accessed November 22, 2026), citing World Bank, Preliminary Stocktake (May 2005), https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/295181468285599568/pdf/328930Replacement0aceh16months.pdf, and United Nations, ECOSOC press release, July 2005, https://www.un.org/press/en/2005/ecosoc6166.doc.htm [Not verified: the original World Bank and UN documents were not opened].

[380] Same source, citing United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030.

[381] Prime Minister Boris Johnson, "PM economy speech: 30 June 2020," Dudley, GOV.UK, https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-economy-speech-30-june-2020 (accessed November 22, 2026).

In November 2020, the World Bank published a report titled "Building Back Better: Pursuing a Greener, More Inclusive, and Resilient Recovery."[382] That title sounds a lot like the Great Reset launch's "greener, smarter, fairer world" (Chapter 14). The vocabulary was shared across the World Bank, the IMF, the UN and the World Economic Forum.

In law

In the United States, "Build Back Better" became the name of a bill. On November 19, 2021, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 5376, the Build Back Better Act, by a vote of 220 to 213.[383] The full plan collapsed in the Senate after Democratic Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia called it "too costly." A slimmed-down version, the Inflation Reduction Act, was signed on August 16, 2022.[384]

Abroad, on June 12, 2021, President Biden and the other G7 leaders launched "Build Back Better World," or B3W. The White House called it "a values-driven, high-standard, and transparent infrastructure partnership led by major democracies," meant to "catalyze hundreds of billions of dollars of infrastructure investment" in developing countries.[385] It was widely reported as a response to China's Belt and Road program.

The verdict

Claim: "Build Back Better was a coordinated global slogan."

Verdict: Partly true. The phrase was shared across governments and international bodies in 2020, and the G7 adopted it formally in 2021 for a joint program.[386] But it was not invented for the pandemic or handed out by the Forum. It came from disaster recovery work going back to 2005 and was endorsed by the UN in 2015.[387] Leaders from opposite parties used it because it was already the standard language of recovery.

What this chapter shows

The people who run governments and international bodies share a vocabulary. They read the same reports, go to the same meetings and hire from the same pool of advisers. When a phrase catches on in that world, it can show up in many capitals at once. That is a real thing, and it is fair to point it out. It is not proof that someone in a back room issued the slogan.

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[382] World Bank, Building Back Better: Pursuing a Greener, More Inclusive, and Resilient Recovery, November 2020, https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/404661606955558548/pdf/Building-Back-Better-Pursuing-a-Greener-More-Inclusive-and-Resilient-Recovery.pdf (cited through Wikipedia, "Building Back Better").

[383] Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives, Roll Call 385, H.R. 5376, November 19, 2021, https://clerk.house.gov/evs/2021/roll385 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[384] "Biden signs Inflation Reduction Act into law, calling it the 'final piece' of his domestic agenda," Fortune, August 16, 2022, https://fortune.com/2022/08/16/joe-biden-signs-inflation-reduction-act-into-law-build-back-better/ (accessed November 22, 2026). Fortune calls the law "a slimmed-down version" of the plan Biden's party unveiled in 2021.

[385] The White House, "FACT SHEET: President Biden and G7 Leaders Launch Build Back Better World (B3W) Partnership," June 12, 2021, https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/12/fact-sheet-president-biden-and-g7-leaders-launch-build-back-better-world-b3w-partnership/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[386] Same source; Johnson speech, June 30, 2020.

[387] Wikipedia, "Building Back Better," and sources cited there.

The harder question is the one behind the phrase: "better" for whom, and decided by whom? That is a question for voters in each country, and in the United States, Congress answered it when it declined to pass the full Build Back Better Act.

Research It Yourself: The slogan

- Read the World Bank's November 2020 "Building Back Better" report and compare its goals with the Great Reset launch statements.[388]
- Look up the Build Back Better Act on congress.gov. Read what was in it and follow what happened to it.
- Read the June 12, 2021 White House fact sheet on Build Back Better World and find out what became of the program.

[388] World Bank, November 2020 (note 4).

Chapter 22: The United Nations, Agenda 2030 and the WEF Partnership

A signing in New York

On June 13, 2019, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Klaus Schwab met at UN headquarters in New York and signed a "Strategic Partnership Framework" between the UN and the World Economic Forum.[389]

The Forum listed six areas the partnership would focus on:[390]

1. Mobilizing money for the UN's 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.
2. Climate change, through private-sector commitments and public-private platforms.
3. Global health, especially new health threats.
4. Digital governance and inclusion in the "Fourth Industrial Revolution."
5. Women's equality, including equal pay.
6. Skills training through public-private partnerships.

Guterres said the framework "underscores the invaluable role of the private sector." Schwab said: "Meeting the Sustainable Development Goals is essential for the future of humanity."[391]

This signing came a year before the Great Reset. It is the clearest documented link between the Forum and the United Nations, and most people have never heard of it.

The left objects

The loudest early protest did not come from the political right. In September 2019, more than 200 civil society groups, many of them on the left, signed a letter against the partnership. They warned it would "permanently associate the U.N. with transnational corporations," some of whose core businesses, they argued, had made global social and environmental problems worse.[392]

That is worth sitting with. Groups that want the UN to do more on poverty and climate looked at this deal and saw corporate capture of the UN. Groups on the right later looked at the same relationship and saw global government. Both were looking at the same signed document.

Agenda 2030 in plain words

On September 25, 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 70/1, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." All 193 member states, including the United

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[389] World Economic Forum, "World Economic Forum and UN Sign Strategic Partnership Framework," press release, June 13, 2019, https://www.weforum.org/press/2019/06/world-economic-forum-and-un-sign-strategic-partnership-framework/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[390] Same source.

[391] Same source.

[392] Common Dreams, news report on more than 200 groups opposing the UN-WEF agreement, September 27, 2019, https://www.commondreams.org/news/2019/09/27/200-groups-denounce-un-wef-agreement-entrenches-corporate-interests-driving-global (accessed November 22, 2026).

States under President Obama, adopted it.[393] It contains seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be reached by 2030, covering poverty, hunger, health, education, gender equality, clean water, energy, jobs, cities, climate and more.

The Agenda is a resolution of the General Assembly. It sets goals and asks governments to work toward them. Its own text calls the targets "aspirational and global," says each government sets its own national targets, and says follow-up and review "will be voluntary and country-led."[394] Like Agenda 21 before it (Chapter 5), it does not have the force of a ratified treaty.

The property question

The single most repeated claim about Agenda 2030 is that it will abolish private property. Chapter 5 showed you Target 1.4, which says the opposite: by 2030, governments should ensure that all men and women, "in particular the poor and the vulnerable," have "ownership and control over land and other forms of property."[395]

Claim: "Agenda 2030 abolishes private property."

Verdict: False (debunked). The text of the goals calls for more people, especially the poor, to have ownership and control over land and property.[396]

The United States walks away

In March 2025, the United States became one of the first countries, possibly the first, to formally reject the Sustainable Development Goals. Edward Heartney, a minister-counselor at the U.S. mission to the UN, said the Trump administration "rejects and denounces" the goals. He said the goals and the 2030 Agenda "advance a program of soft global governance that is inconsistent with U.S. sovereignty," and that "globalist endeavors like Agenda 2030 and the SDGs lost at the ballot box." UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric replied that all 193 members had agreed to the goals in 2015 and that the agenda remains "the path to bridging divides, restoring trust and building solidarity."[397]

Whatever you think of that decision, it proves something important. A country that signed on in 2015 walked away in 2025 because voters elected a president who opposed it. The UN could not stop it. Neither could the World Economic Forum.

Claim: "The UN signed on to the WEF agenda."

Verdict: Partly true. The UN and the Forum signed a formal partnership in 2019 covering finance, climate, health, technology, gender and skills.[398] But the agreement was a framework for cooperation

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[393] United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 70/1, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," adopted September 25, 2015, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/809145 (accessed November 22, 2026); Associated Press via Global News, March 7, 2025 (note 8), for the 193 members and the Obama administration's commitment.

[394] United Nations, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," paragraphs 55 and 74, https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda (accessed November 22, 2026).

[395] United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, Target 1.4, https://agenda2030lac.org/en/sdg/1-no-poverty/targets/14 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[396] Same source.

[397] Associated Press, "U.S. rejects 2030 UN goals on ending poverty, tackling climate change," Global News, March 7, 2025, https://globalnews.ca/news/11072215/trump-administration-rejects-un-global-goals-2030/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[398] World Economic Forum, press release, June 13, 2019.

between the two organizations, not a commitment by member countries, and the agenda at its center, the SDGs, was the UN's own, adopted four years earlier.

Research It Yourself: The UN

- Read UN Resolution 70/1 yourself. It is free on the UN's digital library.[399] Search it for "property," "sovereignty" and "voluntary."
- Find the full text of the 2019 UN-WEF Strategic Partnership Framework.
- Read the 2019 letter from civil society groups opposing it, and the March 2025 U.S. statement rejecting the SDGs. Compare the arguments from left and right.

[399] UN Resolution 70/1 (note 5).

Part Four: Power and Accountability

Chapter 23: Future Leaders: Who Attended Before They Took Power

Baden-Baden, 1991

In June 1991, the governor of Arkansas, a man few people outside the South had heard of, went to Baden-Baden, Germany, for the Bilderberg Meeting, held June 6 to 9.[400] Less than two years later, Bill Clinton was President of the United States.

This is not a rumor. The William J. Clinton Presidential Library's own finding aid for its Bilderberg records says: Governor Clinton attended the Baden-Baden conference in 1991, "for which no records were available." The same finding aid says President Clinton made brief remarks at an October 1995 Bilderberg Steering Committee meeting, that First Lady Hillary Clinton attended the June 1997 conference in Atlanta, and that several National Security Council staff members spoke at Bilderberg events. The library holds about 1,328 pages of Bilderberg records from roughly 1995 to 2000, some of which may be restricted.[401]

That last point deserves a moment. A sitting president's staff produced more than a thousand pages of records about a private meeting the public cannot attend. Those records are presidential records, and parts of them can be requested.

Brussels, 2009

On November 12, 2009, Belgian Prime Minister Herman Van Rompuy attended a Bilderberg dinner at Val Duchesse, a former priory outside Brussels. Bilderberg chairman Etienne Davignon and Henry Kissinger were among the guests. At that moment, Van Rompuy was a leading candidate for the new job of President of the European Council.[402]

According to the Belgian newspaper De Tijd, as reported by EUobserver, Van Rompuy spoke about financing the European Union and said: "New resources will be necessary for the financing of the welfare state." He reportedly said European-level taxes on finance should be seriously examined.[403]

One week later, on November 19, 2009, European Union leaders chose Van Rompuy as the first permanent President of the European Council.[404]

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[400] Bilderberg Meetings, "Meetings overview: 1990s," https://www.bilderbergmeetings.org/meetings/meetings-overview/1990 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[401] William J. Clinton Presidential Library, "2008-0637-F - Bilderberg Conferences," finding aid, https://www.clintonlibrary.gov/research/archives/finding-aids/2008-0637-f-bilderberg-conferences (accessed November 22, 2026).

[402] Andrew Rettman, "Top candidate debates EU tax at elite dinner," EUobserver, November 16, 2009, https://euobserver.com/institutional/28993 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[403] Same source.

[404] CVCE (University of Luxembourg), "Address by Herman Van Rompuy on his election as President of the European Council (19 November 2009)," https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/address_by_herman_van_rompuy_on_his_election_as_president_of_the_european_council_19_november_2009-en-b3930a34-920f-420b-870f-ada796ec2b9c.html (title and date from search listing, November 22, 2026). The CVCE page was blocked to automated access on November 22, 2026; the date is also given in Wikipedia, "President of the European Council," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_the_European_Council (accessed November 22, 2026), which notes he took office on December 1, 2009.

Attendance or selection?

These stories are the backbone of the claim that "Bilderberg picks presidents." So let's be fair about what they show.

What they show is that Bilderberg has a habit of inviting people who are about to rise. A governor before a presidency. A prime minister before a top European job. The Steering Committee picks guests, and it seems to have a good eye for who is going places. Some might say that is the point of the invitation: to meet the next generation of leaders before they take power.

What they do not show is that anyone was chosen at Bilderberg. Clinton still had to win the 1992 Democratic primaries and a general election against a sitting president. Van Rompuy was chosen by twenty-seven heads of government. I found no record of Bilderberg directing either outcome.

You might ask, "Couldn't the invitation itself help?" Yes. Meeting bankers, executives and foreign leaders in private before a run for office is a real advantage. That is influence. It is just not the same as picking the winner.

One researcher's count

The most careful outside study of the "future leaders" question I found comes from a Czech researcher, Lukas Kantor, interviewed by the Georgetown Journal of International Affairs in February 2025. The interview's title calls Bilderberg "A Forum for Trans-Atlantic Dialogue and Elite Career Advancement," and Kantor is careful to call his evidence "circumstantial."[405]

Here is what he points to:

- Ursula von der Leyen attended four Bilderberg meetings before she became president of the European Commission in 2019.
- As of his 2023 research, the heads of the United Nations (Antonio Guterres), the International Monetary Fund (Kristalina Georgieva), NATO (Jens Stoltenberg) and the European Commission (von der Leyen) had all attended Bilderberg.
- He says every president of the European Central Bank attended at least one Bilderberg meeting before taking office.
- He describes a "revolving door" between Bilderberg and NATO, pointing to Peter Carrington, Jens Stoltenberg and Mark Rutte.[406]

[Not verified: Kantor's claims about every European Central Bank president and von der Leyen's four meetings; I did not check them against the official participant lists.]

Kantor also makes the point this book has been making. He accepts, "to some extent," the argument that privacy allows frank talk. But he says the lack of transparency "creates space for backroom politics, lobbying, conflicts of interests."[407]

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[405] Owen Huang and Harry Yang, interview with Lukas Kantor, "The Bilderberg Meetings: A Forum for Trans-Atlantic Dialogue and Elite Career Advancement," Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, February 24, 2025, https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2025/02/24/the-bilderberg-meetings-a-forum-for-trans-atlantic-dialogue-and-elite-career-advancement/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[406] Owen Huang and Harry Yang, interview with Lukas Kantor, "The Bilderberg Meetings: A Forum for Trans-Atlantic Dialogue and Elite Career Advancement," Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, February 24, 2025, https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2025/02/24/the-bilderberg-meetings-a-forum-for-trans-atlantic-dialogue-and-elite-career-advancement/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

The verdicts

Claim: "Bill Clinton was chosen at Bilderberg in 1991."

Verdict: Partly true. His own presidential library confirms he attended the 1991 meeting as governor before running for president.[408] There is no evidence he was "chosen" there; he won his party's primaries and a general election.

Claim: "Bilderberg chose Herman Van Rompuy to lead the European Council."

Verdict: Partly true. He attended a Bilderberg dinner a week before EU leaders picked him, and his remarks there were reported.[409] But the decision was made by the EU's heads of government, and no record shows Bilderberg directing it.

Claim: "Tony Blair was chosen at Bilderberg in 1993."

Verdict: Inconclusive. Blair is widely reported to have attended in 1993, before becoming Labour Party leader in 1994. [Not verified: I could not confirm his attendance from a primary source during research.] Even if he attended, attendance is not selection.

Claim: "Bilderberg picks presidents and prime ministers."

Verdict: False (debunked) as stated. Future leaders have attended before rising, which is documented. But each of them still had to win elections or be chosen by other leaders in the open.[410]

Research It Yourself: Future leaders

- Request records from the Clinton Presidential Library's Bilderberg collection, FOIA 2008-0637-F.[411]
- Search other presidential libraries for "Bilderberg" in their finding aids.
- For any leader said to have been "picked," find the date they attended and the date they took office, and list everything that happened in between.

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[407] Owen Huang and Harry Yang, interview with Lukas Kantor, "The Bilderberg Meetings: A Forum for Trans-Atlantic Dialogue and Elite Career Advancement," Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, February 24, 2025, https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2025/02/24/the-bilderberg-meetings-a-forum-for-trans-atlantic-dialogue-and-elite-career-advancement/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[408] Clinton Library finding aid (note 1).

[409] Rettman, EUobserver.

[410] Clinton Library finding aid; EUobserver.

[411] Clinton Library finding aid (note 1).

Chapter 24: Europe, NATO and War

Europe, the Common Market and the euro

The claim

A common claim is that Bilderberg created the European Union, or at least its common market and its single currency, the euro. This is one of the few big Bilderberg claims where real historians have done real work, so we can test it carefully.

What the historian found

Thomas Gijswijt, who studied the group's early archives, argues that the first Bilderberg meetings pushed participants toward what he calls "positive anti-communism": not just opposing the Soviet Union, but offering Western Europe a better future. He concludes that European integration became the main expression of that strategy, and that positive anti-communism "was a real driving force behind the relaunch of Europe in the mid-1950s."[412]

At the 1955 meeting in Barbizon, France, he reports, French Socialist leader Guy Mollet argued that "the best way to challenge the attraction of communism was to raise the standard of living," and that tying Western Europe's economies together was the way to do it. The American George Ball made a similar point about the frustrations that fed neutralism in Europe.[413] The group's own records show "European unity" on the agenda at Garmisch-Partenkirchen in September 1955.[414]

Two years later, on March 25, 1957, six countries, West Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, signed the Treaties of Rome, creating the European Economic Community, the common market that grew into today's European Union, and the European Atomic Energy Community.[415]

Did Bilderberg cause it?

Here is where we have to be careful.

What is documented: European integration was discussed at early Bilderberg meetings. Leading European politicians who attended, including Mollet, were in favor of it. A historian who read the archives concludes that the discussions helped push the idea forward.[416]

What is not documented: that Bilderberg drafted the Treaty of Rome, decided it, or ordered governments to sign it. European integration had many sources: the European Movement Retinger helped found (Chapter 1), the governments themselves, the European Coal and Steel Community, set up by the same

[412] Thomas W. Gijswijt, "Emotions and positive anti-communism during the early Cold War: the case of the Bilderberg Group," Journal of Transatlantic Studies 22 (2024): 11-24, pp. 11, 23, https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1057/s42738-024-00117-3.pdf (accessed November 22, 2026).

[413] Same source, pp. 20-21.

[414] Bilderberg Meetings, "Meetings overview: 1950s," https://www.bilderbergmeetings.org/meetings/meetings-overview/1950 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[415] European Union, "History of the European Union 1945-59," https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/1945-59_en (accessed November 22, 2026).

[416] Gijswijt, 2024, pp. 21-23.

six countries in a treaty signed on April 18, 1951, three years before the first Bilderberg meeting, and the parliaments that ratified the treaties.[417]

The euro came decades later. I found no archive-based evidence tying Bilderberg to its design.

The verdict

Claim: "Bilderberg created the euro."

Verdict: False (debunked) as usually stated. I found no archive-based evidence that Bilderberg designed or decided the euro. European integration was discussed at early meetings, and a historian of the group concludes those discussions helped drive the 1950s push for European unity.[418] Influence on an idea is documented. Creating the currency is not.

What this chapter shows

This chapter shows the best honest case for Bilderberg's influence. In the 1950s, it brought together the people who wanted a united Western Europe, gave them a private place to make the case to Americans and to each other, and a serious historian concludes it mattered. That is influence, and it is real.

It also shows the limits. Influence over an idea is not control over the outcome. The treaties were negotiated by governments and approved by parliaments. If Bilderberg's members wanted European unity, they still had to win it in the open.

NATO, war and the Cold War agenda

Born with NATO in the room

Bilderberg and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) grew up together. The 1955 meeting discussed "Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization" and "the political and strategic aspects of atomic energy." The 1957 Fiuggi meeting discussed "modern weapons and disarmament in relation to Western security," and the 1958 meeting in Buxton, England, discussed "the future of NATO defence."[419]

Seventy years later, NATO is still in the room.

The NATO guests

Mark Rutte attended Bilderberg in 2019 as Dutch prime minister, and in 2025 and 2026 as NATO's Secretary General.[420] His predecessor, Jens Stoltenberg, attended in 2026.[421] An earlier NATO chief, George Robertson, attended in 1998 while he was Britain's defence secretary, a year before he took over

[417] European Union, "History of the European Union 1945-59," https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/1945-59_en (accessed November 22, 2026).

[418] Same source.

[419] Bilderberg Meetings, "Meetings overview: 1950s," https://www.bilderbergmeetings.org/meetings/meetings-overview/1950 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[420] Swissinfo, May 2019, https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/politics/secretive-montreux-meeting_what-and-who-is-bilderberg/44997466; Reuters, June 12, 2025, via RTE, https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2025/0612/1518108-bilderberg-group-meets-in-sweden-amid-us-europe-tensions; Josh Friedman, Cal Coast News, April 12, 2026, https://calcoastnews.com/2026/04/california-funding-pours-into-bilderberg-despite-tech-elites-fleeing-the-state/ (all accessed November 22, 2026).

[421] Friedman, Cal Coast News.

NATO (Chapter 25). And in 2025, Poland's foreign minister, Radoslaw Sikorski, attended the Stockholm meeting.[422]

Military commanders attend too. In 2025, Reuters reported that General Christopher Donahue, commander of U.S. Army Europe and Africa, was a guest.[423] In 2026, reported guests included U.S. Army Secretary Daniel Driscoll and Admiral Samuel Paparo, head of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.[424]

The 2026 published topics included "Arctic Security," China, Russia, Ukraine, the "Trans-Atlantic Defence-Industrial Relationship" and the "Future of Warfare."[425]

Seventy years of defense topics

Defense never left the agenda. The group's own records list "S.D.I." (the Strategic Defense Initiative) in 1985, "What is NATO Supposed to Do?" in 1995, "Will NATO's Enlargement Affect the Transatlantic Alliance?" in 1997, "Kosovo" and "NATO's future" in 1999, "A Stable Strategic Order" in 2019, "Future of Warfare" in 2024 and "Defence Innovation and Resilience" in 2025.[426] Appendix E lists every meeting.

Who else is at that table

Here is what deserves attention. In the same private room as NATO's chief, America's top Pacific commander and the U.S. Army's civilian head sat the chief executives of companies that sell technology and services to militaries, including Palantir, whose co-founder and chief executive, Alex Karp, is a reported donor to Bilderberg's U.S. nonprofit (Chapter 7).[427]

When generals and defense officials discuss the "Trans-Atlantic Defence-Industrial Relationship" in private with the people whose companies might win the contracts, the public has a legitimate interest in what was said. In the United States, there are ethics rules on gifts, travel and meetings with contractors. Chapter 25 explains the federal law that makes agencies report outside payments for officials' travel to meetings like this one.

Does Bilderberg decide wars?

Claim: "Bilderberg decides wars."

Verdict: False (debunked) as stated. Decisions to go to war are made by governments, and in the United States by the President and Congress. I found no record of a war decision made at Bilderberg.

Claim: "Bilderberg controls NATO."

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[422] "Poland's Sikorski, Anne Applebaum among attendees at Bilderberg Meeting in Stockholm," Polish Radio English Section, June 13, 2025, https://www.polskieradio.pl/395/7784/artykul/3537093 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[423] Reuters, June 12, 2025.

[424] Friedman, Cal Coast News.

[425] Wikipedia, "2026 Bilderberg Conference," summarizing the official press release, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2026_Bilderberg_Conference (accessed November 22, 2026); Pagina Um, April 10, 2026.

[426] Bilderberg Meetings, "Meetings overview" pages for the 1980s, 1990s, 2010s and 2020s, https://www.bilderbergmeetings.org/meetings/meetings-overview/1980 and the same address ending in 1990, 2010 and 2020 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[427] Friedman, Cal Coast News.

Verdict: False (debunked) as stated. NATO is run by its member governments. But NATO's leaders and senior Western military officers regularly attend, and defense is a standing topic, so Bilderberg is plainly a place where NATO's agenda is discussed privately with business and political leaders.[428]

Claim: "Bilderberg ordered the war in Ukraine."

Verdict: False (debunked). Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022.[429] Ukraine has been on Bilderberg agendas since, as it has been on every Western security agenda. I found no evidence Bilderberg ordered or caused the war.

What this chapter shows

Bilderberg began as a Cold War meeting about holding the Western alliance together, and it still is one. Its guest lists show NATO's leadership and senior U.S. military officers sitting with defense-industry executives in private. That does not prove anyone decided a war there. It does mean that some of the most important conversations about Western defense happen in a room the voters who pay for that defense cannot enter.

[428] Swissinfo, May 2019, https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/politics/secretive-montreux-meeting_what-and-who-is-bilderberg/44997466; Reuters, June 12, 2025, via RTE, https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2025/0612/1518108-bilderberg-group-meets-in-sweden-amid-us-europe-tensions; Josh Friedman, Cal Coast News, April 12, 2026, https://calcoastnews.com/2026/04/california-funding-pours-into-bilderberg-despite-tech-elites-fleeing-the-state/ (all accessed November 22, 2026).

[429] UN News, report of February 24, 2022, https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/02/1112592 (accessed November 22, 2026).

Chapter 25: Governments Answer: The Logan Act and Questions in Parliament

The Logan Act claim

A popular claim is that American officials who attend Bilderberg break the Logan Act, a 1799 law against private citizens conducting unauthorized diplomacy.

The Congressional Research Service (CRS), Congress's own nonpartisan research office, explained the law in a 2018 report by legislative attorney Wilson C. Freeman. The Act generally makes it illegal for U.S. citizens to engage in unauthorized diplomacy with intent to "influence the measures or conduct" of a foreign government, or to "defeat the measures of the United States." The CRS found only two prosecutions since 1799: a Kentucky farmer named Francis Flournoy, indicted in 1803, whose case went no further, and Jonas P. Levy, arrested in 1853, whose case was dropped. Neither led to a conviction, and there has been no indictment since.[430]

The CRS also noted serious constitutional doubts about the law under the First Amendment and due process.[431]

There is a second problem with the claim. The Logan Act is about acting "without authority." A sitting Secretary of State or cabinet member attending in an official capacity is not a private citizen acting without authority. A private businessman talking to a foreign minister about policy might be a harder case, but no one has ever been charged for it.

Claim: "U.S. officials who attend Bilderberg break the Logan Act."

Verdict: False (debunked) as a legal matter. The law has never produced a conviction in over two centuries, officials acting in their roles are not acting "without authority," and the CRS describes serious constitutional doubts about it.[432] The real question is not criminal law but disclosure: who paid, and what did officials share?

Questions in parliaments

Elected officials in Europe have asked real questions about Bilderberg, and the record shows the answers have often been thin.

On July 27, 1999, a British member of Parliament, John Bercow, later Speaker of the House of Commons, asked the government whether members of the European Commission attending Bilderberg had done so in their official capacity, and "at what cost to public funds." The minister, Joyce Quin, answered: "I shall reply to the hon. Member shortly and place copies of the letter in the Libraries of the House."[433] [Not verified: whether the letter was placed and what it said.]

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[430] Wilson C. Freeman, "The Logan Act: An Overview of a Sometimes Forgotten 18th Century Law," Congressional Research Service, Legal Sidebar LSB10058, January 12, 2018, https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/LSB10058.html (accessed November 22, 2026). The official copy is at https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/LSB/PDF/LSB10058/LSB10058.3.pdf.

[431] Same source.

[432] Same source.

[433] House of Commons, Written Answers, July 27, 1999, vol. 336, c374W, "Bilderberg Meetings," https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1999/jul/27/bilderberg-meetings (accessed November 22, 2026).

Prime ministers have answered too. On June 15, 1998, Liberal Democrat MP Paul Keetch asked which ministers had attended that year's Bilderberg meeting in Scotland. Prime Minister Tony Blair answered in writing that the Secretary of State for Defence had attended part of the "Bilderberg Conference in Ayrshire" on May 14 and 15.[434] The group's own records place the 1998 meeting at Turnberry, a resort in Ayrshire, Scotland, May 14 to 17.[435]

In 2023, a member of the European Parliament filed a written question titled "Is the participation of three commissioners in the 2023 Bilderberg Meeting compatible with democracy?" The European Commission's answer was given by Vice-President Vera Jourova.[436] [Not verified: the content of the answer, which would not load during research.]

A paper trail in Parliament

British members of Parliament asked about Bilderberg again and again in the late 1990s, and the government's written answers form a small paper trail:

Table 25.1. Written answers on Bilderberg in the House of Commons, 1998 to 2000

Date	Asked by	Answered by	What was said
March 30, 1998	Christopher Gill	Prime Minister Tony Blair	Asked which members of his government had attended Bilderberg meetings, Blair answered: "None."[437]
June 15, 1998	Paul Keetch	Prime Minister Tony Blair	The Defence Secretary attended part of the "Bilderberg Conference in Ayrshire" on May 14 and 15, as described earlier in this chapter.[438]
July 20, 1998	Paul Keetch	Defence Secretary George Robertson	Robertson said he "attended part of the Bilderberg Conference in Ayrshire last May" to contribute to a discussion relevant to his ministerial responsibilities.[439]
May 20, 1999	John Bercow	Prime Minister Tony Blair	"only one member of this Government - the Defence Secretary - has attended a meeting of the Bilderberg Group."[440]

[434] House of Commons, Written Answers, June 15, 1998, vol. 314, c6W, "Bilderberg Group," https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1998/jun/15/bilderberg-group (accessed November 22, 2026). Keetch's party affiliation [Not verified].

[435] Bilderberg Meetings, "Meetings overview: 1990s," https://www.bilderbergmeetings.org/meetings/meetings-overview/1990 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[436] European Parliament, written question E-001703/2023, "Is the participation of three commissioners in the 2023 Bilderberg Meeting compatible with democracy?," https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2023-001703_EN.html, and answer, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2023-001703-ASW_EN.html (titles from search listings, November 22, 2026).

[437] House of Commons, Written Answers, March 30, 1998, vol. 309, cc376-7W, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1998/mar/30/bilderberg-group (accessed November 22, 2026).

[438] House of Commons, Written Answers, June 15, 1998, vol. 314, c6W, "Bilderberg Group," https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1998/jun/15/bilderberg-group (accessed November 22, 2026). Keetch's party affiliation [Not verified].

[439] House of Commons, Written Answers, July 20, 1998, vol. 316, c434W, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1998/jul/20/bilderberg-meeting-turnbern (accessed November 22, 2026).

[440] House of Commons, Written Answers, May 20, 1999, vol. 331, c402W, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1999/may/20/bilderberg-group (accessed November 22, 2026).

Date	Asked by	Answered by	What was said
July 4, 2000	John Bercow	Prime Minister Tony Blair	Asked about the 2000 Sintra session, Blair said: "So far as I am aware, no Minister attended this conference."[441]

Two things stand out. First, these answers show a government willing to say who went, in writing, when asked. That is the kind of accountability this book has been asking for. Second, Bercow's 1999 question asked for more: what official transport and funds were used, what reports were made and what follow-up there was with other attendees. The answer pointed back to earlier answers rather than providing those reports.[442]

The Defence Secretary who attended in 1998, George Robertson, served as Secretary General of NATO from October 1999 to January 2004.[443] That is one more example of the pattern in Chapter 23: Bilderberg's guests often rise. It is not evidence that the meeting chose him.

Before Blair: "a private occasion"

The questions did not start in the 1990s. Three earlier answers show how British governments of both parties described the meeting.

In April 1977, the Labour member Gwilym Roberts asked Prime Minister James Callaghan which members of his government would attend the Bilderberg Conference in Torquay, and in what capacity, and asked him to make sure the government was not represented at such meetings in the future. Callaghan answered that he understood it was "a private occasion which all participants attended in a personal capacity," so the question of government representation did not arise.[444]

In May 1986, Sir John Biggs-Davison asked Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher "for what purpose she attended the Bilderberg conference." Thatcher answered: "The Bilderberg conferences are privately organised international gatherings. I was invited to attend this year's conference on this basis and was pleased to accept."[445]

In March 1996, Lord Stoddart of Swindon asked why Sir David Hannay, a senior British diplomat, had attended the 1995 meeting at Burgenstock, Switzerland, at whose invitation, and "what report he filed to the Foreign Secretary." The Foreign Office minister, Baroness Chalker, answered that Hannay attended "at the invitation of the organisers" to "talk about UN peacekeeping operations."[446] The question about a report went unanswered in her reply.

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[441] House of Commons, Written Answers, July 4, 2000, vol. 353, c102W, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/2000/jul/04/bilderberg-conference (accessed November 22, 2026).

[442] House of Commons, Written Answers, May 20, 1999, vol. 331, c402W, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1999/may/20/bilderberg-group (accessed November 22, 2026).

[443] NATO, "The Rt. Hon. Lord Robertson of Port Ellen," https://nato.int/en/about-us/organization/who-we-are/nato-secretaries-general/the-rt--hon--lord-robertson-of-port-ellen (accessed November 22, 2026).

[444] House of Commons, Written Answers, April 28, 1977, vol. 930, c373W, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1977/apr/28/bilderberg-conference-torquay (accessed November 22, 2026).

[445] House of Commons, Written Answers, May 1, 1986, vol. 96, c454W, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1986/may/01/bilderberg-conference (accessed November 22, 2026).

[446] House of Lords, Written Answers, March 19, 1996, vol. 570, c93WA, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written_answers/1996/mar/19/sir-david-hannay-attendance-at (accessed November 22, 2026).

And in 1999, asked by Paul Keetch which ministers and officials would go to that year's meeting in Portugal, Tony Blair answered that the group "usually invites a number of people from government, politics, industry, finance and education," and that "There is no formal representation by the UK Government." Asked by John Bercow who sent the invitations, Blair answered: "Who sends invitations is a matter for the Bilderberg Group."[447]

Callaghan, a Labour prime minister, and Thatcher, a Conservative, gave the same answer twenty years before Kenneth Clarke gave it again: private occasion, personal capacity. That is the British line, and it has held for half a century. Set it next to the Dutch answers below, where two prime ministers said they were invited because of their office, and you can see why people are confused.

The day the House of Commons debated it

The fullest public exchange about Bilderberg in any parliament I found took place in the British House of Commons on Monday, June 10, 2013, the day after that year's meeting near Watford ended.

Michael Meacher, a Labour member of Parliament, asked an urgent question. He described the meeting as about 130 "top decision makers," including bankers and politicians, and said they met "to concert their plans to deal with a particularly awkward stage in western capitalism." He called it "an anti-democratic cabal if ever there was one," while adding: "Of course it is not a conspiracy." He asked why no statement had been made: "So why is there no transparency about a very crucial meeting that could affect us all?"[448]

The government's answer came from Kenneth Clarke, then a Minister without Portfolio, who had attended. He said people attend "as individuals," that "Nobody attends representing any particular organisation," and that it was a "Chatham House rules discussion" at which "no conclusions of any kind were reached." He said the European Union and Britain's place in it "did come up from time to time," and that "the Prime Minister was there." He called the idea of a plot "total, utter nonsense."[449]

The opposition's finance spokesman, Ed Balls, spoke "as one of the British parliamentarians who attended the weekend meeting in Watford." He asked Clarke to agree it was welcome that the group now "publishes a list of all those who attend the meeting and the topics that are discussed," and to confirm that over the past sixty years "Prime Ministers, Chancellors and shadow Ministers from all parties" had attended, naming Lord Healey, Lord Ashdown and the late John Smith. He also said Clarke was answering because he was "a member of the Bilderberg steering group."[450]

Think about what that exchange shows. A sitting minister who sat on Bilderberg's steering committee answered for the government. The opposition's finance spokesman had been in the same room. And the sitting Prime Minister had been there too. When the people supposed to hold each other accountable all attend the same private meeting, the public has a fair question about who is left to ask.

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[447] House of Commons, Written Answers, May 7, 1999, vol. 330, cc470-1W, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1999/may/07/bilderberg-group, and July 26, 1999, vol. 336, c29W, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1999/jul/26/bilderberg-group (both accessed November 22, 2026).

[448] House of Commons, "Bilderberg Conference," urgent question, June 10, 2013, as reproduced by Parallel Parliament from the official Hansard, https://parallelparliament.co.uk/debate/2013-06-10/commons/commons-chamber/bilderberg-conference (accessed November 22, 2026). The official record is at hansard.parliament.uk for June 10, 2013.

[449] Same source.

[450] Same source.

The Netherlands: the parliament that keeps asking

No country has asked its leaders about Bilderberg more often, in writing, than the Netherlands. That makes sense. It is the country where Bilderberg began, and its royal family has been in the room for most of the meeting's history (Chapter 2). The Dutch government publishes these questions and answers in its official record, so anyone can read them.

2012: "I was invited as the Prime Minister." Marianne Thieme of the Party for the Animals asked Prime Minister Mark Rutte about the 2012 meeting in Chantilly, Virginia. Rutte confirmed he went and said: "I was invited as the Prime Minister of the Netherlands." He declined to share the agenda, saying the talks fell under the Chatham House rules, which he had accepted by attending. And he confirmed that travel and hotel costs for members of the government are paid from the national budget.[451]

2013: 1,223 euros. Geert Wilders, leader of the Party for Freedom, asked Rutte why he was skipping a cabinet meeting to attend the 2013 meeting in England, and who was paying. Rutte answered that the deputy prime minister chairs the cabinet when the prime minister is abroad, that the Chatham House Rule "ensures a meaningful exchange of views," and that the state paid his costs, which came to 1,223 euros.[452]

2023: "The invitation was sent to me as Minister-President." Pepijn van Houwelingen of Forum for Democracy asked whether Rutte and the finance minister had attended the 2023 meeting in Lisbon, and, if they were invited as individuals, why taxpayers paid. The government answered that both attended, that no other ministers did, and that the invitations would not be made public. On capacity, it said: "The invitation was sent to me as Minister-President," and the same applied to the finance minister. It added that the travel and hotel costs were paid by the state and are always published under the Dutch rules on officials' expenses.[453]

2026: "In their formal capacity." Van Houwelingen asked again after the 2026 meeting in Washington. Was it true that the King, the Queen and the Prime Minister had attended? Prime Minister Rob Jetten answered on June 2, 2026: "Yes." Did they attend in a personal capacity or represent the Netherlands? Jetten answered that participants are invited "in their formal capacity," while the discussions themselves are informal under the Chatham House Rule.[454]

Now set those answers next to what Bilderberg says about itself. In 2013, Britain's Kenneth Clarke told the House of Commons that people attend "as individuals" and that "Nobody attends representing any particular organisation" (see above). Two Dutch prime ministers, of different parties, told their parliament in writing that they were invited because of their office, and their governments paid the bill.

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[451] Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (Dutch House of Representatives), Aanhangsel van de Handelingen 2011-2012, no. 2705, questions by Thieme (Party for the Animals) submitted June 5, 2012, answered by the Prime Minister, received June 7, 2012, https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/ah-tk-20112012-2705.pdf (accessed November 22, 2026). Quotations translated from Dutch.

[452] Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (Dutch House of Representatives), Aanhangsel van de Handelingen 2012-2013, no. 2542, questions by Wilders (Party for Freedom) submitted June 6, 2013, answered by the Prime Minister, received June 11, 2013, https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/ah-tk-20122013-2542.pdf (accessed November 22, 2026). Quotations translated from Dutch.

[453] Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (Dutch House of Representatives), Aanhangsel van de Handelingen 2022-2023, no. 2922, questions by Van Houwelingen (Forum for Democracy) submitted May 22, 2023, answered June 15, 2023, https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/ah-tk-20222023-2922.pdf (accessed November 22, 2026). Quotations translated from Dutch.

[454] Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (Dutch House of Representatives), Aanhangsel van de Handelingen 2025-2026, no. 2106, questions by Van Houwelingen (Forum for Democracy) submitted April 13, 2026, answered by Prime Minister R.A.A. Jetten, received June 2, 2026, https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/ah-tk-20252026-2106.html (accessed November 22, 2026); questions: https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kv-tk-2026Z07726.pdf. Quotations translated from Dutch.

Both things cannot be fully true at once. My reading is that the people attend as officials and talk as individuals. That is a fair way to run a private seminar. But it means the public is paying for a head of government to attend a meeting whose content the public is not allowed to know. That is not a conspiracy theory. It is the official record, in two prime ministers' own words.

Claim: "Officials go to Bilderberg only as private individuals."

Verdict: Partly true. British prime ministers from Callaghan and Thatcher to Blair, and minister Kenneth Clarke in 2013, described attendance as private or personal.[455][456][457] But two Dutch prime ministers told their parliament in writing that they were invited because of their office and that the state paid their costs, and in 2026 the Dutch government said participants are invited "in their formal capacity."[458][459] The talk is private. The invitations, at least in the Netherlands, are official.

Germany: six invitations

When Bilderberg met in Dresden in 2016, the Left Party (Die Linke) in the German Bundestag asked the federal government about it. The Bundestag's own news service summarized the answer on May 18, 2016. The government said that Chancellor Angela Merkel, Economy Minister Sigmar Gabriel, Finance Minister Wolfgang Schauble, Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen, Chancellery chief Peter Altmaier and Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier had all received invitations, and that members of the government are regularly invited. It said "exchange and dialogue, especially in international formats" matters to it, "even without concrete results having to be achieved," and that running the meetings is the organizers' business.[460]

Six invitations to one government, covering the head of government and the ministers for the economy, money, defense and foreign affairs. The answer, as summarized, does not say which of them went. [Not verified: which of the six attended; the full government answer, Bundestag document 18/8383, was not opened.]

Austria: the minister who would not answer

In May 2023, Michael Schnedlitz and other members of Austria's National Council asked Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg about his visit to that year's meeting. His written answer of July 24, 2023, did not say whether he went. Instead, he said that questions "concerning my participation in the

[455] House of Commons, Written Answers, April 28, 1977, vol. 930, c373W, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1977/apr/28/bilderberg-conference-torquay (accessed November 22, 2026).

[456] House of Commons, Written Answers, May 1, 1986, vol. 96, c454W, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1986/may/01/bilderberg-conference (accessed November 22, 2026).

[457] Same source.

[458] Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (Dutch House of Representatives), Aanhangsel van de Handelingen 2022-2023, no. 2922, questions by Van Houwelingen (Forum for Democracy) submitted May 22, 2023, answered June 15, 2023, https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/ah-tk-20222023-2922.pdf (accessed November 22, 2026). Quotations translated from Dutch.

[459] Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (Dutch House of Representatives), Aanhangsel van de Handelingen 2025-2026, no. 2106, questions by Van Houwelingen (Forum for Democracy) submitted April 13, 2026, answered by Prime Minister R.A.A. Jetten, received June 2, 2026, https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/ah-tk-20252026-2106.html (accessed November 22, 2026); questions: https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kv-tk-2026Z07726.pdf. Quotations translated from Dutch.

[460] Deutscher Bundestag, "heute im bundestag" (hib) 291/2016, May 18, 2016, https://www.bundestag.de/presse/hib/201605/-/423498 (accessed November 22, 2026), summarizing the federal government's answer (Drucksache 18/8383) to a minor interpellation by the Left Party parliamentary group (Drucksache 18/8166). Quotations translated from German.

mentioned 'Bilderberg meeting'" did not fall under Parliament's right to question ministers, because they did not concern the running of his ministry. He did say the meetings "serve an informal exchange of views on current political and economic topics," and that his ministry had paid no costs in connection with the participation.[461]

Compare that with the Dutch answers. In the Netherlands, the prime minister went "as Minister-President" and the state paid. In Austria, the foreign minister treated the question as outside his job, and his ministry paid nothing. Two governments, two opposite theories of what it means for a minister to attend Bilderberg. Neither one is illegal. Together they show that nobody has agreed on the basic rules.

Brussels: a reporter asks for the files

In June 2023, Xavier Azalbert, a journalist with the French site France-Soir, used the European Union's public-access rules to ask the European Commission for its records on Bilderberg and the World Economic Forum from 2018 on: correspondence, meeting documents, internal rules on commissioners attending, and travel and expense records. The public request site AsktheEU.org shows the Commission extending its deadline because the documents were held by several departments, then releasing batches of documents, many of them redacted, through October 2023. The site lists the outcome as "partially successful."[462] [Not verified: which documents were withheld and on what grounds; the decision letters were not in the part of the page I could read.]

That is the model for anyone who wants to know more. Official public-records requests do not always get everything. But they get something, and what they get is real.

Disclosure: the paper trail an American can request

For U.S. officials, the more useful question is not the Logan Act. It is disclosure, and here there is a real law a reader can use.

Under a federal law, 31 U.S. Code section 1353, an executive branch agency may accept payment from an outside, non-government source for an employee's "travel, subsistence, and related expenses" to attend "any meeting or similar function relating to the official duties of the employee." But there is a catch that works in the public's favor. Each agency must report every such payment "of more than $250" to the U.S. Office of Government Ethics (OGE), twice a year. The report must name who paid, how much, the employee, the nature of the meeting, and the time and place of the travel. The law says OGE makes these reports available for public inspection and copying.[463]

OGE calls the form the Semiannual Report of Payments Accepted from a Non-Federal Source, OGE Form 1353, and it lists these "1353 Travel Reports" among the documents it offers the public.[464]

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[461] Austrian Parliament, Anfragebeantwortung 14654/AB (XXVII. GP) to question 15112/J, "Besuch bei den Bilderbergern," answered by Federal Minister for European and International Affairs Alexander Schallenberg, July 24, 2023, https://www.parlament.gv.at/dokument/XXVII/AB/14654/imfname_1577651.pdf (accessed November 22, 2026). Quotations translated from German.

[462] AsktheEU.org, "Transparency of relations between European Commissionners and Bilderberg meeting, attendees and representatives," request by Xavier Azalbert, June 1, 2023, https://www.asktheeu.org/request/transparency_of_relations_betwee (accessed November 22, 2026).

[463] 31 U.S. Code section 1353, "Acceptance of travel and related expenses from non-Federal sources," subsections (a) and (d), via Cornell Law School Legal Information Institute, https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/31/1353 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[464] U.S. Office of Government Ethics, "OGE Form 1353: Semiannual Report of Payments Accepted from a Non-Federal Source," https://oge.gov/Web/oge.nsf/Resources/OGE+Form+1353:+Semiannual+Report+of+Payments+Accepted+from+a+Non-Federal+Source (accessed November 22, 2026).

So here is a question nobody I found has answered in print: when a sitting U.S. official attends Bilderberg, who paid for the trip, and does it show up on that agency's Form 1353 report? If the government paid, that is one answer. If the Bilderberg nonprofit or a host paid, the law says it should be on the report. If it is on neither, that is worth asking about. [Not verified: I did not search the 1353 reports for any Bilderberg payment.]

Research It Yourself: Following the travel money

- Pick a U.S. official from a recent participant list (Chapter 8).
- Find that official's agency in OGE's posted 1353 travel reports, for the half-year covering the meeting date.
- Look for the meeting by name, by host city or by the payer "American Friends of Bilderberg."
- If you find nothing, you can ask the agency's ethics office, or file a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, for the travel records.

What this chapter shows

The legal claims about Bilderberg mostly fail. The political questions are real. Members of the British, Dutch, German, Austrian and European parliaments have asked who attends, in what capacity and at whose expense. Some governments answered plainly, some answered thinly and one declined to answer at all. And in the United States, a reporting law already exists that could show who paid for officials' trips, if someone looks. That is where pressure belongs.

Chapter 26: Who Pushed Back: Governments, States and Voters

Davos, January 2020

Four months before the Great Reset launch, the President of the United States stood on the stage at Davos and told the room it was wrong. On January 21, 2020, Donald Trump said: "We must reject the perennial prophets of doom and their predictions of the apocalypse." The Forum's own write-up put his words in its headline.[465]

Six years later, on January 21, 2026, Trump was back in Davos. At a reception with business leaders, he joked about the Forum's change in leadership, saying the former head "had a hell of a run in Davos," and told the audience "the people in this room are amazing."[466]

That pair of moments tells you something the conspiracy version of this story leaves out. The Forum's biggest critics in government still go to Davos. Davos still invites them. The relationship is not control. It is a long, public argument held in the same building.

The pushback, chapter by chapter

Looking back over Part Three, a pattern shows up. Almost every major idea connected to the Great Reset met real resistance from elected governments or voters, and much of it was rolled back or changed.

Table 26.1. Great Reset-linked ideas and the pushback they met[467]

Idea	Who pushed back	What happened	Chapter
ESG investing and net-zero alliances	Texas and other states; the Texas Attorney General	Texas listed BlackRock as boycotting energy; BlackRock dropped the "ESG" label and left Net Zero Asset Managers; Texas removed it from the list	16
Digital travel ID	Pandemic, Dutch government	KTDI pilot stalled; the Netherlands had "no concrete plans" to go ahead	17
Mandatory digital ID	British public	The U.K. dropped the compulsory app for right-to-work checks and opened a consultation	17

[465] World Economic Forum, "At Davos, Trump urges the world to ignore the 'prophets of doom'," January 21, 2020, https://www.weforum.org/stories/2020/01/trump-davos-apocalypse-greta-climate/ (accessed November 22, 2026). The Forum's page spells the word "profits" in one place; the speech used "prophets."

[466] "Remarks During a World Economic Forum Reception With Business Leaders in Davos, Switzerland," January 21, 2026, Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents, DCPD-202600049, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/DCPD-202600049/pdf/DCPD-202600049.pdf (accessed November 22, 2026).

[467] Sources for each row are in the chapters listed in the table.

Idea	Who pushed back	What happened	Chapter
U.S. central bank digital currency	The White House; Congress	Executive order bars agencies from creating one; a 2026 law bans a Federal Reserve CBDC through 2030	18
Livestock cuts for nitrogen	Dutch farmers	A new farmers' party won 16 of 75 Senate seats in 2023	19
Sudden organic farming	Sri Lankan farmers and shortages	The ban was lifted within months	19
Oxford traffic filters	Residents and national politicians	Protests; the U.K. transport secretary criticized "so-called 15-minute cities"	20
Build Back Better Act	U.S. Senate	The full bill did not pass the Senate	21
UN Sustainable Development Goals	U.S. government	The U.S. formally rejected them in March 2025	22

What this table shows

This table is the strongest piece of evidence in this book against the claim that the World Economic Forum runs the world.

If the Forum controlled governments, these reversals should not have happened. Instead, the Forum floated ideas, some governments adopted pieces of them, and when voters or their representatives objected, the policies were changed, delayed or dropped.

That does not mean the Forum has no influence. It clearly does. Its ideas got into the room with presidents, prime ministers, central bankers and the biggest money managers on earth. Some of them became policy, at least for a while. But influence that can be voted down is a very different thing from control.

A fair warning in the other direction

I do not want to leave you thinking the fight is over.

Many of these reversals depend on who wins the next election. An executive order can be undone by the next president. A digital euro with privacy rules can have those rules changed by a later parliament. A money manager that dropped a label can keep the practice. The people who wrote the Great Reset have not stopped writing, and the Forum is still meeting.

The lesson of this chapter is not "relax." It is "pay attention." Every reversal in that table happened because ordinary people read what was proposed, objected and voted.

Claim: "Nobody can stop the Great Reset."

Verdict: False (debunked). The record in Table 26.1 shows elected officials and voters changing or stopping specific Great Reset-linked policies in the United States, Britain, the Netherlands and Sri Lanka.[468]

[468] Same as note 3.

Chapter 27: Inside the Forum: Schwab's Exit, the Investigations and the Epstein Files

Information in this chapter is current to November 22, 2026.

"We don't eat our own dog food"

The World Economic Forum has spent fifty years telling companies how to treat their workers. In June 2024, The Wall Street Journal reported on how the Forum treated its own.

The Journal said it had talked to more than 80 current and former employees, with tenures from the 1980s to the present. Among the allegations it reported:[469]

- That Klaus Schwab told the human resources department to remove employees over 50, and that the head of human resources declined and was later fired. The Forum said Schwab never set an age limit.
- That at least six women were pushed out or saw their careers suffer when they were pregnant or returning from maternity leave.
- That about six employees described sexual harassment by senior managers, and two said they were harassed years ago by VIP guests at Forum events. Three women who worked closely with Schwab described suggestive comments from him. The Forum denied he made sexual advances.
- That six Black employees said they were passed over for promotion, and that two managers used a racial slur in front of Black women.

One former employee, Tiffany Hart, summed it up: "We don't eat our own dog food."[470]

The Forum fought back hard. On June 30, 2024, it published a statement calling the article inaccurate, saying it contained "significant inaccuracies and unsubstantiated speculation," and that its workplace has zero tolerance for harassment and discrimination. Its lawyer said: "We have a clear defamation case here."[471] [Not verified: whether the Forum ever filed a defamation suit against the Journal.]

These are allegations, not court findings. But they matter to this book for a simple reason. The Davos Manifesto 2020 (Chapter 4) said a good company treats its people with dignity and respect. The Forum asked to be judged by that standard.

The founder's exit

On April 1, 2025, Schwab emailed trustees that he planned to "start the process of stepping down." Within weeks, he was forced out as chairman sooner than he had planned. Peter Brabeck-Letmathe, the former chairman of Nestle, became interim chairman.[472]

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[469] Shalini Ramachandran and Khadeeja Safdar, The Wall Street Journal, "Behind Davos, Claims of a Toxic Workplace," June 2024, as republished by To Vima, July 13, 2024, https://www.tovima.com/wsj/behind-davos-claims-of-a-toxic-workplace/ (accessed November 22, 2026). Original Journal publication date and headline [Not verified].

[470] Same source.

[471] World Economic Forum, "World Economic Forum Statement Regarding Inaccurate Wall Street Journal Article," June 30, 2024, https://www.weforum.org/media/statement-june-2024 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[472] "Downfall in Davos: Klaus Schwab fights for legacy after WEF whistleblower claims," Swissinfo, May 2025, from the Financial Times, May 15, 2025, https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/international-geneva/downfall-in-davos-klaus-schwab-fights-for-

An unsigned whistleblower letter to the board made what the Financial Times called a "near-dozen" claims. Several accused Schwab and his family of mixing personal and Forum expenses. One said he received personal royalties from books written by ghostwriters the Forum paid for. Others said his wife had taken parts of a refurbished Forum property for family use, and that holidays were billed to the Forum as work meetings. Schwab "strongly denies all claims against him." On the book royalties, he said: "Those publications contributed substantially to the intellectual leadership of the World Economic Forum."[473]

That book royalty claim touches this story directly, because "COVID-19: The Great Reset" is one of Schwab's books.

On August 15, 2025, the Forum's board announced that an outside law firm it had hired found "no evidence of material wrongdoing by Klaus Schwab." It found no misconduct by his wife, Hilde Schwab, and attributed minor irregularities to unclear lines between personal contributions and Forum operations. It did not name the law firm. Brabeck-Letmathe stepped down as interim chairman, and Larry Fink and Andre Hoffmann became interim co-chairs.[474]

Claim: "Schwab was forced out over misconduct."

Verdict: Partly true. Schwab was pushed out earlier than he planned, amid a whistleblower letter alleging financial misconduct.[475] But the investigation the Forum commissioned found "no evidence of material wrongdoing," and Schwab denied every claim.[476] The Forum has not released the investigators' report or named the firm, so readers cannot check the findings for themselves.

The chief executive and the Epstein files

On February 26, 2026, the Forum's president and chief executive, Borge Brende, resigned. Records released by the U.S. Department of Justice showed contacts with Jeffrey Epstein. In 2018, Brende was invited to a dinner in New York by former Norwegian politician Terje Rod-Larsen, where Epstein was a guest, described to him as "an American investor." In 2019 he attended two more dinners with Epstein and exchanged a few emails and text messages with him. Brende said he was "completely unaware of Epstein's past and criminal activities" and regretted not checking more carefully. The Forum's outside review found no concerns beyond what had already been disclosed. Brende's statement said "now is the right moment for the Forum to continue its important work without distractions."[477]

Alois Zwinggi became interim president and chief executive.[478]

Claim: "The WEF's leaders had ties to Jeffrey Epstein."

legacy-after-wef-whistleblower-claims/89325206 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[473] Same source.

[474] World Economic Forum, "News Release," August 15, 2025, https://www.weforum.org/press/2025/08/news-release/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[475] Swissinfo, May 2025.

[476] World Economic Forum, August 15, 2025; Swissinfo, May 2025.

[477] "World Economic Forum head Borge Brende quits after Epstein links revealed," Al Jazeera, February 26, 2026, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/2/26/world-economic-forum-head-borge-brende-quits-after-epstein-links-revealed (accessed November 22, 2026); World Economic Forum, "Press Statement from Co-Chairs Andre Hoffmann and Larry Fink," February 26, 2026, https://www.weforum.org/press/2026/02/press-statement-from-co-chairs-andre-hoffmann-and-larry-fink-on-behalf-of-the-board-of-trustees/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[478] World Economic Forum, February 26, 2026.

Verdict: Partly true. The Forum's chief executive met Epstein at three dinners in 2018 and 2019 and exchanged messages with him, as shown in records released by the Justice Department, and resigned after they came out.[479] I found no evidence that the Forum as an organization had dealings with Epstein, and no report that Brende was accused of a crime.

Where the Forum stands now

As of November 22, 2026, the Forum's website lists Larry Fink of BlackRock and Andre Hoffmann of Roche as co-chairs and Alois Zwinggi as president and chief executive. The board named all three on an interim basis; the website no longer uses that word, and I found no announcement making the posts permanent.[480] Reuters reported in October 2026 that the board might name Christine Lagarde, president of the European Central Bank, as chair as early as November. As of November 22, 2026, I found no announcement that the board had chosen a chair.[481]

And the Great Reset itself? Schwab followed it in 2022 with "The Great Narrative."[482] Its main author is gone. The man who ran the Forum day to day is gone. The Forum's 2026 Davos theme was "A Spirit of Dialogue," not "reset."[483]

Claim: "The Great Reset was dropped and renamed the Great Narrative."

Verdict: Inconclusive. The Forum did publish "The Great Narrative" as a "sequel" to "The Great Reset," and the "reset" branding has faded.[484] Whether the goals were dropped, renamed or simply absorbed into the Forum's regular work cannot be settled from public records. What would settle it: the Forum stating plainly whether the Great Reset Initiative is still active.

[479] Al Jazeera, February 26, 2026.

[480] World Economic Forum, "Leadership and Governance," https://www.weforum.org/about/leadership-and-governance (accessed November 22, 2026).

[481] Reuters, "WEF could appoint Lagarde as early as November, sources say," October 15, 2026, via RTE, https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2026/1015/1595518-wef-could-appoint-lagarde-as-early-as-november-sources/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[482] World Economic Forum, "Klaus Schwab Releases 'The Great Narrative' As Sequel To 'The Great Reset'," January 7, 2022, https://www.weforum.org/media/klaus-schwab-releases-the-great-narrative-as-sequel-to-the-great-reset/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[483] World Economic Forum, "A Spirit of Dialogue Brings Record Numbers of World Leaders to Davos," January 2026, https://www.weforum.org/press/2026/01/a-spirit-of-dialogue-brings-record-numbers-of-world-leaders-to-davos-for-world-economic-forum-annual-meeting-2026/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[484] World Economic Forum, January 7, 2022.

Part Five: The Theories

Chapter 28: Where the Theories Came From, and Who Criticizes Them

How the Bilderberg theories began

1964

The modern theories about Bilderberg go back at least to 1964. Chip Berlet, a researcher at Political Research Associates, traced right-wing Bilderberg theories to Phyllis Schlafly's best-selling book "A Choice Not an Echo," published that year to support Barry Goldwater's presidential campaign. [485]

Schlafly's argument, in short, was that a small group of East Coast establishment figures picked Republican nominees behind the scenes. The book's fourteenth chapter, titled "Who are the Secret Kingmakers?", brought Bilderberg into that story. It described a 1957 meeting of the group, which she called "DeBilderberg," and said: "The meetings were closed and no reports were given to the press." It named Prince Bernhard as "the titular head of this secret group," listed participants from what it called "the official unpublished list," and complained that "Republicans are in a small minority in these meetings, and are always of the liberal 'me too' variety."[486]

Notice what that chapter did and did not do. It reported a real meeting with real names, at a time when the group published nothing. That was fair reporting. But it did not show the meeting choosing a nominee. That leap, from "they met in secret" to "they pick our presidents," is the step this whole book keeps asking readers to check.

Schlafly herself kept returning to it. In a March 8, 2016, statement, she wrote that "the first account of that previously unreported meeting appeared in my 1964 book," and called the Bilderbergers "globalists."[487]

The reporters at the gate

From the 1970s on, a few writers made Bilderberg their life's work. Jim Tucker of the American Free Press, a far-right weekly, chased the meeting from country to country for decades. Daniel Estulin, a Russian-born writer living in Spain, wrote "The Secrets of the Bilderberg Club," first published in 2006, and "The True Story of the Bilderberg Group," published in the United States by TrineDay.[488] [Not verified: publication details of Tucker's book.]

Their work mixed real reporting, such as getting guest lists before the group published them, with claims that were never proven, such as specific decisions said to have been made inside.

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[485] Wikipedia, "Bilderberg Meeting," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bilderberg_Meeting (accessed November 22, 2026), citing Chip Berlet, Right Woos Left (Political Research Associates, 1994).

[486] Phyllis Schlafly, A Choice Not an Echo (Alton, Illinois: Pere Marquette Press, 1964), Chapter 14, "Who are the Secret Kingmakers?", as reproduced in a scanned excerpt at https://www.metabunk.org/files/Sclafy%20-%20A%20Choice,%20not%20an%20Echo%20c14%20Bilderberg.pdf (accessed November 22, 2026). Publisher and place [Not verified]; page numbers not shown in the excerpt.

[487] Phyllis Schlafly, "Kingmakers Don't Even Change Location," Eagle Forum press release, March 8, 2016, https://eagleforum.org/publications/press-releases/kingmakers-dont-even-change-location.html (accessed November 22, 2026).

[488] WorldCat record for Daniel Estulin, The True Story of the Bilderberg Group (Walterville, Oregon: TrineDay, 2009), https://search.worldcat.org/oclc/223910265 (accessed November 22, 2026); for the 2006 date of The Secrets of the Bilderberg Club, "Fidel Castro fascinated by book on Bilderberg Club," Associated Press, August 18, 2010, via History News Network, https://www.historynewsnetwork.org/article/130619 (accessed November 22, 2026).

A phrase on the agenda

Theories about Bilderberg often use the phrase "New World Order." It is worth knowing that the phrase once appeared on Bilderberg's own agenda. At the 2007 meeting in Istanbul, a listed topic was "The New World Order: Uni-Polar or Non-Polar?"[489]

Read the whole title. It asks whether, after the Cold War, the world would be led by one superpower or by several. That was a common question among foreign-policy writers at the time. It is not a plan to create a world government. But it shows how a phrase on a private agenda can be read two ways, and why publishing only the titles, and not the discussion, invites the worst reading.

Left and right

The Bilderberg theory has never belonged to one side.

In August 2010, Cuba's former leader Fidel Castro devoted a long article in Granma, the Cuban Communist Party newspaper, to Estulin's book. The Associated Press reported that the article filled three of the paper's eight pages, quoted the book largely word for word, and called it a "fantastic story."[490] Castro's own text, in a Portuguese translation, opens by explaining that he had written two days earlier about "what Randy calls the World Government," referring to a Cuban journalist, and that "475 pages" of Estulin's book were waiting for him.[491] On the right, Alex Jones built a large audience in part on Bilderberg and Bohemian Grove (Chapter 12). In Britain, Nigel Farage has been named among those promoting the theories.[492]

When a Cuban communist and an American talk-radio host agree that a private Western meeting is sinister, it tells you the appeal is not ideological. It is about distrust of hidden power, which people on all sides share.

The antisemitic strand

Some versions of the Bilderberg theory borrow from the oldest conspiracy myth in Europe: that a hidden Jewish group controls nations. That myth was spread by the forged "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," exposed by The Times of London in 1921. My book "Secret Societies" traces that forgery, its spread through Henry Ford's newspaper and Nazi Germany, and the way later writers pasted it onto modern groups.[493]

Bilderberg's own founding story, told in Chapters 1, 2 and 3, is a Cold War story of Western European politicians, American bankers and diplomats, and a Dutch prince who had once carried a Nazi Party card. It has nothing to do with the forgery's claims. Honest critics of Bilderberg should be the first to say so.

Claim: "Bilderberg, the Trilateral Commission and the CFR are part of the Illuminati."

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[489] Wikipedia, "List of Bilderberg meetings," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1954_Bilderberg_Conference (accessed November 22, 2026), citing the group's official meeting pages [Not verified: the official 2000s overview page would not load].

[490] "Fidel Castro fascinated by book on Bilderberg Club," Associated Press, August 18, 2010, via History News Network, https://www.historynewsnetwork.org/article/130619 (accessed November 22, 2026). The Christian Science Monitor carried a version on August 20, 2010.

[491] Fidel Castro, "O Governo Mundial (primeira parte)" (The World Government, part one), August 17, 2010, Portuguese translation at the Marxists Internet Archive, https://www.marxists.org/portugues/castro/2010/08/17.htm (accessed November 22, 2026). Quotations translated from Portuguese.

[492] Wikipedia, "Bilderberg Meeting," citing Peter Walker, The Guardian, May 6, 2019 [Not verified].

[493] Andrew Dominguez, Secret Societies (Dayton, Nevada: Trinfinity Enterprises, 2026), Chapter 15.

Verdict: False (debunked). The Bavarian Illuminati was banned in the 1780s. The Council on Foreign Relations (1921), Bilderberg (1954) and the Trilateral Commission (1973) were all founded long after, by people whose names and motives are documented (Chapters 1 and 12), and none has any documented tie to it. My book "Secret Societies" covers the Illuminati claims in full.[494]

Why the theories last

Christina Garsten told Reuters in 2025 that when such groups seem to have too much influence, "It's there that conspiracy theories can flower."[495] Bilderberg has made that easier by keeping its discussions private for seventy years.

You do not need a theory to see the problem. You only need the guest list and the rule of silence.

The Great Reset theories and their critics

Four days

The Great Reset was launched on June 3, 2020. Four days later, a video calling it a "New World Order power grab" went up on BitChute, a video site popular with people banned elsewhere. The Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), a London research group that tracks extremism, reported it was viewed more than 100,000 times.[496]

By the end of June 2020, the criticism had reached the mainstream. On June 29, 2020, Justin Haskins of the Heartland Institute, a free-market think tank, published an opinion piece on Fox News saying the plan's goal was to "completely destroy the global capitalist economy and reform the Western world."[497] (ISD's explainer misspells his name as "Justin Hawkins.")[498]

From June 2020 to January 2023, ISD counted more than 260,000 Facebook posts on public pages and groups mentioning the Great Reset, and TikTok videos tagged #GreatReset had been viewed 245 million times.[499]

This chapter sorts the critics into three groups and gives each a fair hearing.

The critics on the right

The best-known critics are on the political right. Their main books include:

- Glenn Beck and Justin Haskins, "The Great Reset: Joe Biden and the Rise of Twenty-First-Century Fascism" (Forefront Books, 2022). Beck is a radio host; Haskins directs a research center at the Heartland Institute.[500]

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[494] Same source, Chapters 1 to 3 and 13.

[495] Reuters, June 12, 2025, via RTE, https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2025/0612/1518108-bilderberg-group-meets-in-sweden-amid-us-europe-tensions (accessed November 22, 2026).

[496] Institute for Strategic Dialogue, "The 'Great Reset'," explainer, https://www.isdglobal.org/explainers/the-great-reset/, uploaded March 14, 2023 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[497] Justin Haskins, "Al Gore, John Kerry, others have radical plans for a 'Great Reset' of capitalism," Fox News, June 29, 2020, https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/gore-kerry-radical-great-reset-capitalism-justin-haskins (accessed November 22, 2026).

[498] Institute for Strategic Dialogue, "The 'Great Reset'," explainer, https://www.isdglobal.org/explainers/the-great-reset/, uploaded March 14, 2023 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[499] Same source.

- Marc Morano, "The Great Reset: Global Elites and the Permanent Lockdown" (Regnery, 2022). Morano publishes ClimateDepot.com.[501]
- Michael Walsh, editor, "Against the Great Reset: Eighteen Theses Contra the New World Order," a collection of essays.[502]
- Michael Rectenwald, "The Great Reset and the Struggle for Liberty: Unraveling the Global Agenda" (New English Review Press, 2023), which the libertarian Mises Institute sells in its store.[503]

Their strongest argument, in my reading, is about power and consent. The Forum is funded by about 925 companies (Chapter 4). It works hand in hand with governments and the UN (Chapter 22). Its founder said he was proud to "penetrate the cabinets" (Chapter 9). None of that was ever put to voters. The right's critics say that is a merger of corporate and state power, and some call it fascism in the economic sense.

Their weakest point, in my reading, is the label. PolitiFact rated "False" a claim that the Great Reset is "mostly just fascism," noting that Schwab wrote "the reset that we need is not a revolution or a shift to some new ideology."[504] Calling something "fascism" grabs attention, but it also lets defenders dismiss the real concerns about consent and power.

Claim: "The Great Reset is fascism" or "communism."

Verdict: False (debunked) as a description of its stated goals. The Forum's own documents argue for reformed capitalism with a bigger role for government and business working together, not a one-party state or the end of private ownership.[505] Critics can fairly argue that close cooperation between big business and government is dangerous. That is an argument, not a fact about the plan.

The critics on the left

The left's criticism came first and gets less attention.

In 2019, before the Great Reset, more than 200 civil society groups opposed the UN-Forum partnership, warning it would "permanently associate the U.N. with transnational corporations."[506] The Transnational

[500] Simon and Schuster, "The Great Reset: Joe Biden and the Rise of Twenty-First-Century Fascism," https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/The-Great-Reset/Glenn-Beck/9781637630594; Porchlight Books listing (Forefront Books, January 11, 2022), https://www.porchlightbooks.com/products/great-reset-glenn-beck-9781637630594 (both accessed November 22, 2026); Washington Times, January 11, 2022, https://m.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jan/11/inside-beltway-glenn-beck-and-great-reset/ (on Haskins's role at Heartland).

[501] Simon and Schuster UK, "The Great Reset" by Marc Morano, Regnery, August 30, 2022, ISBN 9781684512768, https://www.simonandschuster.co.uk/books/The-Great-Reset/Marc-Morano/9781684512768 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[502] WorldCat record, "Against the great reset: eighteen theses contra the new world order," Michael Walsh, editor, https://search.worldcat.org/title/1347738071 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[503] Mises Institute store, "The Great Reset and the Struggle for Liberty: Unraveling the Global Agenda," https://store.mises.org/Great-Reset-and-the-Struggle-for-Liberty-Unraveling-the-Global-Agenda-P11271.aspx; publisher (World Encounter Institute/New English Review Press), date (January 10, 2023) and ISBN 9781943003754 per Readings, https://readings.com.au/product/9781943003754/the-great-reset-and-the-struggle-for-liberty--michael-rectenwald--2023--9781943003754 (both accessed November 22, 2026).

[504] PolitiFact, fact-check of a claim by Liz Wheeler about the Great Reset, October 11, 2022, https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2022/oct/11/liz-wheeler/great-reset-not-conspiracy-force-changes-economic/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[505] Same source; Klaus Schwab, "Now is the time for a 'great reset'," June 3, 2020.

[506] Common Dreams, September 27, 2019, https://www.commondreams.org/news/2019/09/27/200-groups-denounce-un-wef-agreement-entrenches-corporate-interests-driving-global (accessed November 22, 2026).

Institute, which calls itself "an international research and advocacy institute," carries the letter on its website.[507]

Their strongest argument is the same as the right's, from the other direction: that unelected corporations are being handed a seat at the table where governments make public policy. Their weakest point, in my reading, is that many of the same groups want the UN itself to have more authority, which raises the same consent questions the right asks about Davos.

When the right and the left both look at the same arrangement and both say "unelected corporations have too much say," that is a point worth taking seriously.

The fact-checkers

The third group is the fact-checkers: PolitiFact, Full Fact, Reuters, the Associated Press, Lead Stories, Logically and others. Throughout this book I have cited their work where they checked a specific claim against a source.

They have done real work. They traced the "bug-based diet" tweet to a fake screenshot (Chapter 19), found that the Forum has no diplomatic immunity (Chapter 4), and showed that Oxford's traffic filters do not lock people in (Chapter 20).

But they have also been criticized, fairly in my view, for sometimes treating the whole subject as a conspiracy theory when parts of it were plainly real. Full Fact deserves credit for saying in 2022 that "the Great Reset is a real thing" and that it "faced genuine criticism."[508] Not every fact-check said that. A reader who saw only the "debunked" headlines might think the Great Reset never existed. It did. It had a launch date and a book.

The dark corner

There is one more group I have to name, because ignoring it would be dishonest.

ISD documented that far-right online communities attached antisemitic codes to the names of Schwab and the Forum, and that some of those communities encouraged violence against them.[509] The old myth of a hidden Jewish group running the world, the forgery known as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, simply got pasted onto a new target. My book "Secret Societies" shows where that forgery came from and how it was exposed in 1921.[510]

ISD also listed politicians who spread Great Reset claims, including Pauline Hanson's One Nation party in Australia, the AfD party in Germany, Carla Zambelli in Brazil and Thierry Baudet in the Netherlands, and media figures including Tucker Carlson, Laura Ingraham, Ben Shapiro, Glenn Beck and Russell Brand.[511] Being on that list does not make someone antisemitic, and most of the people named would reject that charge. It means they spread claims about the Great Reset, some true and some not.

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[507] Transnational Institute, "End the United Nations/World Economic Forum Partnership Agreement," https://www.tni.org/en/article/end-the-united-nationsworld-economic-forum-partnership-agreement (accessed November 22, 2026).; Transnational Institute, "About," https://www.tni.org/en/about (accessed November 22, 2026).

[508] Grace Rahman, "The Great Reset: What is it?," Full Fact, April 14, 2022, https://fullfact.org/online/great-reset-conspiracy-theory/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[509] Institute for Strategic Dialogue, "The 'Great Reset'."

[510] Andrew Dominguez, Secret Societies (Dayton, Nevada: Trinfinity Enterprises, 2026), Chapter 15.

[511] Institute for Strategic Dialogue, "The 'Great Reset'."

The lesson is simple. Honest critics of the Forum have every reason to separate themselves from the people using it as a cover for hate. Bad company makes good arguments look bad.

Part Six: The Verdicts

Chapter 29: Fifty-Nine Claims Put to the Test

This chapter gathers every claim tested in this book in one place. Each verdict is explained, with sources, in the chapter listed. The verdicts use the four meanings set out in the Prologue.

The two books this one grew from tested thirty claims each. One claim appeared in both, about the Illuminati, so it is counted once here.

One more claim first: the world government

Claim: "Bilderberg is a world government."

Verdict: False (debunked). A government makes laws, collects taxes and enforces decisions. Bilderberg, by its own description, issues no statement, proposes no resolutions and takes no votes.[512] Its participants go home and act, if at all, through their own governments, companies and institutions, where the public can see and challenge them. Even a researcher who studies such groups closely called the world-government idea "very much exaggerated."[513] The documented concern is influence without accountability, not government.

The full list

Table 29.1. Every claim tested in this book

#	Claim	Verdict	Chapter
1	"The Great Reset is a real WEF plan."	True	Prologue, 14
2	"The WEF's plan is that you will own nothing and be happy."	Partly true	Prologue
3	"Schwab said the world will never go back to normal."	True	Prologue, 15
4	"Bilderberg is a secret meeting."	Partly true	Prologue
5	"The founding chairman was corrupt."	True	2
6	"The CIA created Bilderberg."	False (debunked)	3
7	"The CIA was involved with Bilderberg from the start."	True	3
8	"The CIA funded the early meetings."	Inconclusive	3
9	"The World Economic Forum has diplomatic immunity."	False (debunked)	4
10	"The Club of Rome admitted in 1991 that it invented global warming as a fake enemy."	False (debunked)	5
11	"Bilderberg is funded by billionaires."	Partly true	7

[512] Bilderberg Meetings, "Frequently Asked Questions," https://bilderbergmeetings.org/frequently-asked-questions (accessed November 22, 2026).

[513] Reuters, June 12, 2025, via RTE, https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2025/0612/1518108-bilderberg-group-meets-in-sweden-amid-us-europe-tensions (accessed November 22, 2026).

#	Claim	Verdict	Chapter
12	"The participant lists are fake or incomplete."	Inconclusive	8
13	"Schwab bragged that his Young Global Leaders penetrated government cabinets."	True	9
14	"Trudeau, Macron, Ardern and other leaders were trained by the WEF."	Partly true	9
15	"The WEF controls governments."	Inconclusive	9, 26
16	"The media is banned and never reports on it."	Partly true	10
17	"Members swear an oath of secrecy."	Partly true	10
18	"The Great Reset was planned at Bilderberg."	Inconclusive	11
19	"Bilderberg, the Trilateral Commission and the CFR are part of the Illuminati."	False (debunked)	11, 28
20	"Bilderberg and the World Economic Forum are the same people."	Partly true	11
21	"Bilderberg planned the COVID response."	False (debunked)	11
22	"The Trilateral Commission and Bilderberg are the same organization."	False (debunked)	12
23	"The Council on Foreign Relations secretly runs U.S. foreign policy."	Inconclusive	12
24	"Human sacrifices are performed at Bohemian Grove."	False (debunked)	12
25	"Powerful men make deals at Bohemian Grove."	Inconclusive	12
26	"Event 201 predicted the COVID-19 pandemic and its death toll."	False (debunked)	13
27	"Event 201 proves the pandemic was planned."	False (debunked)	13
28	"The WEF and Gates Foundation helped plan a pandemic response, including fighting 'misinformation,' before COVID began."	True	13
29	"Prince Charles launched the Great Reset."	True	14
30	"The Great Reset book calls for a global surveillance network."	Partly true	15
31	"BlackRock and Vanguard own everything."	Partly true	16
3	"Schwab warned that new technology would let governments	True	17

#	Claim	Verdict	Chapter
2	watch and control people."		
33	"The WEF plans to force people to get microchip implants."	False (debunked)	17
34	"Big Tech now runs Bilderberg."	Partly true	17
35	"Central bank digital currencies will replace cash in the United States."	False (debunked) as of November 22, 2026	18
36	"Bilderberg planned the 2008 financial crisis."	False (debunked)	18
37	"Bilderberg is run by bankers."	Partly true	18
38	"The WEF wants you to eat bugs instead of meat."	Partly true	19
39	"Farmers' protests in Europe were caused by Great Reset policies."	Partly true	19
40	"15-minute cities will lock people in their neighborhoods."	False (debunked)	20
41	"Build Back Better was a coordinated global slogan."	Partly true	21
42	"Agenda 2030 abolishes private property."	False (debunked)	22
43	"The UN signed on to the WEF agenda."	Partly true	22
44	"Bill Clinton was chosen at Bilderberg in 1991."	Partly true	23
45	"Bilderberg chose Herman Van Rompuy to lead the European Council."	Partly true	23
46	"Tony Blair was chosen at Bilderberg in 1993."	Inconclusive	23
47	"Bilderberg picks presidents and prime ministers."	False (debunked)	23
48	"Bilderberg created the euro."	False (debunked)	24
49	"Bilderberg decides wars."	False (debunked)	24
50	"Bilderberg controls NATO."	False (debunked)	24
51	"Bilderberg ordered the war in Ukraine."	False (debunked)	24
52	"U.S. officials who attend Bilderberg break the Logan Act."	False (debunked)	25

#	Claim	Verdict	Chapter
53	"Officials go to Bilderberg only as private individuals."	Partly true	25
54	"Nobody can stop the Great Reset."	False (debunked)	26
55	"Schwab was forced out over misconduct."	Partly true	27
56	"The WEF's leaders had ties to Jeffrey Epstein."	Partly true	27
57	"The Great Reset was dropped and renamed the Great Narrative."	Inconclusive	27
58	"The Great Reset is fascism" or "communism."	False (debunked)	28
59	"Bilderberg is a world government."	False (debunked)	29

The count

Table 29.2. Verdicts by type

Verdict	Number of claims
True	8
Partly true	20
False (debunked)	23
Inconclusive	8

What the count shows

Look at that split. Eight claims are flatly true and twenty are partly true. That is twenty-eight of fifty-nine where something real sits under the claim. Twenty-three are false, and eight cannot be settled from the public record.

The two rooms produce different kinds of claims. The Great Reset claims lean true or partly true, because the Forum says so much in public. Most of the true claims come straight from the Forum's own words. The Bilderberg claims lean false or inconclusive, because Bilderberg says so little that people have filled the silence with stories, and the records that would settle the rest are kept private.

So anyone who tells you all of this is "just a conspiracy theory" is wrong more often than right. And anyone who tells you it is a secret government that controls the world is also wrong. The truth sits in the "partly true" column: real people with real power, meeting in rooms the public cannot see into, saying things in public that should make free people uneasy, wrapped in a lot of exaggeration and some outright fakes.

That is the real finding of this book. The problem is not that a secret group rules the world. It is that powerful public officials meet privately, again and again, with the people who fund and profit from their decisions, and the public is asked to trust that nothing important happens there. In a free country, trust is supposed to be earned with transparency.

Chapter 30: What Is Still Unanswered

Some questions in this story cannot be closed with the records available as of November 22, 2026. Here they are, with what would settle each one. These are the places where your own research could add something real, and most of them can be answered by an ordinary citizen with time and a records request.

Table 30.1. Questions still open

Question	What is known	What would settle it
Does the Forum shape government decisions, or only host the conversation?	Deep ties to leaders; Schwab's "penetrate the cabinets" remark; many policies later reversed by voters (Chapters 9 and 26)	Internal Forum records or officials' testimony showing Forum direction of a specific decision
What did the investigation of Schwab actually find?	The Forum says an outside law firm found "no evidence of material wrongdoing" (Chapter 27)	Release of the report and the name of the firm
Is the Great Reset Initiative still active?	"The Great Narrative" (2022) followed it; the 2026 Davos theme was "A Spirit of Dialogue" (Chapter 27)	A plain statement from the Forum, or its current program list
Who will chair the Forum?	Reuters reported in October 2026 that Christine Lagarde could be named as early as November (Chapter 27)	A Forum announcement
Did BlackRock change how it votes, or only what it calls it?	Fink dropped the "ESG" label in 2023; BlackRock left Net Zero Asset Managers in 2025 (Chapter 16)	A study of BlackRock's proxy votes before and after
What will the final digital euro rules be?	Parliament backed holding limits, offline privacy and cash protections in 2026; negotiators met November 18 and 19, 2026, without a final deal, with more talks set for December (Chapter 18)	The final regulation after negotiations
Will the U.S. ban on a central bank digital currency last?	An executive order bars it, and a 2026 housing law bans a Federal Reserve CBDC through December 31, 2030 (Chapter 18)	What Congress does before the ban ends in 2030
Was the Great Reset discussed at Bilderberg?	Bilderberg discussions are private (Chapter 11)	A participant's account or notes
How accurate was Schwab's count of Trudeau's cabinet?	Schwab said "more than half" were Young Global Leaders (Chapter 9)	A name-by-name comparison of the 2017 cabinet with Forum lists
Where did COVID-19 come	U.S. agencies disagree: in	Records from the Wuhan

Question	What is known	What would settle it
from?	January 2025 the CIA said a lab origin was "more likely" with "low confidence"; the FBI and Energy Department also favor a lab; four other agencies and the National Intelligence Council favor natural spread; China rejects the lab theory	laboratories and early patient data, which have not been released
Did CIA money ever pay for a Bilderberg meeting?	A former CIA director helped organize and fund the early meetings; CIA leaders discussed the first one (Chapter 3)	Early financial records; further CIA releases
Who chairs the Steering Committee today?	The group's FAQ and its undated Steering Committee page point to Halberstadt and Kravis; other sources list Henri de Castries from 2025 (Chapter 6)	The group's own current Steering Committee page
Exactly who gave how much?	Reported donors include Thiel, Schmidt, Karp and Palantir (Chapter 7)	The Form 990 filings, read line by line
Is every attendee on the published list?	Lists match visible attendees; a 2026 provisional list differed (Chapter 8)	Independent verification at the venue
What did Tony Blair do at Bilderberg in 1993, if he attended?	Widely reported, not confirmed here (Chapter 23)	A primary record of attendance
What is in the Clinton Library's 1,328 pages of Bilderberg records?	The finding aid describes them; some may be restricted (Chapter 23)	A records request
What was said about defense contracts in 2026?	Defense industry and military officials attended; "Future of Warfare" was a topic (Chapter 24)	Participant accounts
What did the European Commission answer in 2023?	A written question was filed and answered (Chapter 25)	The text of the answer
Did U.S. officials disclose their attendance and who paid?	Federal law requires agencies to report outside travel payments over $250; the reports were not searched for this book (Chapter 25)	The agencies' OGE Form 1353 reports for each meeting year
Is Prime Minister Mark Carney still on the Steering Committee?	The group's page lists him with his pre-2025 job (Chapter 6)	An updated page or a statement from his office
In what capacity do officials attend?	Britain says personal; the Netherlands says formal, and	A plain written rule from the group, and from each

Question	What is known	What would settle it
	pays (Chapter 25)	government
Which German ministers went in 2016?	Six were invited (Chapter 25)	The full government answer, Bundestag document 18/8383

A word about the last one

The origin of COVID-19 is the biggest open question touching this story. It is not the same question as the Great Reset. A pandemic can be used as an opportunity by people who had nothing to do with starting it, and the Forum said openly that it saw the pandemic as "a rare but narrow window of opportunity."[514] In January 2025, the CIA said a lab origin was "more likely," but with "low confidence," and that both lab and natural scenarios "remain plausible." Al Jazeera reported that three agencies, including the FBI and the Department of Energy, publicly back a lab origin, while four other U.S. intelligence agencies and the National Intelligence Council lean toward natural spread. China's embassy said the CIA assessment "throws dirty water on China."[515] Whether that opportunity was natural or man-made is a separate subject, and it deserves its own book in this series, built on the intelligence assessments, congressional reports and scientific papers.

[514] Klaus Schwab, "Now is the time for a 'great reset'," World Economic Forum, June 3, 2020, https://www.weforum.org/stories/2020/06/now-is-the-time-for-a-great-reset/ (accessed November 22, 2026).

[515] "CIA says 'more likely' COVID-19 originated from a lab," Al Jazeera, January 27, 2025, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/1/27/cia-says-more-likely-covid-19-escaped-from-a-lab (accessed November 22, 2026).

Chapter 31: Check It Yourself

You do not need me, or anyone else, to tell you what is true about the Great Reset or Bilderberg. Here is the method I used in this book. It works on any claim, from any side.

Step 1: Write the claim down exactly

Write down the claim the way you heard it, word for word. "The WEF wants us to eat bugs" is a different claim from "the WEF published an article about eating insects." Most arguments go wrong because people are checking different claims.

Step 2: Find the original

Ask: who said this first, and where? A screenshot is not an original. A clip is not an original. Find the full document, the full video or the full page. For the Forum, start at weforum.org. For governments, start at the official site: govinfo.gov, congress.gov, the Federal Register, gov.uk, un.org.

If you cannot find the original, that is a warning sign. The "bug-based diet" tweet in Chapter 19 had no original. It was fake.

Step 3: Read what comes right before and after

Most misleading quotes are real words with the context cut off. The Club of Rome quote in Chapter 5 is real, but the next paragraph changes its meaning. Trudeau's "reset" clip in the Prologue cut off his second sentence. Always read the paragraph before and after.

Step 4: Ask what kind of document it is

Is it a law, a treaty, a regulation or a court ruling? Those bind people. Is it a report, a speech, a book, a blog post or a goal? Those do not, by themselves. Most of the Great Reset is the second kind. That does not make it harmless, but it tells you where the fight is: in the governments that might adopt it.

Step 5: Check who wrote it and who pays them

The insect article in Chapter 19 was written by the head of an insect farming company. The Forum is funded by about 925 companies. A fact-checker may be funded by a tech platform. None of that makes them wrong. It tells you what to double-check.

Step 6: Look for a second, independent source

One source can be wrong. Two independent sources that agree are stronger. "Independent" means they did not just copy each other.

Step 7: Check whether it is still true

Things change. BlackRock left a climate group in 2025. Britain dropped part of its digital ID plan. The Forum changed leaders twice in a year. Look for the date on everything, and look for anything newer.

Step 8: Give it a verdict, and be willing to change it

Use the four verdicts in this book: True, Partly true, False (debunked), Inconclusive. Write down why. If new evidence comes in, change your verdict. That is not weakness. It is honesty.

The one rule

If I had to boil this whole book down to one rule, it would be this: **trust the record, not the reaction.** The Forum's own words are often more striking than anything said about them. And the record is usually right there, free, for anyone willing to read it.

Appendices

Appendix A: Timeline

Table A.1. Timeline

Date	Event	Chapter
1872	Bohemian Club founded in San Francisco	12
1921	Council on Foreign Relations founded	12
1952	Jozef Retinger begins organizing European leaders	1
May 21, 1954	CIA leadership discusses the upcoming conference	3
May 29 to 31, 1954	First meeting, Hotel de Bilderberg, Oosterbeek, Netherlands	Prologue, 1
1955 to 1959	Meetings in France, West Germany, Denmark, the U.S., Italy, England and Turkey	1
1964	Phyllis Schlafly's "A Choice Not an Echo" brings Bilderberg into American politics	28
February 1971	First European Management Forum in Davos, about 450 participants	4
February 1972	"The Limits to Growth" published	5
1973	Davos Manifesto	4
1973	Trilateral Commission founded by David Rockefeller	12
1975	Meeting in Turkey; CIA notes Margaret Thatcher invited	3
1976	Lockheed findings against Prince Bernhard; no meeting held	2
April 28, 1977	Prime Minister Callaghan tells Parliament the Torquay meeting is "a private occasion"	25
About 1982	Reagan administration memo proposes using the Bilderberg meeting for "Project Truth"	3
May 1, 1986	Prime Minister Thatcher tells Parliament she was invited and "pleased to accept"	25
1987	European Management Forum renamed World Economic Forum	4
1991	Club of Rome's "The First Global Revolution"	5
1991	Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton attends in Baden-Baden	23
1992	Global Leaders for Tomorrow program begins; Agenda 21 adopted in Rio (June 3 to 14)	5, 9
October 1995	President Clinton speaks to the Steering Committee	23
June 1997	Hillary Clinton attends in Atlanta	23
May 1998	British Defence Secretary George Robertson attends at Turnberry, Scotland	25
May 20, 1999	Blair confirms only the Defence Secretary has attended	25
July 27, 1999	John Bercow asks Parliament about Bilderberg costs	25
2004	Forum of Young Global Leaders established	9
November 12, 2009	Van Rompuy attends Bilderberg dinner near Brussels	23

Date	Event	Chapter
April 2010	Richard Florida's "The Great Reset" published	5
August 2010	Fidel Castro writes about Estulin's Bilderberg book in Granma	28
June 7, 2012	Dutch Prime Minister Rutte: "I was invited as the Prime Minister"	25
June 6 to 9, 2013	Meeting near Watford, England; police face large bill	7
June 10, 2013	House of Commons urgent question on Bilderberg	25
January 23, 2015	Swiss host-state agreement gives the Forum formal status	4
September 25, 2015	UN adopts the 2030 Agenda	22
2016	Schwab's "The Fourth Industrial Revolution"	17
May 18, 2016	German government says six of its members were invited to Dresden	25
November 2016	Ida Auken's "Welcome to 2030" essay	Prologue
2017	Schwab's "penetrate the cabinets" remark at Harvard	9
2018	Known Traveller Digital Identity launched	17
May 30 to June 2, 2019	Meeting in Montreux, Switzerland	8
June 13, 2019	UN-WEF Strategic Partnership Framework signed	22
October 18, 2019	Event 201 in New York	13
December 2019	Davos Manifesto 2020	4
2020 and 2021	No meetings because of the pandemic	11
January 16, 2020	Larry Fink's "Fundamental Reshaping of Finance" letter	16
January 21, 2020	Trump's "prophets of doom" speech at Davos	26
June 3, 2020	Great Reset launched	Prologue, 14
June 30, 2020	Boris Johnson's "build back better" speech	21
July 14, 2020	"COVID-19: The Great Reset" released	Prologue, 15
Late September 2020	Trudeau's "opportunity for a reset" remarks	Prologue
October 6, 2020	40 Global Future Councils launched for the Great Reset	14
May 2021	Planned 2021 meeting in Singapore canceled; Sri Lanka bans farm chemical imports	Prologue, 19
June 12, 2021	G7 launches Build Back Better World	21
November 2021	Sri Lanka lifts its ban; U.S. House passes Build Back Better Act	19, 21
January 7, 2022	"The Great Narrative" released	27
March 2023	Dutch farmers' party wins big in provincial elections	19

Date	Event	Chapter
May 2023	Meeting in Lisbon; artificial intelligence tops the agenda	17
June 25, 2023	Fink says he will stop using "ESG"	16
July 24, 2023	Austria's foreign minister declines to say whether he attended	25
October 2023	Prince Bernhard's original Nazi Party card revealed	2
June 2024	Wall Street Journal workplace report; Forum calls it inaccurate	27
January 10, 2025	BlackRock leaves Net Zero Asset Managers	16
January 23, 2025	Executive Order 14178 bars a U.S. CBDC	18
March 2025	U.S. rejects the Sustainable Development Goals at the UN	22
April 2025	Schwab pushed out as chairman	27
June 2025	Meeting in Sweden	8
July 17 to 18, 2025	House passes anti-CBDC bill; GENIUS Act signed	18
August 15, 2025	Forum says investigation found no material wrongdoing by Schwab; Fink and Hoffmann named co-chairs	27
September 2025	U.K. announces digital ID plan	17
January 19 to 23, 2026	Davos meeting, "A Spirit of Dialogue"; Trump speaks January 21	Prologue, 26
February 26, 2026	Borge Brende resigns after Epstein records released	27
February 26, 2026	Vanguard settles the Texas-led coal antitrust case for $29.5 million	16
April 9 to 12, 2026	72nd meeting, Washington, D.C.	Prologue
June to July 2026	European Parliament backs the digital euro and opens final talks	18
June 2, 2026	Dutch government confirms the King, Queen and Prime Minister attended, invited "in their formal capacity"	25
July 11, 2026	Housing law banning a Federal Reserve CBDC through 2030 becomes law without the president's signature	18
October 2026	Reuters reports Lagarde may be named Forum chair	27
November 18 to 19, 2026	Digital euro negotiators end without a final deal	18

Appendix B: Who's Who

Table B.1. Key people

Name	Role in this story	Chapter
Ida Auken	Danish politician; wrote the 2016 "Welcome to 2030" essay	Prologue
Queen Beatrix and King Willem-Alexander	Bernhard's daughter and grandson; regular guests	2, 25
Glenn Beck and Justin Haskins	Authors of a leading critical book	28
Walter Bedell Smith	Former CIA director; helped organize and fund early meetings	1, 3
Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands	First chairman, 1954 to 1976	2
Borge Brende	Forum president and CEO from 2017; resigned February 2026	Prologue, 27
James Callaghan and Margaret Thatcher	British prime ministers who told Parliament attendance was private	25
Mark Carney	Listed on the Steering Committee; Prime Minister of Canada since March 2025	6
King Charles III	As Prince of Wales, announced the Great Reset with Schwab	Prologue, 14
Bill Clinton	Attended in 1991 before becoming president	23
Etienne Davignon	Chairman, 1999 to 2011	6, 23
Allen Dulles	CIA director who corresponded about the meetings	3
Larry Fink	BlackRock chief; Forum interim co-chair from 2025	Prologue, 16, 27
George Gao	Event 201 player; head of China's CDC	13
Kristalina Georgieva	IMF head; spoke at the launch	14
Thomas Gijswijt	Historian who wrote the first archive-based history	1, 3, 24
Antonio Guterres	UN Secretary-General; signed the 2019 UN-WEF partnership	Prologue, 22
Avril Haines	Event 201 player; later U.S. Director of National Intelligence	13
Victor Halberstadt and Marie-Josee Kravis	Co-chairs named on the group's website	6
Denis Healey	British founder-member; called the conferences "the most valuable" to him	Prologue
Edward Heartney	U.S. diplomat who said the U.S. "rejects and denounces" the SDGs	22
Andre Hoffmann	Roche vice-chairman; Forum interim co-chair from 2025	Prologue, 27
C.D. Jackson	Eisenhower adviser reported to have handled the U.S. side	3

Name	Role in this story	Chapter
Rob Jetten	Dutch prime minister; confirmed in 2026 that guests are invited "in their formal capacity"	25
Joseph E. Johnson	Carnegie Endowment leader; corresponded with Allen Dulles about Bilderberg	1, 3
Lukas Kantor	Czech researcher who studied attendees' later careers	23
John Kerry	Opened a 2020 Great Reset Dialogue: "Normal wasn't working"	14
Christine Lagarde	ECB president; reported candidate for Forum chair	Prologue, 27
Thierry Malleret	Co-author of "COVID-19: The Great Reset" and "The Great Narrative"	Prologue, 15
Adrian Monck	Forum managing director; blamed disinformation for "own nothing" claims	Prologue
Carlos Moreno	Professor who developed the 15-minute city	20
Jozef Retinger	Polish-born organizer who conceived the meetings	1
George Robertson	British defence secretary who attended in 1998; later NATO Secretary General	24, 25
David Rockefeller	Helped organize and fund the meetings; founded the Trilateral Commission	1, 12
Mark Rutte	Attended as Dutch prime minister and as NATO Secretary General; told Parliament he was invited "as the Prime Minister"	8, 24, 25
Phyllis Schlafly	Author whose 1964 book brought Bilderberg into American politics	28
Eric Schmidt and Alex Karp	Steering Committee members, reported donors and frequent guests	6, 7, 17
Klaus Schwab	Founded the Forum in 1971; co-wrote "COVID-19: The Great Reset"; left as chairman in 2025	Prologue, 4, 9, 15, 27
Peter Thiel	Steering Committee member and donor	6, 7, 17
Justin Trudeau	Canadian prime minister; "opportunity for a reset" remarks	Prologue, 9
Herman Van Rompuy	Attended a 2009 dinner a week before being chosen EU Council president	23
Alois Zwinggi	Forum president and CEO since 2026 (named on an interim basis)	Prologue, 27

Appendix C: Where to Find the Original Documents

Table C.1. Where to look

What	Where
World Economic Forum press releases, articles and reports	weforum.org (use web.archive.org for removed pages)
"COVID-19: The Great Reset"	Libraries and booksellers; Forum Publishing, 2020, ISBN 9782940631124
U.S. executive orders and presidential remarks	federalregister.gov; govinfo.gov
U.S. bills and votes	congress.gov; clerk.house.gov
UN resolutions	digitallibrary.un.org
Swiss government records on the Forum	admin.ch; eda.admin.ch
Texas boycott list	comptroller.texas.gov
Fund voting records	sec.gov
Digital euro	ecb.europa.eu; europarl.europa.eu
Event 201	centerforhealthsecurity.org
Fact-checks	politifact.com; fullfact.org; factcheck.org; reuters.com/fact-check
Bilderberg history, FAQ, meetings, participant lists	bilderbergmeetings.org (use web.archive.org for older versions)
CIA records	cia.gov/readingroom (search "Bilderberg")
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German Bundestag questions and answers	bundestag.de and dserver.bundestag.de (search "Bilderberg")
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Reagan White House files on the Bohemian Club	reaganlibrary.gov
Logan Act	Congressional Research Service, LSB10058
Early history	Gijswijt, Journal of Transatlantic Studies (2024), free online

Appendix D: Glossary

Agenda 2030: The UN's 2015 plan of seventeen Sustainable Development Goals for the year 2030.

Agenda 21: A UN plan of action adopted in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

Big Three: BlackRock, Vanguard and State Street, the largest index fund managers.

Bilderberg Meeting: A private yearly conference of about 130 leaders from Europe and North America, held since 1954.

CBDC (central bank digital currency): Digital money issued directly by a central bank.

Chatham House Rule: A rule that lets participants use what they hear but not identify who said it.

CIA (Central Intelligence Agency): The U.S. foreign intelligence service.

Davos: The Swiss ski town where the Forum holds its annual meeting; often used to mean the Forum itself.

ESG (environmental, social and governance): A way of rating companies on more than profit.

FOIA (Freedom of Information Act): The U.S. law that lets anyone request federal records.

Form 990: The yearly public tax return filed by U.S. nonprofits.

Fourth Industrial Revolution: Schwab's term for the merging of digital, physical and biological technology.

GENIUS Act: The 2025 U.S. law setting rules for stablecoins.

Great Narrative: Schwab and Malleret's 2022 follow-up to "The Great Reset."

Logan Act: A 1799 U.S. law against unauthorized private diplomacy; no one has ever been convicted under it.

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization): The Western military alliance founded in 1949.

Stablecoin: A digital token issued by a private company and backed by a regular currency such as the dollar.

Stakeholder capitalism: The idea that companies owe something to workers, customers and society, not only to owners.

Steering Committee: The group that runs Bilderberg and chooses its guests.

Young Global Leaders: A Forum program for rising leaders under 40, started in 2004.

Appendix E: Every Bilderberg Meeting, 1954 to 2026

What seventy years of agendas show

Bilderberg does not publish what anyone said. It does publish what it planned to talk about. Read in order, those topic lists are one of the best records we have of what worried the Western establishment, year by year. Here is what stands out.

The 1950s and 1960s: holding the West together. The early agendas are about communism, colonies, atomic weapons, German reunification and European unity (Chapter 1).[516]

The 1980s: the Soviet Union, debt and arms control. The group's own records list topics such as "East-West relations: containment, detente or confrontation" (1983), "Risks in banking and finance" (1983), "S.D.I." (the Strategic Defense Initiative, 1985), "The Soviet Union under Gorbachev: foreign policy implications" (1986) and "How to handle a world awash with public and private debt?" (1988).[517]

The 1990s: after the Cold War. The 1990 meeting, held months after the Berlin Wall fell, discussed "The new Soviet (Dis)Union" and "Germany." The 1991 meeting in Baden-Baden, the one Bill Clinton attended, discussed "Eastern Europe: economic prospects" and "The Middle East: political fallout and future prospects," months after the Gulf War. Later meetings discussed NATO's future and enlargement, Bosnia and Kosovo, and, in 1998, "What Will be the Consequences of EMU?" (EMU is the European Economic and Monetary Union, which created the euro).[518]

That 1998 topic is worth noting for Chapter 24. Bilderberg did discuss the euro, the year before it launched. Discussing it is documented. Deciding it is not.

The 2000s: terrorism, the Middle East and markets. Topics included "The Consequences of the War Against Terrorism" (2002), "Corporate Governance: Does Capitalism Need Fixing?" (2002), the Middle East (2003 and 2006), "Managing Financial Turbulence" (2008) and, in 2009, "Governments and Markets."[519] And in 2007, in Istanbul, one listed topic was titled "The New World Order: Uni-Polar or Non-Polar?"[520] That phrase has fed many theories. In context, it is a standard foreign-policy question about whether one superpower or several would lead the world after the Cold War.

The 2010s: technology and populism. "The Growing Influence of Cyber Technology" appears in 2010, "Does Privacy Exist?" in 2014, "Artificial Intelligence" in 2015, "The war on information" in 2017, "Populism in Europe" and "The inequality challenge" in 2018, and "The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence" in 2019.[521]

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The 2020s: war and artificial intelligence. There were no meetings in 2020 or 2021 because of travel and meeting restrictions. Since then, the group's own summaries list NATO and Ukraine in 2022 and 2023, "State of AI," "AI Safety" and "Future of Warfare" in 2024, and "Defence Innovation and Resilience" in 2025.[522]

You might ask, "Doesn't it prove something that they talked about the euro, populism and artificial intelligence before those things hit the headlines?" It proves they were paying attention to the same things serious analysts everywhere were paying attention to. It is worth knowing what powerful people were worried about. It is not evidence that they caused what they discussed.

The full list

Table E.1. Bilderberg meetings, 1954 to 2026[523]

No.	Year	Dates	Place
1	1954	May 29 to 31	Oosterbeek, Netherlands
2	1955	March 18 to 20	Barbizon, France
3	1955	September 23 to 25	Garmisch-Partenkirchen, West Germany
4	1956	May 11 to 13	Fredensborg, Denmark
5	1957	February 15 to 17	St. Simons Island, Georgia, U.S.
6	1957	October 4 to 6	Fiuggi, Italy
7	1958	September 13 to 15	Buxton, England
8	1959	September 18 to 20	Yesilkoy, Turkey
9	1960	May 28 to 29	Burgenstock, Switzerland
10	1961	April 21 to 23	Lac-Beauport, Quebec, Canada
11	1962	May 18 to 20	Saltsjobaden, Sweden
12	1963	May 29 to 31	Cannes, France
13	1964	March 20 to 22	Williamsburg, Virginia, U.S.
14	1965	April 2 to 4	Cernobbio, Italy
15	1966	March 25 to 27	Wiesbaden, West Germany
16	1967	March 31 to April 2	Cambridge, England

[522] Bilderberg Meetings, "Meetings overview: 2020s," https://www.bilderbergmeetings.org/meetings/meetings-overview/2020 (accessed November 22, 2026).

[523] Bilderberg Meetings overview pages for the 1950s, 1980s, 1990s, 2010s and 2020s (notes 1 to 7); Wikipedia, "List of Bilderberg meetings," for the 1960s, 1970s and 2000s; Pagina Um, April 10, 2026, for 2026.

No.	Year	Dates	Place
17	1968	April 26 to 28	Mont Tremblant, Quebec, Canada
18	1969	May 9 to 11	Helsingor, Denmark
19	1970	April 17 to 19	Bad Ragaz, Switzerland
20	1971	April 23 to 25	Woodstock, Vermont, U.S.
21	1972	April 21 to 23	Knokke-Heist, Belgium
22	1973	May 11 to 13	Saltsjobaden, Sweden
23	1974	April 19 to 21	Megeve, France
24	1975	April 22 to 24	Izmir, Turkey
-	1976	Canceled	Planned for Hot Springs, Virginia, U.S.
25	1977	April 22 to 24	Torquay, England
26	1978	April 21 to 23	Princeton, New Jersey, U.S.
27	1979	April 27 to 29	Baden bei Wien, Austria
28	1980	April 18 to 20	Aachen, West Germany
29	1981	May 15 to 17	Burgenstock, Switzerland
30	1982	May 14 to 16	Sandefjord, Norway
31	1983	May 13 to 15	Montebello, Canada
32	1984	May 11 to 13	Saltsjobaden, Sweden
33	1985	May 10 to 12	Rye Brook, New York, U.S.
34	1986	April 25 to 27	Gleneagles, Scotland
35	1987	April 24 to 26	Villa d'Este, Italy
36	1988	June 3 to 5	Telfs-Buchen, Austria
37	1989	May 12 to 14	La Toja, Spain
38	1990	May 11 to 13	Glen Cove, New York, U.S.

No.	Year	Dates	Place
39	1991	June 6 to 9	Baden-Baden, Germany
40	1992	May 21 to 24	Evian-les-Bains, France
41	1993	April 22 to 25	Vouliagmeni, Greece
42	1994	June 2 to 5	Helsinki, Finland
43	1995	June 8 to 11	Burgenstock, Switzerland
44	1996	May 30 to June 2	Toronto, Canada
45	1997	June 12 to 15	Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.
46	1998	May 14 to 17	Turnberry, Scotland
47	1999	June 3 to 6	Sintra, Portugal
48	2000	June 1 to 4	Genval, Belgium
49	2001	May 24 to 27	Stenungsund, Sweden
50	2002	May 30 to June 2	Chantilly, Virginia, U.S.
51	2003	May 15 to 18	Versailles, France
52	2004	June 3 to 6	Stresa, Italy
53	2005	May 5 to 8	Rottach-Egern, Germany
54	2006	June 8 to 11	Ottawa, Canada
55	2007	May 31 to June 3	Istanbul, Turkey
56	2008	June 5 to 8	Chantilly, Virginia, U.S.
57	2009	May 14 to 16	Vouliagmeni, Greece
58	2010	June 3 to 6	Sitges, Spain
59	2011	June 9 to 12	St. Moritz, Switzerland
60	2012	May 31 to June 3	Chantilly, Virginia, U.S.
61	2013	June 6 to 9	Hertfordshire, England
62	2014	May 29 to June 1	Copenhagen, Denmark
63	2015	June 11 to 14	Telfs-Buchen, Austria

No.	Year	Dates	Place
64	2016	June 9 to 12	Dresden, Germany
65	2017	June 1 to 4	Chantilly, Virginia, U.S.
66	2018	June 7 to 10	Turin, Italy
67	2019	May 30 to June 2	Montreux, Switzerland
-	2020 and 2021	Canceled	Pandemic restrictions
68	2022	June 2 to 5	Washington, D.C., U.S.
69	2023	May 18 to 21	Lisbon, Portugal
70	2024	May 30 to June 2	Madrid, Spain
71	2025	June 12 to 15	Stockholm, Sweden
72	2026	April 9 to 12	Washington, D.C., U.S.

Note on numbering: counting every meeting held, the 2026 meeting is the 72nd, which matches the number reported in 2026. Some lists number it differently. [Not verified: the group's own numbering.]

The pattern in the places is plain once you see it all at once. Counting each meeting held, Bilderberg has met in the United States 13 times, more than in any other country, and it has never met outside Europe or North America except in Turkey. Chantilly, Virginia, a suburb near Washington, D.C., has hosted four times.

Appendix F: In Their Own Words

Here, in one place, are the key quotes from both rooms, with the chapter where each is sourced. Read them in order and decide for yourself what they add up to.

The World Economic Forum in its own words

On the Great Reset itself

Quote	Who and when	Chapter
"a commitment to jointly and urgently build the foundations of our economic and social system for a more fair, sustainable and resilient future"	World Economic Forum press release, June 3, 2020	Prologue
"To achieve a better outcome, the world must act jointly and swiftly to revamp all aspects of our societies and economies, from education to social contracts and working conditions."	Klaus Schwab, June 3, 2020	Prologue
"In short, we need a 'Great Reset' of capitalism."	Klaus Schwab, June 3, 2020	Prologue
"a rare but narrow window of opportunity to reflect, reimagine, and reset our world"	Klaus Schwab, June 3, 2020	Prologue
"There is a golden opportunity to seize something good from this crisis"	The Prince of Wales, June 3, 2020	14
"We simply can't waste more time."	The Prince of Wales, June 3, 2020	Prologue
"The time for cynicism is a little behind us.... Being an armchair critic is really not acceptable."	Ajay Banga, Mastercard, June 3, 2020	14
"Normal was a crisis; normal wasn't working"	John Kerry, June 24, 2020	14

From the book "COVID-19: The Great Reset" (2020)

Quote	Section	Chapter
"the world as we knew it in the early months of 2020 is no more"	Introduction	15
"The short response is: never."	Introduction	Prologue
"Nothing will ever return to the 'broken' sense of normalcy that	Introduction	15

Quote	Section	Chapter
prevailed prior to the crisis"		
"The COVID-19 pandemic has made government important again."	1.3.3	15
"extraordinary powers require authorization from the people and must be limited in time and proportion"	1.3.4	15
"will necessitate a global surveillance network"	1.1.3	15
"The most effective form of tracking or tracing is obviously the one powered by technology"	1.6.2	15
"the pandemic could open an era of active health surveillance made possible by location-detecting smartphones"	1.6.3	15
"ESG will therefore become more fully integrated and internalized into the core strategy and governance of a company."	2.1.4	15
"The verdict seems clear: we need to change; we should change."	Conclusion	15

On technology, business and power

Quote	Who and when	Chapter
"The purpose of professional management is to serve clients, shareholders, workers and employees, as well as societies."	Davos Manifesto, 1973	4
A company "pays its fair share of taxes" and "has zero tolerance for corruption"	Davos Manifesto 2020	4
Governments "will gain new technological powers to increase their control over populations, based on pervasive surveillance systems."	Klaus Schwab, 2016	17
"that we penetrate the cabinets"	Klaus Schwab, Harvard Kennedy School, 2017	9
"Climate risk is investment risk."	Larry Fink, January 2020	16
"I'm not going to use the word	Larry Fink, June 25, 2023	16

Quote	Who and when	Chapter
ESG because it's been misused by the far left and the far right."		
"Meeting the Sustainable Development Goals is essential for the future of humanity."	Klaus Schwab, June 13, 2019	22

From the Forum's defenders and critics

Table E.1. Key quotes, with the chapter where each is sourced

Quote	Who and when	Chapter
"a scenario showing where we could be heading - for better and for worse"	Ida Auken on her "own nothing" essay	Prologue
"We have a clear defamation case here."	The Forum's lawyer on The Wall Street Journal's reporting, June 2024	27
"no evidence of material wrongdoing by Klaus Schwab"	Forum board, August 15, 2025	27
"now is the right moment for the Forum to continue its important work without distractions"	Borge Brende, February 26, 2026	27
"We don't eat our own dog food."	Former Forum employee Tiffany Hart, 2024	27
"permanently associate the U.N. with transnational corporations"	More than 200 civil society groups, 2019	22
"the Great Reset is a real thing"	Full Fact, 2022	Prologue
Agenda 2030 and the SDGs "advance a program of soft global governance that is inconsistent with U.S. sovereignty"	U.S. mission to the UN, March 2025	22

What the quotes show

Lay these quotes side by side and a few things stand out.

First, the people behind the Great Reset said openly that they saw the pandemic as an opportunity to change "all aspects of our societies and economies." That is not a theory about them. It is their own sentence.

Second, they knew the risks. Schwab warned in 2016 that new technology could give governments "control over populations," and his 2020 book warned about "permanent surveillance societies" even while calling technology-based tracking "the most effective."

Third, the quotes that most alarmed people were often the vaguest. "Normal wasn't working." "We need to change; we should change." Vague words from powerful people leave the public to guess what will be done in their name. The cure for that is not to guess the worst. It is to ask for specifics, and to say no when the specifics are bad.

Bilderberg in its own words

Bilderberg's participants rarely speak about it on the record. Here, in one place, is what the group, its insiders, its critics and its scholars have said, with the chapter where each quote is sourced.

Table F.1. What people have said about Bilderberg on the record

Quote	Who and when	Chapter
"a forum for discussion on a wide range of topics"	Bilderberg Meetings, "Brief History"	Prologue
Participants "agree not to quote each other"	Bilderberg Meetings, FAQ	Prologue, 10
"There is no closing statement, there are no resolutions proposed or votes taken."	Bilderberg Meetings, FAQ	Prologue
"Bilderberg Meetings does not seek any public attention."	Bilderberg Meetings, FAQ	10
"The fate of western civilization depends on the maintenance of accord between Europe and America."	Jozef Retinger's founding memorandum, as quoted by Thomas Gijswijt	1
"Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands convened the first conference in May 1954 at the urging of Joseph Retinger"	David Rockefeller, Memoirs, 2002	1
"Of all these meetings, the most valuable to me while I was in opposition were the Bilderberg Conferences"	Denis Healey, The Time of My Life, 1989	Prologue, 10
"The Bilderberg conferences inevitably aroused jealousy because they were exclusive and suspicion, because they were private."	Denis Healey, 1989	10
"My years at the Bilderberg meetings also brought me many contacts in the financial world which now proved of great value."	Denis Healey, 1989	10
"If that's the charge, I stand guilty, and I am proud of it."	David Rockefeller, Memoirs, 2002	12
The Prince had "shown himself open to dishonorable requests and offers"	Dutch government commission, 1976, as reported by Time	2
"I can declare with my hand on the Bible: I was never a Nazi."	Prince Bernhard, to de Volkskrant	2
"an anti-democratic cabal if ever	Michael Meacher MP, House of	25

Quote	Who and when	Chapter
there was one"	Commons, June 10, 2013	
"Of course it is not a conspiracy."	Michael Meacher MP, same debate	25
"The Bilderberg meeting does not make any decisions."	Kenneth Clarke, minister, same debate	25
"total, utter nonsense" (on the idea of a plot)	Kenneth Clarke, same debate	25
"It's there that conspiracy theories can flower."	Professor Christina Garsten, to Reuters, 2025	Prologue, 10
A world government is "very much exaggerated"	Professor Christina Garsten, 2025	Prologue, 29
Bilderberg was "neither an entirely American nor European invention"	Diplomacy and Statecraft, 2003	3
"New resources will be necessary for the financing of the welfare state."	Herman Van Rompuy at a Bilderberg dinner, November 12, 2009, as reported by De Tijd	23

The pattern is worth noticing. The people who attend describe Bilderberg as useful, private and harmless. The critics who were not inside describe it as exclusive and unaccountable. Both are describing the same thing: a room where powerful people speak freely because the public cannot hear them. Whether that is wise or dangerous is the question this book leaves with you.

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