



# Here's how Epstein broke the internet

His meeting with the founder of 4chan and his quest to profit off the end of democracy

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I spent most of my 20s covering what we now call the global populism wave. I got my start in newsrooms writing 4chan explainers and trawling through school shooter manifestos and eventually that work took me around the world.

I followed far-right soccer hooligan Tommy Robinson as he marched through the streets of London in the weeks leading up to Brexit, monitored 4chan users in France and Germany as they tried to hijack their respective elections, attended Facebook's election party in Rome, interviewed Bolsominion YouTubers in Brazil, went to Estonia to learn about how the country was protecting itself from Russian-led disinformation campaigns, and even went back to the source, interviewing Japanese bloggers in Tokyo about 2chan, or Futaba Channel, the site that inspired 4chan.

I had a front row seat to the collapse of the global order. And I believed at the time that I understood what was going on. In the aftermath of the Great Recession, far-right extremists, aided and amplified by Russia's

influenced the unthinking algorithms on larger platforms like Facebook and YouTube. But there were always holes in that explanation that I could never quite account for. A feeling — one that can be quite dangerous for a journalist trying not fall into the void of conspiracy theories — that there was something bigger going on. And while I can't say that we have the complete story yet, it does increasingly feel like I was actually, without knowing it, following Jeffrey Epstein around the world the whole time.

Based off the newest tranche of emails and texts released by the Justice Department this weekend, Epstein, at the very least, *believed* that he was orchestrating the downfall of the global order in the 2010s. In June 2016, he emailed venture capitalist, early Facebook investor, and Palantir founder Peter Thiel, writing, "Brexit, just the beginning." He then laid out the most succinct mission statement we currently have for what Epstein was trying to accomplish. "Return to tribalism," he wrote. "Counter to globalization. Amazing new alliances. You and I both agreed zero interest rates were too high, and as I said in your office. Finding things on their way to collapse was much easier than finding the next bargain."

Epstein's messages give us a glimpse, one we were never meant to see, of a shadowy world of international espionage, deregulated finance, far-right politics, eugenicist race science, information warfare, and unfathomably intricate human trafficking networks. Epstein wanted to break the internet and, eventually, democracy, to cover his tracks and cash in on the chaos. Here's everything we know so far about how he planned to do it.



# World Of Warcraft And The Downfall Of Democracy

Based on the documents we have access to, these were twin obsessions for Epstein: Manipulating what we see online and finding digital alternatives to traditional finance. During the last years of his life, these two ideas would dovetail into one project — building a far-right takeover of Europe with Steven Bannon.

Following his 2008 conviction for soliciting prostitution of a child, Epstein spent a considerable amount of time managing his online reputation. In 2013, he had a list of instructions for managing his digital footprint that were meant to be forwarded to “the new SEO tech person.” And a 2014 invoice shows that he was spending \$1,000 a month to “reinforce positive listings.”

In November 2010, he received an email from visual artist Al Seckel, with the subject line, “Hacking wiki again.” Seckel said he was fighting with Wikipedia editors about whether or not Epstein’s page should be included in the site’s “sex offender” category. Seckel also claimed that he was recording the IP addresses of editors that pushed back, “hacked the site to block them.”

Bannon first enters the picture when Epstein took an interest in *World of Warcraft*. Epstein was close with Brock Pierce, cryptocurrency entrepreneur, who co-founded the stablecoin Tether. In 2001, Pierce founded Internet Gaming Entertainment, or IGE, a company that tried to build a trading market for in-game currency for video games like WoW. In 2007, Pierce was replaced at IGE by Bannon. And in November 2016, Epstein’s long-time accountant Richard Kahn emailed Epstein a *WIRED* article about Bannon’s role at IGE.

In-game currency, especially, was a fixation for him. He emailed former Activision CEO Bobby Kotick in May 2013 a long diatribe about using virtual items and in-game currency to “co-opt the existing video game industry” and replace replace traditional education. (He seemed to think you could inspire kids to learn better by gamifying it.)

Journalist Michael Wolff, who advised Epstein on media strategy, would formally connect Bannon and Epstein in October 2017, two days after *The New York Times* published the investigation into director Harvey Weinstein, which jumpstarted the #MeToo movement. Bannon and Epstein would message often about #MeToo, referring to it by its other name, “Time’s Up.” At one point, the two men brainstormed how to use cryptocurrency to fund a “populist/nationalist coalition” that could “stave off ‘Time’s Up’ for next decade plus.”

And it seems like both Bannon and Epstein had already, independently, figured out the perfect place to build that coalition: 4chan.

## Epstein Met Moot

One of the central internet mysteries of the last 15 years is why 4chan creator Christopher Poole reversed course in 2011 and brought back the site’s politics board, which is called /pol/, or “Politically Incorrect.” It would become the staging ground for Gamergate, the 2016 Trump campaign, and the far-right populism wave that swept the world in the back half of the 2010s.

2010, when Poole launched /new/, largely as a way to quarantine the overwhelming amount of support on the site for Ron Paul's 2008 presidential campaign. Poole shutdown /new/ in January 2011, telling users at the time, "As for /new/, anybody who used it knows exactly why it was removed. When I re-added the board last year, I made a note that if it devolved into /stormfront/, I'd remove it." (Stormfront is one of the oldest Neo-Nazi communities on the web.)

So it has never made much sense as to why Poole would ban /new/ for being a racist hell hole and then, barely a year later, launch /pol/, a board specifically designed to be a racist hell hole. But buried inside the newest batch of files related to the Epstein investigation is a possible hint as to what made Poole change his mind. He met with Epstein the day before /pol/ was created.

On October 20th, 2011, Boris Nikolic, a venture capitalist and former advisor to Bill Gates, sent Epstein the Wikipedia page for Christopher Poole, writing, "There is a cool guy (KID) that you should meet." Four days later, Nikolic followed up, asking Epstein, "How did you like moot? He is very sensitive so be gentle." (Poole's username for years was moot or m00t.) "I liked [him a lot]. I drove him home, he is very bright," Epstein replied. Nikolic went on to write that, "he will be a friend" and that he is "one of the greatest hackers."

According to Epstein's emails, that appears to be the only time Epstein successfully made contact with Poole. It seems like organizing a simple lunch meeting with Poole was a genuine nightmare for Epstein and his team. Nikolic said he planned to meet Poole again in early November. And according to a reminder Epstein set, it seems like he planned to meet Poole at the same time. There's also a separate email thread from October 31st with an unidentified correspondent, where the redacted sender takes credit for introducing Nikolic and Poole, writing, "I introduced Boris to Chris Poole and got them talking, encouraged Boris to get to know him. Boris said the two of you really hit it off. ;)" Epstein had subsequent meetings scheduled with Poole on November 23rd, January 27th, 2012, which Poole canceled last minute, and, again, in February. There are nearly a hundred emails going back and forth about how Poole kept flaking on them.

But Epstein didn't forget about 4chan. We can't say for sure if he was an active user, but, in 2017, he sent Karyna Shuliak, his girlfriend at the time, a 4chan link containing *Five Nights At Freddy's* porn.

Meanwhile in March 2012, Bannon, following the death of conservative blogger Andrew Breitbart, was installed as the editor-in-chief of *Breitbart News*. In 2014, 4chan's video game board, /v/, and /pol/ started lighting up about the Gamergate conspiracy theory. Milo Yiannopoulos, then a young tech writer for *Breitbart*, would transform Gamergate from fringe message board drama into the cornerstone of the global far-right movement by repackaging it in articles optimized for Facebook traffic.

Which was perfect timing, because Epstein was beginning to work his way into Silicon Valley.

## **The International Pedophile Cabal Also Thought Elon Musk Was A Loser**

Epstein was not always a creature of the internet. In 2010, Hollywood producer Barry Josephson asked

In one of the hundreds of newly released emails between Epstein and Elon Musk, Musk introduced Epstein to Google DeepMind CEO Demis Hassabis. It's unclear if the two ever formally communicated, but Epstein continued to keep tabs on Hassabis. As for Musk, contrary to what he's been saying for the last few years, he was a regular presence in Epstein's inbox. Musk's daughter corroborated some of the details about Musk's interactions with Epstein after the new emails came to light. But seems like Musk was mostly a path towards bigger fish.

In 2012, Epstein asked British investor Ian Osborne to set up a meeting between him and Thiel and "zuckerberg." Osborne also tried to connect Epstein with Apple's Tim Cook. And in 2013, Epstein was recorded telling former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak that he should try and work with Palantir.

However, the earliest actual emails between Epstein and Thiel released so far are from 2014. In an email in July 2015, Epstein connected Thiel with Sergey Belyakov, Russia's the deputy minister of economic development, and alleged Russian intelligence operative. In an email to Thiel a month after that, Epstein alludes to a visit at his Zorro Ranch in New Mexico. In 2015, Epstein told medical researcher and author Peter Attia — who was just named as a new CBS contributor by Bari Weiss (whose wife Nellie Bowles also corresponded with Epstein) — that he was having dinner with "Musk, Thiel, [and] Zuckerberg." And in 2016, Epstein offered to share the expenses for Thiel's lawsuit against *Gawker*, which would eventually bankrupt the outlet.

During this time, Epstein was trying to worm his way into the world of science and technology by using his connections to then-Director of MIT Media Lab Joi Ito, former Harvard president Larry Summers, and LinkedIn co-founder Reid Hoffman (who Osborne in an email refers to as "Fatty"). Ito emailed Epstein in 2015 to tell him that he "used gift funds to underwrite" the Media Lab's management of Bitcoin's core software. Epstein was also an early investor in Coinbase. Oh, and, in July 2013, Ito also showed Epstein what an anime waifu body pillow was.

And then, Epstein's dreams of statecraft were supercharged when he finally officially met Bannon in 2017.

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**From:** Joichi Ito [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 4, 2013 2:19 AM  
**To:** Jeffrey Epstein  
**Subject:** Dakimakura - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

<http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dakimakura>

# Epstein's Electioneering

Thanks to Russia's notorious troll farm, the Internet Research Agency, the success of huge social platforms like Facebook and YouTube, and the frenzy of the Trump campaign in the US and Brexit in the UK, Epstein's interest in overt statecraft went into overdrive. Rather than the more traditional espionage he was believed to be engaged in before the social media boom. But it's important to note that he was not some kind of political mastermind.

Based on the emails to which we currently have access to, populist politics, online disinformation, cyber warfare, and cryptocurrency were all just scaffolding for his work as a financier and sex trafficker. A way to destabilize the global order, make connections with the world's elites, and continue enriching himself and preying on vulnerable young girls. Reading through his messages, it's clear that he was someone who was learning to speak the language of social media and far-right populism at the same time everyone else was.

In 2014, a redacted correspondent suggested he read the work of a far-right Russian philosopher. In 2015, Epstein allegedly started funding a French-language white nationalist YouTube channel. And he and Bannon were plotting a far-right blitz on Europe's upcoming elections.

In March 2018, Bannon bragged that he was now "advisor" to far-right Italian politician Matteo Salvini, Germany's far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, and UK Brexiteer Nigel Farage. He also said that he could pressure them to "shut down" any crypto legislation or "anything else we want."

In July 2018, Epstein told Bannon that he was "wrestling" with how to get a team of hackers for Bannon, and wanted to use a zero-day exploit to target crypto wallets and voting booths. And in another email that month, Epstein also alleged that Marine Le Pen's far-right Front National party was financed by Russia.

And over the next six months the men continued to scheme with each other over text. In March 2019, Rød-Larsen texted Epstein, "Trying to lift [Shinzo] Abe on world stage as key to [Brazil's Jair] Bolsonaro, Orbán, Salvini." And Epstein texted Bannon, "Now at the pyramid," referring to the Louvre Pyramid, "With the entire government. What are your plans?"

## Unanswered Questions

Were Epstein and Bannon really building a crypto-funded far-right coalition of pro-Russian dictators across Europe? Or were they just LARPing as kingmakers with each other over email? And does the distinction even matter if other powerful figures seemed to believe in their project?

It is nearly impossible to not get pulled deeper down the rabbit hole while reading through Epstein's emails. Because, whether or not he did directly influence elections across the globe, he was trying to. And he had the means and the access to believe he could. But even if we stick to what we know from previous investigations and what can see in his newly-released emails, the reality, stated plainly, is, frankly, insane.

But those are the facts.

Epstein, possibly the most prolific sex trafficker in human history, spent the last decade of his life investing in technology that would help Russia, as he wrote in a 2013 email, “leapfrog the global community by reinventing the financial system of the 21st century.” He was fascinated by websites like 4chan and technology like Bitcoin and was personally invested in the success of far-right politicians in the US and Europe. He believed he was months away from ushering in a new world order that would allow him to continue with his monstrous passion projects, like creating a super-race of children with his own DNA and building fascist nation states to manage overpopulation and climate collapse. And he wined and dined the world’s most powerful men (none of whom seemed to have an issue with these ideas), inviting them to his island and his ranch, and made sure they were surrounded by an endless supply of young girls. And I’m just not sure what we’re supposed to do with that knowledge.

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00 00 1 day ago

Russia Russia Russia, and just a single mention of Israel's PM. No mentions of the Mossad associations, just more Russia.

Cmon.

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TT 1 day ago

I never finished reading it because I couldn't get past all the sad sex scenes, but this sounds like the secret CIA self-enrichment scheme from Norman Mailer's "Harlot's Ghost".

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Chris W 1 day ago

What's crazy is, no matter how much I learn about this guy, more questions are raised. How was he able to meet all these people and get all this stuff to happen in the first place? Who tf was this guy?

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A T 1 day ago

"Bannon first enters the picture when Epstein took an interest in World of Warcraft." What a sentence. Great piece as always!

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