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Emails link Peter Thiel's Palantir and Eric Schmidt's daughter to Facebook's Cambridge Analytica fiasco

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Jim Edwards Mar. 28, 2018, 5:15 AM

Emails indicate that Eric Schmidt's daughter Sophie once suggested that Cambridge Analytica's parent company work with Palantir.

Cambridge Analytica later developed a relationship with a Palantir staffer that produced the idea to use an app to harvest Facebook user data.

Both Cambridge Analytica and Palantir are owned by conservative billionaires who funded Donald Trump's election campaign.

LONDON — Both Peter Thiel's data-mining company Palantir and a daughter of the former Google chairman Eric Schmidt had connections to Cambridge Analytica's misuse of Facebook user information,

according to documents seen by The New York Times

"We learned today that an employee, in 2013-2014, engaged in an entirely personal capacity with people associated with Cambridge Analytica," Palantir told The Times. "We are looking into this and will take the appropriate action."

The employee was Alfredas Chmieliauskas, according to The Times. His LinkedIn shows that he is a business-development staffer at Palantir in London. He suggested that Cambridge Analytica create a personality-quiz app to harvest data from Facebook users, The Times said. Cambridge Analytica eventually used a similar method to obtain data from about 50 million Facebook users it could then sell.

The connection between Palantir and Cambridge Analytica was apparently suggested by Schmidt's daughter Sophie, who had been an intern at SCL Group, a UK-based defense and intelligence contractor that created Cambridge Analytica in 2012. A 2013 email seen by The Times indicated that Sophie Schmidt, who did not respond to the paper's request for comment, urged that SCL work with Palantir:

"Ever come across Palantir. Amusingly Eric Schmidt's daughter was an intern with us and is trying to push

us towards them?" one SCL employee wrote to a colleague in the email.

sophie schmidt

Sophie Schmidt, the daughter of the former Alphabet chairman Eric Schmidt, visiting the Iraqi National Museum in Baghdad in 2009. REUTERS/Thaier Al-Sudani

Cambridge Analytica and Palantir began their relationship in 2014, when Christopher Wylie, the pink-haired Cambridge Analytica cofounder turned whistleblower who testified to Parliament in London this week, visited Palantir's London headquarters in Soho Square with Cambridge Analytica CEO Alexander Nix. The Times said :

"Mr. Chmieliauskas continued to communicate with Mr. Wylie's team in 2014, as the Cambridge employees were locked in protracted negotiations with a researcher at Cambridge University, Michal Kosinski, to obtain Facebook data through an app Mr. Kosinski had built. The data was crucial to efficiently scale up Cambridge's psychometrics products so they could be used in elections and for corporate clients.

"'I had left field idea,' Mr. Chmieliauskas wrote in May 2014. 'What about replicating the work of the cambridge prof as a mobile app that connects to facebook?' Reproducing the app, Mr. Chmieliauskas wrote, 'could be a valuable leverage negotiating with the guy.'"

Nix later tried to work officially with executives at Palantir, but they demurred. Ultimately, Cambridge Analytica pursued the app without Palantir's official help.

The emails will make uncomfortable reading for both companies.

Thiel is a Facebook board member and a conservative libertarian with a dystopian view of the future who funded Donald Trump's US presidential campaign. He became a billionaire through a series of tech investments including PayPal and Facebook.

Cambridge Analytica was founded by Robert Mercer, the conservative billionaire hedge fund creator who has also funded Trump and Breitbart News, the right-wing media group that is often accused of publishing misleading stories.

Cambridge Analytica is now the subject of criminal investigations in both the UK and the US over its role in the 2016 US presidential election and the Brexit referendum in the UK. The company has made contradictory statements about its alleged role persuading British people to vote to leave the European Union .

SEE ALSO: All the times Cambridge Analytica gave

brazenly contradictory accounts of its murky work on Brexit

FC37 213 points · 4 months ago

That guy's name hasn't come up NEARLY enough through any of this Facebook-CA-GOP story. There are a ton of reasons he deserves an extra long look here.

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itzprospero 141 points · 4 months ago · edited 4 months ago

They knew what was going on.

It was exposed that [Palantir worked with Cambridge Analytica on the Facebook data it acquired](#) ^[1]

Thiel is on Facebook's board and "Zuckerberg has continually defended Thiel's presence on Facebook's governing body as vital to the company, a balancing presence to stop the site from sliding too far in any one political direction." ^[2] Thiel helped lead a meeting to calm down conservatives that believed they were being "censored" including: Glenn Beck, Tucker Carlson, Dana Perino, and leaders from the Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute. ^[2]

Remember when - [Facebook Threw a Swanky Inauguration Party With Garbage Website The Daily Caller](#) ^[3] This party boasted a guests including: Laura Ingraham, Benny Johnson, Matt Boyle, Grover Norquist, Scooter Libby, and Martin Shkreli, who previously ran around with Alt-Right trolls and offered to bail out 4chan by joining it's board of directors. ^[4]

Also

The Paradise Papers reveal Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook's connection to Russian tech investor Yuri Milner - also funded Cadre, a startup that Jared Kushner co-founded and left off his security clearance forms. ^{[5][6]} Nothing definitive, but another Trump/Russia/Facebook.

Cadre is also in Peter Thiel's portfolio. ^[7] Thiel, who was part of the Trump transition team, gained a role following his donation of more than a million dollars to Trump's campaign within days of the Billy Bush tape release. ^[8]

Bannon said of Thiel:

"I cannot overstate his impact on the transition," Bannon began, describing Thiel as a hidden hand in shaping Team Trump. "You will see in the near term that Peter will be taking on new responsibilities, like intelligence." While Trump and his communications squad may rail about Washington's permanent bureaucracy, especially those in national-security positions, Bannon talked about having been in the trenches alongside Thiel as part of an offensive against the so-called Deep State"^[7] Although he doesn't have an official post, Peter Thiel's company Palantir was just awarded a \$876 million U.S. Army contract. ^[9]

AND

Facebook knew Cambridge Analytica had been abusing user data for *three years* and only suspended them when confronted. ^[10]

The finishing touches for this weird twist of characters some when Michael Cohen presented his side of the Stormy Daniel's story in [Vanity Fair](#) ^[^11]

In another Trumpian twist, **Charles Harder—the attorney best known for representing Hulk Hogan in his lawsuit against Gawker (Thiel helped sue and won)—is handling the case on behalf of Trump.** —————

1. [CNBC - Palantir worked with Cambridge Analytica on the Facebook data it acquired](#)
2. [NY Mag - Is Peter Thiel Playing Mark Zuckerberg?](#)
3. [Gizmodo - Facebook Threw a Swanky Inauguration Party With Garbage Website The Daily Caller](#)
4. [Salon - Pharma bro Martin Shkreli — of course — offers to bail out financially troubled 4chan](#)
5. [The Guardian - Russia funded Facebook and Twitter investments through Kushner investor](#)
6. [Newsweek - Jared Kushner hid one of his companies on a disclosure form - then profited](#)
7. [Vanity Fair - Is Trump Mulling Peter Thiel For A Top Intelligence Advisory Post?](#)
8. [The Verge - Peter Thiel is joining Donald Trump's transition team](#)
9. [Bloomberg - Peter Thiel's Palantir Wins \\$876 Million U.S. Army Contract](#)

10. [Quartz - Facebook knew Cambridge Analytica was misusing users' data three years ago and only banned the company this week](#)
11. [Vanity Fair - "I have never threatened her in any way": Michael Cohen offers his side of the Stormy Daniels saga](#)

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[deleted] 74 points · 4 months ago

And Peter Thiel is also an investor in Reddit.

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[stufen1](#) 50 points · 4 months ago

In October 2014, Reddit raised \$50 million in a funding round led by Sam Altman and including investors Marc Andreessen, Peter Thiel, Ron Conway, Snoop Dogg, and Jared Leto.[8] Their investment saw the company valued at \$500 million at the time.[9][10] In July 2017, Reddit raised an additional round of \$200 million at a \$1.8 billion valuation, with Advance Publications remaining the majority stakeholder.[11]

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reddit>

Posting a source in case anyone is interested.

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[Puripnon](#) 44 points · 4 months ago

Y Combinator previously too, which is why Hacker News can't keep anything up about Vlad Thiel for more than 2 minutes. He has basically used the money he lucked into to push his anti-enlightenment techno-elitism as some sort of heterodox thought. Rather than arguing it, which to be fair he does, though not so openly now, he pays for it to be spread by others. He also applied pressure financially and legally to suppress stories. His contempt for free speech is remarkable.

He's such a movie villain that it's almost a cliché.

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[_Discofunk_](#) 4 points · 4 months ago

Thiel was offered an investment deal by the New Zealand government, courtesy of the taxpaying public.

Our shady conservative government at the time offered a deal where the government would put in around \$9 million, and Thiel would put in \$7 million.

NZVIF's 2016 Annual Report, shows the since-abandoned clause allowed Thiel to take-over the fund for a nominal price if its investments did well, meaning profits would be privatised, while **taxpayers were still exposed if it tanked.**

Thiel made \$30 million off his \$7 million investment. The taxpayer barely broke even.

New Zealand only has *two* daily newspapers. Both of those companies are trying to merge, meaning we would have the same number of broadsheet outlets as North Korea. Journalism isn't our strong suit and more needs to be done to uncover Thiel's shady business dealings here.

New Zealand after all, is a tax haven for foreign investors - many global billionaires have their boltholes here, not that the public would know about it. Thiel was offered citizenship after spending just 12 days in the country.

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[Puripnon](#) 2 points · 4 months ago

He needs a fallback country for after he tanks America.

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[_Discofunk_](#) 3 points · 4 months ago

Well you don't buy a billion dollar safe house in the middle of fucking nowhere because you think things are going swimmingly.

That's what is so hilarious. They want *the peasants* to have faith in a system they've already bet against. Like any good Ponzi scheme.

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[gilthanan](#) 2 points · 4 months ago

Y combinator has invested in more than 1500 companies. You can link them to anything at this point.

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FC37 3 points · 4 months ago

That's an excuse? Hey, Deutsche Bank gives out a ton of loans every year, you can tie them to anything! Skadden Arps represents so many officials and governments, an issue like this was BOUND to happen eventually!

"We give money to everyone" is not going to hold up in court if and when it comes out that you're laundering money or investing in shady people for shady purposes.

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gilthanan 0 points · 4 months ago · *edited 4 months ago*

Are you joking? Do I need to show you all the times Duetsche Bank alone did that exact thing and paid a small fine and walked away like nothing happened?

And really, Y Combinator is a glorified Shark Tank. If you looked at who they invested in and how much they invest you'd realize how paranoid you sound right now. Nobody from Y Combinator is going to court.

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FC37 0 points · 4 months ago

You're responsible for doing due diligence on who you're investing in: full. stop.

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gilthanan 0 points · 4 months ago

Show me where they didn't then buddy. Your speculation means nothing in the court of law. Full. Stop.

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FC37 0 points · 4 months ago

I'm not saying they have. I'm saying if they had, your excuse is bullshit. Volume is not a defense, just ask Countrywide.

Shar

[4esop](#) 6 points · 4 months ago

We all need to stop investing in him.

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[seejordan3](#) 3 points · 4 months ago

So what's an alternative, high-IQ, low-troll discussion board on the news? My partner loves the NYTimes comments.. But, I've been down on the times lately for what IMHO is a big shift to the right.

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[deleted] 4 points · 4 months ago

I wish I knew. I would quit this site in a heartbeat.

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[arandomusernameblah](#) 9 points · 4 months ago

Glad to see that poppinKream guy's format is spreading. I do like me some citations.

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[Sprewell_Choke_Job](#) 10 points · 4 months ago

Another note on Yuri Milner, he is a Russian Billionaire investor with hundreds of millions of dollars from the Kremlin in his company. Facebook and Twitter were literally partially funded by Kremlin money.

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/05/world/yuri-milner-facebook-twitter-russia.html>

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[gilthanan](#) 5 points · 4 months ago

It almost like of you set up your corporate structure so that anyone can enter and them let those corporations grow so large they can threaten your national security it creates a wide gaping fucking hole. It's not like the Russians haven't been trialing shutting down our electric grid already...

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[ElephantTeeth](#) America 7 points · 4 months ago · *edited 3 months ago*

On a side note, Palantir [is trying to sell their shit to the United States IC and failing](#). They lost a big bid, and then threw temper tantrums, and then sued the government for not picking them. Harmful, since it stalls the adoption of any updates, not just Palantir's. Not exactly a good way to make allies and build partnerships in the industry.

The article I linked is accurate for the first half - it outlines the (decidedly imperfect) system and why Palantir is acting like a bull in a China shop. In the article's second half, though, the author alleges that Trump is going to save us from the swamp -- What? Given Thiel's involvement with the election, this is the definition of swamp.

Peter Thiel is trying to circumvent the system by cronying up to Trump and having him force the issue.

EDIT: oh wait. After years of failing their bids/appeals, guess who won the contract.

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[objectivedesigning](#) 3 points · 4 months ago

Perhaps we are seeing one side of the military-industrial-complex being exposed.

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[Testiclese](#) 3 points · 4 months ago

Basically, our Democracy has been "hacked". We are all pawns now - all of our opinions, all of our beliefs - finely tuned and controlled by people who understand machine learning and data mining - to get us to "vote" in whatever stooge/puppet they need who'll ensure their continuing power grab.

It's a fucking circus.

Hey - 2nd amendment guardians of freedom - you're sleeping on the fucking job.

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[FC37](#) 2 points · 4 months ago

Exactly. There's even more beyond this, but exactly zero of it has reached the MSM's radar. Even Thiel's "friends" are

terrified of him, and he made an example of Gawker. The media treats him and his with the softest of gloves.

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Vagrant_Charlatan 43 points · 4 months ago

Ha the guy who came up with the Facebook harvesting idea has his Linked-in page summary title as:

"i fix or break large things"

...like one of the top 5 most valuable companies in the country and the entire United States electoral system?

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charmed_im-sure 17 points · 4 months ago

if you follow the money, it's shake and bake and they all helped. even flynn, seems he helped drum up business.

<https://pbs.twimg.com/media/C9QnzlsXsAENsI5.jpg:large>

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Asiriya 1 point · 4 months ago

Jesus fuck, where is that from? I guess we're Faux News now, but with more sensible lines, and a hell of lot more of them.

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Nebulious 0 points · 4 months ago

Someone worked really hard on that chart. Too bad it's unreadable and has zero sources.

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MoonBatsRule 33 points · 4 months ago

Because the owners, the owners of this country don't want that. I'm talking about the real owners now, the BIG owners! The Wealthy... the REAL owners! The big wealthy business interests that control things and make all the important decisions. ... They don't care about you at all... at all... AT ALL. And nobody seems to notice. Nobody seems to care. That's what the owners count on. The fact that Americans will probably remain willfully ignorant of the big red, white and

blue dick that's being jammed up their assholes everyday, because the owners of this country know the truth.

It's called the American Dream, because you have to be asleep to believe it.

-- [George Carlin](#)

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[6FootDwarf](#) [Ohio](#) 26 points · 4 months ago

Anyone else not surprised that something called "Palantir" being linked to something nefarious?

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[dannyygwp](#) [Connecticut](#) 25 points · 4 months ago

I was waiting for someone to point this out. This is like Cosmic levels of irony! The palantir were notoriously used by Sauron to paint incomplete truths to twist people to his whims! Both Sarumon and the steward of Gondor were corrupted by the visions shown in the palantir!

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[SonOfBears](#) 8 points · 4 months ago

That's not irony, that's their corporate motto.

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[dannyygwp](#) [Connecticut](#) 11 points · 4 months ago

The irony is that in the end the palantir fails because Aragorn uses them to draw Sauron into a battle before his armies are ready to crush the last alliance of men and elves. So it would be really ironic if this leads to the downfall of these powerful people...

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Comment deleted 4 months ago (1 child)

[19djafoij02](#) [Florida](#) 8 points · 4 months ago

Morningstar is the name of a major funds/finance website. It's also the name of Satan.

[Share](#) [Save](#)

[fitzgizzle](#) 3 points · 4 months ago

Seriously, does Celebrimbor know about this one?

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[VTvalleymom](#) 11 points · 4 months ago

Didn't Peter Thiel buy New Zealand citizenship the day after Trump got elected?

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[deleted] 91 points · 4 months ago · *edited 4 months ago*

Fuck. Hitler was right. There's a rootless international clique working to undermine society. He was only wrong on one account: it's not the Jews, it's rich people. A global oligarchy.

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[ButterflySammy](#) Great Britain 48 points · 4 months ago

Think about it - who do you think got the idea of a "deep state" out there and why? You think that came into the public discourse entirely organically?

The people like Cambridge Analytica who personally boasted of influencing 200 elections around the globe, through bribery, blackmail and propaganda - a literal description of what the deep state does.

They got the news out ahead of them being revealed and pointed the finger at the very people who would be investigating them to boot.

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[deleted] 13 points · 4 months ago

I dunno about any of that, I just like getting upvotes on posts that start with "Hitler was right".

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[FrankTank3](#) Pennsylvania 2 points · 4 months ago

"Hitler got *one* thing wrong"

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[azsqueeze](#) 3 points · 4 months ago

Yo I've been saying the same. Why is it mostly rich people shouting about the "deep state". If they have so much

money it shouldn't fucking matter to them.

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[19djafoij02](#) Florida 7 points · 4 months ago

Rich yanks and their followers in China, Russia, the UK, and the EU among others have basically used antisemitic propaganda as a self-help manual.

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[emanresu_tcerrocni](#) 7 points · 4 months ago

Surprise? Google is also in on it.

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[BigNickDipples](#) 16 points · 4 months ago

James Bond Quantum of Solace got it right, except it wasn't water they were after, it was data.

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[beingsubmitted](#) 13 points · 4 months ago

Geostorm (2017) got it right, except it wasn't the weather they controlled, it was opinions.

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[hanibalicious](#) 21 points · 4 months ago

Babe pig in the city got it right, only instead of Mickey Rooney almost dying and being put on life support, it's democracy.

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[beingsubmitted](#) 8 points · 4 months ago

Batman Forever got it right, except instead of keeping people mindlessly glued their screens while extracting all their deepest thoughts and secrets, they were... wait no, Batman Forever had it pretty well nailed.

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[elevendayempire](#) 5 points · 4 months ago

James Bond's Spectre got it right, and it *was* [data they were after]

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spectre_\(2015_film\)#Plot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spectre_(2015_film)#Plot)).

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[Makewhatyouwant](#) 5 points · 4 months ago

The Deep Pockets State.

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[CeciNestPasUnGulag](#) 5 points · 4 months ago

So what you're really saying is that Marx and Lenin were right...

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[emanresu_tcerrocni](#) 3 points · 4 months ago

Their methods were just unpalatable.

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[CeciNestPasUnGulag](#) 2 points · 4 months ago

I see nothing wrong with Marx's methods. He was totally in line with the spirit and practice of mid-19th century revolutionaries.

Lenin was perhaps a bit too aggressive, given that the Tsar was already toppled by the time Hindenburg and Ludendorff put him on the train from Geneva to Moscow.

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[Testiclese](#) 2 points · 4 months ago

Their time table was off.

The Earth's population will increase by another 3 billion people in the next 50 years or so. Most of those people will be in Africa/Asia, and climate change will push them to migrate to Europe/US. You can't keep all of them out, and our current economic models, which rely on growth, will ensure a lot of them will end up coming here - our populations will be aging/old, migrants will be predominantly young.

Most of them are not doctors/engineers - they'll put pressure on the lower end of the market - blue-collar jobs - which by then will already be few and far between in developed countries due to automation.

It's a ticking time bomb. Our current "troubles" are just a small taste of what's to come.

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[19djafoij02](#) Florida 1 point · 4 months ago

And most of them are within three handshakes of Wall Street.

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[TheLastGracchus](#) 5 points · 4 months ago

Who would ever have guessed that literal vampire Peter Thiel was up to something nefarious.

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[Schiffy94](#) New York 3 points · 4 months ago

That's major Reddit investor Peter Thiel.

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[skanman19](#) New York 3 points · 4 months ago

SaVe ThE ShIrE

Share Save

[sthIm soul](#) 3 points · 4 months ago

"... Christopher Wylie, the pink-haired Cambridge Analytica cofounder..."

Wylie has now been upgraded to CA "cofounder"? What's the angle??

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[theoretical_hipster](#) 2 points · 4 months ago

Drain the swamp!

Share Save

[rockforahead](#) 2 points · 4 months ago

By the way if anyone hasn't read Eric Schmidt's book "The New Digital Age" then it's a must read, I think it was 2015 - he lays out the blueprint for how this sort of attack will work.

The New Digital Age: Reshaping the Future of People, Nations and

Business https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/184854622X/ref=cm_sw_r_cp_api_zk-UAb0V4FMZK

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RosemaryFocaccia 2 points · 4 months ago

Sounds like a desperate stretch to try and link it to Google.

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footshred 0 points · 4 months ago · *edited 4 months ago*

I have a feeling the Bilderbergs wanted Trump to win, so they could move forward on their one world government. One of the steps outlined for this to happen was that the US must fall from being a superpower.

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imagepoem 3 points · 4 months ago

Did the wacky conspiracy also involve spellcheck?

Share Save

footshred 2 points · 4 months ago · *edited 4 months ago*

This isn't something you should be downplaying. It's pretty likely, considering all these successful tech leaders (with enormous power over the distribution of information) have been invited to the same meetings to discuss "things."

Sure, they may not call their plans a "new world order" (although this phrase has actually been used by powerful people), but it's painfully obvious to anyone with common sense to realize that rich and powerful people think they should reign over those below them. This is one of the biggest constants of our history as human beings. Every time someone or some group gets too much power, they feel the need to rule. You can't argue this, it happens literally every single time. Why is today any different?

Like global warming, there will be people who don't believe it, but will make fun of those who do. Actively trying to discredit it as "something only crazy people believe," you might be doing serious harm unintentionally. I don't fully believe in the Illuminati (or whatever an elite group wanting to control the world might call themselves), but I do think we should keep our guard up instead of apathetically letting

questionable things happen all around us. It's better to be proactive than reactive.

And for the record, I use my phone to comment sometimes. And I don't use my spellcheckers, because only pedantic cretins use something like a typo to discredit someone's message.

Share Save

[imagepoem](#) 2 points · 4 months ago

And I don't use my spellcheckers, because only pedantic cretins use something like a typo to discredit someone's message.

Or maybe I'm on the Bilderberg payroll.

Share Save

[footshred](#) 1 point · 4 months ago · *edited 4 months ago*

There are too many people who discredit warning signs (out of either ignorance or apathy) for me to think you are any different. If I see evidence that you are going far beyond what those people do, then I might believe you're being paid. But until then, I just think you're one of those who've jumped on the "every conspiracy is false" bandwagon.

I actually don't believe in many conspiracies, but this one is highly probable considering our past. It's human nature to want to control others, and it has happened more often than it has not happened. History is your friend.

Share Save