

# **Bilderbergers head the EU, NATO, the IMF and the UN**

**Lukas Kantor**

**S**ince 2019, the EU, NATO, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the UN have been chaired by people who attended confidential Bilderberg conferences prior to their appointment. In the EU, Bilderbergers also occupy other top positions: head of the European Council, European Central Bank and Eurogroup. French President Macron is a Bilderberger and the day after his inauguration, another Bilderberger, Édouard Philippe, became Prime Minister. These and other indications of elite cronyism are summarized and interpreted in my new peer-reviewed study for the journal *International Politics*.<sup>1</sup>

Since 1954, the Bilderberg Group has functioned as one of the platforms for transatlantic elite networking and coordinating. The club has been organizing annual informal and highly exclusive conferences for approximately 130 politicians, businesspeople, and intellectuals, most of them from Europe and North America. The most recent, 70th, conference took place in 2024 from 30 May to 2 June in Madrid.<sup>2</sup>

My study argues that affiliation with the Bilderberg Group might serve as a career elevator. Participants of the meetings can strengthen valuable contacts and gain insider information. And they sometimes receive backing in professional life from their club's members.

## **Two Bilderbergers pushed Georgieva**

**F**or instance, a member of Bilderberg Group's steering committee, José Manuel Barroso, used the Bilderberg conference in 2016 to lobby for fellow attendee Kristalina Georgieva's nomination to the post of UN Secretary General.<sup>3</sup> Although she was not chosen, the position did go to another Bilderberger, Antonio Guterres. Then, during his mandate, at least two

---

<sup>1</sup> Lukas Kantor, 'Elite clubs as career elevator? Mixed evidence from the Bilderberg Group', *International Politics*, vol. 60, no. 6, pp. 1209-1247, at <<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-023-00477-1>>. A free link to the essay is <<https://rdcu.be/dkqBc>>.

<sup>2</sup> <<https://bilderbergmeetings.org/meetings/meeting-2024/press-release-2024>>

<sup>3</sup> Euractiv.com, 10 June 2016 at <<https://shorturl.at/6dgt6>> or <<https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/bilderberg-gathering-envisions-top-job-for-kristalina-georgieva/>>.

other Bilderbergers (Miguel Ángel Moratinos and Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert) were selected as UN representatives.<sup>4</sup>

Georgieva's leadership of IMF is another clear instance of favoritism among Bilderbergers. Georgieva had strong backing from Emmanuel Macron, whose support was seen as 'crucial'. So much so that the selection rules were sidestepped or changed in favor of Georgieva.

Georgieva did not even meet the terms of the complex voting system France devised . . . . There was one more twist. The day before nominations closed, the IMF changed the rules to remove the age limit of 65 for a new managing director; Georgieva turned 66 in August.<sup>5</sup>

### **von der Leyen's Bilderberg connections won her the nod**

The EU in particular has been overcrowded with Bilderbergers, who occupy the top posts of president of the European Commission (Ursula von der Leyen); members of the European Commission (Jutta Urpilainen, Margrethe Vestager); president of the European Central Bank (Christine Lagarde); president of Eurogroup (Paschal Donohoe); and president of the European Council (Charles Michel).

von der Leyen and Michel attended the same Bilderberg conference in 2015 and subsequently in the same year 2019 they both gained highest positions in EU.<sup>6</sup>

Originally, Manfred Weber was expected to become head of the European Commission. But he was not as well-connected. Even mainstream media acknowledged the contribution of Bilderberg to von der Leyen's elevation. The study quotes *Politico*,<sup>7</sup> which stated:

Bilderberg. Davos. Munich. [Ursula von der Leyen] has quietly built an extensive international network in politics and business — connections that won her the nod for the EU's top job [. . . .] It's thanks to her international network that her political career is still alive.

---

<sup>4</sup> Kantor (see note 1) p. 1226

<sup>5</sup> *South China Morning Post*, 3 October 2019 at <<https://shorturl.at/ykieI>> or <<https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3031085/new-imf-leader-must-smash-system-gave-her-job-if-she-wants-truly>>.

<sup>6</sup> Kantor (see note 1) p. 1225.

<sup>7</sup> *Politico*, 11 July 2019 at <<https://www.politico.eu/article/ursula-von-der-leyen-power-network/>>.

Herman Van Rompuy was approved in 2009 as the first president of the European Council soon after he had a private dinner with prominent Bilderbergers Etienne Davignon (former vice-president of the European Commission) and Henry Kissinger. The EU summit that chose Van Rompuy was chaired by Bilderberger Fredrik Reinfeldt, who championed his candidacy.

In the past, Bilderbergers have also occupied the posts of president of the European parliament (Pat Cox); EU Brexit negotiator (Michel Barnier); EU special representative for the Southern Mediterranean (Bernardino León Gross); EU antiterrorism coordinator (Gijs de Vries) and EU ombudsman (Nikiforos Diamandouros).

'This raises suspicion that in EU's nomination processes, Bilderbergers are the preferred candidates'.<sup>8</sup>

### **All general secretaries of NATO are Bilderbergers**

The case of NATO is also striking: '[A]ll post-Cold War general secretaries of NATO participated at some Bilderberg conference prior to their appointment. [. . .] both Wörner and Solana had their Bilderberg première in 1985'.<sup>9</sup> In addition, at least three Bilderbergers – Karl Lamers, Pierre Lellouche, Bert Koenders – became presidents of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

Other attendees of Bilderberg conclaves were subsequently installed into leading positions at the World Bank (James Wolfensohn, Paul Wolfowitz, Ad Melkert, Robert Zoellick, Frank Heemskerk) and the WTO (Renato Ruggiero, Pascal Lamy).

The then member of Bilderberg Group's steering committee, Vernon Jordan, secured an invitation to Bilderberg conference in 1991 for Bill Clinton, then Governor of Arkansas, and introduced him as 'the next President of the United States'.<sup>10</sup> And in 1995, as Jordan wanted, President Clinton installed Wolfensohn into the World Bank.

In other words: prominent Bilderberger Jordan contributed to career advancement of Bilderberger Wolfensohn, via another Bilderberger, Clinton.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Kantor (see note 1) p. 1225.

<sup>9</sup> Kantor (see note 1) p. 1225.

<sup>10</sup> Ian N. Richardson, Andrew P. Kakabadse, and Nada K. Kakabadse, *Bilderberg People: Elite Power and Consensus in World Affairs* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2011) p. 173.

<sup>11</sup> Kantor (see note 1) p. 1222.

## **Mayor at Bilderberg conference, Prime Minister a year later**

Emmanuel Macron attended the Bilderberg conference in May-June 2014. In August that year, under Bilderberger Manuel Valls as Prime Minister, Macron was chosen to lead the key Ministry of the Economy.

Moreover, on 14 May 2017, Macron reached the position of French president. And the next day, another Bilderberger – [Édouard] Philippe – became new Prime Minister. Philippe attended Bilderberg conference in 2016, at that time as mere mayor.<sup>12</sup>

The case of Portugal is most striking: five Portuguese politicians (Antonio Guterres, José Manuel Barroso, Pedro Santana Lopes, Jose Socrates, and Antonio Costa) became prime ministers after their attendance at Bilderberg conferences. Moreover, the Bilderberg conference in 2004 was attended by two future Portugal PMs – Lopes and Socrates. At that time, Socrates was a mere MP, but the next year he became PM.<sup>13</sup>

## **A web of national and transnational elite clubs**

All these findings are in line with previous empirical research, especially that by Diana Kendall.<sup>14</sup> She maintains that affiliation with US elite clubs (such as the Bohemian Club) enhances political, social, and cultural capital. As a result, members have advantage vis-à-vis outsiders, which contributes to the inequality (of opportunity) in society. Kendall notes that 'privileged people gain greater access to powerful positions in the local, state, and federal branches of the government' and 'they do this partly through extensive social networks among elite club members'.<sup>15</sup> Specifically, fellows from clubs tend to 'nominate each other'<sup>16</sup> into high-profile posts (not only in politics, but also business, academia etc.) or provide other support in climbing the career ladder.

The same benefits can be extracted from connections with transnational elite clubs. Just recall the case of Jimmy Carter, who belonged to the Trilateral Commission, which has had a partly overlapping membership with the Bilderberg Group. After Carter became US president in 1977, numerous Trilateralists (Zbigniew Brzezinski, Walter Mondale,

---

<sup>12</sup> Kantor (see note 1) p. 1225.

<sup>13</sup> Kantor (see note 1) p. 1224.

<sup>14</sup> Diana Kendall, *Members Only: Elite Clubs and the Process of Exclusion* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> Kendall (see note 14) p. 112.

<sup>16</sup> Kendall (see note 14) p. 49.

Cyrus Vance, Harold Brown, Michael Blumenthal, Henry Owen, Robert Bowie, Paul Volcker) received influential positions in his administration.

Moreover, at least three World Bank presidents (Robert McNamara, Alden Clausen, Barber Conable) were also Trilateralists. Therefore, it is understandable that the club was seen by some critics as a 'springboard for elevation to political power', as Stephen Gill wrote in his pioneering monograph.<sup>17</sup>

### **Remaining interpretational puzzles**

The study of the Bilderberg Group yields similar evidence, or at least indications of, favouritism. Under-used data from lists of participants of 30 Bilderberg conferences from 1990 to 2019 were examined. It resulted in new dataset about 133 (both right-wing and left-wing, mainly European) politicians who were elevated after their Bilderberg attendance. From this group, 42 people became prime ministers, presidents, or top representatives of international organizations.

Examples include Canadian PMs Paul Martin and Stephen Harper; British PMs Tony Blair and Gordon Brown; German PMs Angela Merkel and Olaf Scholz; Swedish PMs Stefan Löfven and Magdalena Andersson, Italian PM Enrico Letta; Spanish PM Pedro Sánchez; Austrian PM Alfred Gusenbauer and Dutch PM Wim Kok.

However, the investigation also admits that in most cases, it demonstrates only some *correlation* between attendance at Bilderberg conclaves and future elevation. Causation is hard – or maybe impossible – to prove. Plus, the analysis does also show that most of the hundreds of political participants of Bilderberg gatherings later made no significant career jump.

So yes, the whole story is not so unambiguous, unidirectional, and worrying. But it is also not as innocent as the elites would have us believe.

\*

*Lukas Kantor is an alumnus of the Faculty of Social Sciences,  
Charles University, Prague, Czechia.*

---

<sup>17</sup> Stephen Gill, *American Hegemony and the Trilateral Commission* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [3rd edition] 2009) p. 171.