

Bilderberg 2011: The tipping point

What we have learned from this year's Bilderberg conference

• Charlie Skelton
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This year, Bilderberg was bigger than ever. Bigger crowds, bigger names, more coverage. So here, starting with about the least most important thing, is what I've learned from this year's Bilderberg summit in St Moritz.

I've got a bit of a crush on the Chinese vice-minister for foreign affairs

Move over Queen Beatrix. Fu Ying is my new postergirl. I can't help myself. She just seems so ... fun.



Photograph: Quierosaber

Always hopping about, taking photos of wild flowers, pointing at the view, laughing – she's like, I don't know, a normal person or something. I look at Ying and have to wonder if China's really such an oppressive place after all. It can't be! Not with people like lovely Fu Ying running it. I think we've been misinformed. Western lies. Fu is the *real* China.

The BBC turned up!

But only in the form of Marcus Agius, the senior non-executive director on the BBC's executive board. He's also chairman of Barclays, and extremely well connected. Here he is, queuing to get on a private jet home.



Photograph: Alles Schall und Rauch

Also on board was Washington hawk, and one of Bilderberg's nastiest pieces of work, Richard Perle. Boy, that's someone you don't want to get stuck next to on flight. I bet he really hogs the armrest.

Bilderbergers look down on things

I've looked at hundreds of photos of the delegates on their nature walk through one of the world's most stunning valleys, and this is honestly the case: they don't look at the view. They walk with their heads down. They stare at their shoes. Googleboss, Eric Schmidt, was probably the least engaged with the world around him:



Photograph: Quierosaber

I know this sounds crackers, but it's really noticeable. It's heads down, as they network with grim determination. The only pair who looked up at all were Fu Ying (*SIGH*) and Loukas Tsoukalis, president of a Greek thinktank. Here he is, with his binoculars, smiling at a passing jogger.



Photograph: Quierosaber

I think Tsoukalis and Fu Ying would make a good couple. I'll stand aside for the sake of international relations.

Bilderberg is the best networking event in the world

And I'm not just talking about the way it gives Douglas Flint, the head of HSBC, the chance to bend George Osborne's ear (policies). It's turned into the most extraordinary networking event for people on the other side of the security line.

I've just spent the best part of a week rubbing shoulders with a bunch of politically articulate, highly intelligent, engaged individuals: many of whom are scarily young and energetic. The character of the event has utterly changed over the last three years. The numbers have rocketed: from about a dozen in 2009, to three hundred in 2011 – and that's according to the Swiss police.

What the mainstream press have failed to do, the alternative media are simply getting on and doing. In the absence of an adequate press centre, people have formed their own. In the weird journalistic vacuum of the conference, people are newsgathering and sharing their information – and sending out bulletins to the world. It's properly inspiring, and it's only going to get bigger.

If you're simply looking to meet switched-on, clued-up people, come to Bilderberg 2012. If you want to help, observe, tweet, photograph, give legal advice, learn, share, chat, talk geo-politics, attend meetings, or just sip beer and watch the spectacle unfold, then come. The spectacle of Bilderberg is reason enough to turn up, but the people – that's where the real value is. Email us at bilderbergmeetings@yahoo.com and come along to the summit of a lifetime.

It's been a happy conference

On Sunday, we bought a cake and a card for David Rockefeller, and delivered them to the gates of the hotel. We couldn't find a card with "Happy 96th Birthday" on the front, but we got one that showed a rainbow over the Engadine: a symbol of peace between God and humanity after the flood.

And I have to say, it's been a very peaceful conference on the outside. The activists have been picking up their litter, shaking hands with security – and the Swiss police issued a press release saying the behaviour of the crowds was "grade A". In Spain last year, it was the same: they sat in a circle on the beach and encircled the hotel with love. This year, people gathered at midnight on Saturday, with candles and lanterns, and sang birthday songs to Rockefeller.

"For he's a jolly good fellow, which nobody can deny ..."



Photograph: Tom

I'm not saying there wasn't a note of irony in the song, but nobody threw their shoes. It was far too wet.

If you're not on the list you're not getting in

We knew that already, but this year for the first time, elected public representatives are queueing up to find out what's going on in their turf. An Italian MEP (a member of the European parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs), Mario Borghezio, was beaten up and arrested by Bilderberg private security. The next day Swiss MP Dominique Baettig was denied entry for after dinner drinks. He probably had an inkling he wasn't going to share a cognac with Kissinger that evening, but it spoke volumes that he tried.

Bilderbergers don't do airport security

Helicopters and private jets have been haring up and down the Engadine, but with all this air traffic I shouldn't think a single Bilderbag has been scanned, let alone searched. They're barely glanced at. We watched as billionaire Alexei Mordashov's bags went from speeding people-carrier to private jet without so much as touching security:



Photograph: Hannah Borno

Not that I think Alexei Mordashov has been nicking the cutlery from the conference venue in order to melt it down into car parts, but it does slightly stick in my craw that as airport security for the average citizen gets ever tighter, airport security for the likes of the oligarch Mordashov barely exists. It's a two-tier system, and to think it's ok – that it's rational, and suitable – one really has to do a lot of mindbending. The best I can do is that it's ok because he's a busy man. He's got important stuff to do. Billionaire stuff.

The rationale is basically this: you want to check his bags? Come on! Get out of the way! Billionaire coming through!

Anonymity is for Bilderbergers, not for the public

The police and secret services keep the cameras at bay. The pegged-up shower curtain hides the hotel. Blackened windows and security escorts protect the delicate, quivering participants from the horror of being identified. The coyest are never seen at all, and never make the delegate list.



Photograph: Paul Dorneanu/infocon.ro

Now compare that with your life. CCTV cameras with face-recognition software scan your daily life. Travel cards log your journeys. And online, you'll have noticed – particularly in the last year – how your accounts are all being linked, and how you're having to constantly prove your identity. Anonymity is a sin. Anonymity is what terrorists do.

And here's the irony. In secret, with no public oversight, a group of politicians, billionaires and corporate CEOs are discussing (we're told): *Social Networks: Connectivity and Security Issues*.

The global policy concerning the transparency of our social life is being thrashed out in an untransparent forum by people whose "social network" includes people like Henry Kissinger and the chairman of Goldman Sachs International. It also includes people we don't even know are there (this happens every year, names emerge that were never admitted to).

It's not wrong to want to know more

Thomas Jefferson said: "Whenever the people are well-informed, they can be trusted with their own government." And: "If once they [the people] become inattentive to the public affairs, you and I, and Congress, and Assemblies, Judges, and Governors, shall all become wolves."

Without the people's attention to government, government grows fangs; but: "Enlighten the people generally, and tyranny and oppressions of body and mind will vanish like evil spirits at the dawn of day."

And then we have Bilderberg. A massive great, sniper-armed, window-tinted, helicoptering slap in the face to any concept of enlightened democracy. Shrouded, misty and removed. A place where "Congress and Assemblies, Judges, and Governors" sit about in secret and do business with bank bosses and the chairmen of corporations, and policemen stand guard lest the citizenry become too informed.

Bilderberg is a backwards step, heading in wholly the wrong direction when "transparency of government" is something we're all clawing

towards. It's a dinosaur. A childish, irritating dinosaur. It's Godzuki. Bilderberg is the very opposite of a bulwark of a democracy, whatever the opposite of a bulwark is. (A siege engine?) Anyone who wants to be a good Jeffersonian and be part of an enlightened populace must become attentive to public affairs, and should pay particular attention to their public officials when they're skulking about in the mist with big business. And if the press won't pay attention to it, then the citizenry must. Fortunately for all of us, that's exactly what the citizenry are doing.

Enjoy a free internet while you can

Speaking of personality disorders – when Peter Mandelson, who pushed through the digital economy bill, sits down with Keith Alexander – the director of the NSA and head of United States Cyber Command to discuss "Social Networks: Connectivity and Security Issues" you can be pretty sure they aren't hammering out how best to preserve the freedom of the internet.

Add a liberal sprinkling of cyber power in the form of Mark Hughes (Facebook), Eric Schmidt (Google) and Craig Mundie (Microsoft) and you have the perfect formula for a lock-down. Let's hope Neelie Kroes, the European commissioner for digital agenda, got to push her "No Disconnect Strategy". I'd pay good money to have heard the head of the NSA's views on that one.

The Bilderberg website is a disgrace

The Bilderberg summit is a gathering of the richest, most powerful people in the western world. They can afford helicopters, hundreds of police, security personnel, secret servicemen, floodlights, fencing, portacabins, limousines, chauffeurs, chefs, catering, entertainment, and the hire of a massive luxury hotel for an entire week ...

But they spent, what, fifty quid on their web design? Sixty tops. They haven't even proof read it.

Now, it's certainly a good and healthy sign that Bilderberg said a tentative "hello" to the world half-way through last year's meeting with its website, but it just isn't good enough.

For a start, look at the agenda. There are people who say: "Look, Bilderberg is being open and transparent! They've published exactly what they discuss! There's no secrecy here!" Then you look at what they publish.

Here's a snippet:

Conflict Areas, Demographic Challenges, China,

So they discussed "China". Care to be a bit more specific? No – just "China". I wouldn't exactly describe their agenda as "information rich". They might as well have listed: "important stuff; things; other things; areas of interest; topics and assorted other subjects".

But more importantly, the website is full of inaccuracies, gaps, and outright lies. The delegate list is never complete, it's just a list of people who don't mind admitting they've been. Some prefer to keep their names out of

Bilderberg history. (Tony Blair never admitted going, he even lied to parliament about it, although it's well documented that he attended). Then it claims that: "Participants attend Bilderberg in a private and not an official capacity." Just not true. We know from the Treasury that Osborne has been in St Moritz in his official role as chancellor. Then it states:

Bilderberg's only activity is its annual Conference.

But a few moments digging around documents and history books, and you realise how the Bilderberg conference actually works. The annual conference bit, whilst being hugely important, is only the "public" bit of the organisation. The steering committee (which has on it, amongst others, our lord chancellor, Kenneth Clarke MP) meets throughout the year. It's extremely active, but even more secretive still.

For example, see if you can find this 1958 conference of the 'Extended Steering Group' in the official Bilderberg history ...



I notice that Sir Colin Gubbins attended. (Budding historians of Bilderberg, get Googling).

The Swiss love a bit of history

I found that many of the Swiss activists were keen to flag up (often with giant flags) the shady roots of the Bilderberg group. It's perhaps wrong to judge present delegates on Bilderberg's past, but the Swiss seemed particularly attuned to this aspect of the group's history: that it was founded in the early 1950s by Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, a former SS officer and executive in IG Farben's notorious NW7 Berlin espionage centre. That's the IG Farben that manufactured Zyklon B and bankrolled Hitler.

Look to the hosts, and you find Bernhard's daughter Beatrix running Bilderberg, alongside "philanthropist" banker David Rockefeller and the saviour of world football (and wanted war criminal) Henry Kissinger.

Look to the delegates, and inside the same conference you've got two people with the nickname "The Prince of Darkness": Lord Mandelson, and Richard Perle (the Washington uber-hawk). Read up about the chairman of Nestlé. Then read [Jon Ronson's important new book on psychopaths](#).

Ronson has dragged a particular discourse into the mainstream without which it is pretty much impossible to understand what's going on here.

The British press simply isn't doing its job

The Swiss press have been reporting Bilderberg with gusto. Russia Today sent a film crew, the Italian media is here, [Alex Jones](#) sent a team, the Canadian Broadcasting Company are doing interviews, there's even a French journalist somewhere, I'm told.

But from Britain? Not so much.

In 2008, when George Osborne, as a private individual, hangs out in Corfu with a Russian oligarch (Oleg Deripaska), Nat Rothschild and Peter Mandelson, the British press has a field day with the gossip – Mandelson "dripping poison" about Osborne, and allegations that Osborne was grubbing around for party funds.

But in 2011, when Osborne spends four days, in his official role as chancellor of the exchequer, cooped up with Lord Mandelson, a Russian oligarch (Alexei Mordashov), and the former vice-chairman of Rothschild Europe (Franco Bernabè) – along with the president of the World Bank, the president of the European Central Bank, the Greek minister of finance, the queen of Spain, the chairman of Royal Dutch Shell, the governor of the Belgium National Bank, the chairman of Goldman Sachs International, and the chief executive of Marks and Spencer ...

This isn't news.

As you might have noticed by now, I beg to differ.

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