

Palantir Technologies: A “CIA-backed startup”

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Statements by whistleblower Christopher Wylie to the parliamentary Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee on alleged activities by Cambridge Analytica were given wide coverage in the British media, especially the *Guardian*.

Allegations that Cambridge Analytica—which backed Donald Trump in the 2016 Presidential election—received Facebook data collected without users’ consent raise serious democratic issues. The campaign against it, however, has nothing to do with redressing these concerns.

This is made clear by the far more damaging allegation made by Wylie to the select committee that has largely been passed over to date.

The WWSW has reported on the real pedigree of Cambridge Analytica’s parent company, the behavioural research and strategic communication company, SCL.

Asked by the parliamentary select committee if there were other data companies operating similarly to Cambridge Analytica, Wylie specifically cited the data analysis giant Palantir Technologies.

“We actually had several meetings with Palantir,” Wylie said. “There were senior Palantir employees that were also working on the Facebook data. That was not an official contract between Palantir and CA, but there were Palantir staff who would come into the office and work on the data. And we would go and meet with Palantir staff at Palantir.”

To the extent that his statement received coverage, it is due to the fact that Palantir was founded by another pro-Trump oligarch, Peter Thiel, founder of PayPal and a member of Facebook’s board of directors.

But the relations between Palantir—as with other social media corporations—and the US deep state have largely been passed over in silence.

So close are the connections between the data firm and the US state that in July 2017, the *Guardian* itself described Palantir as a “CIA-backed startup.”

The CIA’s venture capital branch, In-Q-Tel, was one of the first investors in the company when it was launched by Thiel in 2004. This was one year after the illegal invasion of Iraq, and Palantir played a major role in the so-called “counterterror” strategies employed by the Pentagon to occupy the country and quash opposition.

Palantir’s clients include a disproportionate number of US military, state and intelligence agencies. They include the CIA, National Security Agency, FBI, Homeland Security, the Defence Intelligence Agency and National Counterterrorism Centre, through to various police departments.

In 2013, *Forbes* listed Palantir’s advisers as including Condoleezza Rice, US secretary of state under President George W. Bush, and former CIA Director George Tenet.

According to documents leaked by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden, Palantir was instrumental in the mass illegal spying activities undertaken by Washington’s global surveillance network, Prism.

Palantir’s data-gathering services were also retained by Britain’s GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters) spying agency as well as the Five Eyes intelligence alliance between the US, UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.



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