

The National Endowment for Democracy (NED), An Instrument of “Regime Change” Financed by Wall Street

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Using a front to hide illegal or immoral activities has been a feature of human criminality since the beginning of human civilization itself. Facades, both ideological and economical, have helped criminal enterprises conceal the true nature of their activities for centuries.

In ages past, organized religion would often take systems of legitimate philosophy and spirituality, and transform them into a means of organizing the masses for the benefit of an elite few, often those heading empires, kingdoms, or nation-states. More recently, patriotism and now the notion of “democracy” have been used successfully by similar cadres of special interests to conceal their self-serving agendas behind notions likely to recruit support from large segments of a population that would otherwise be disinterested.

There is no example of this more transparent than that of the US National Endowment for Democracy (NED). According to [its own website](#), it claims:

The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) is a private, nonprofit foundation dedicated to the growth and strengthening of democratic institutions around the world. Each year, NED makes more than 1,200 grants to support the projects of non-governmental groups abroad who are working for democratic goals in more than 90 countries.

“The growth and strengthening of democratic institutions around the world” sounds noble enough. One would expect, then, that the NED would be led by a collection of some of the most notable activists involved in the empowerment of “the people.” Instead, upon NED’s board of directors, we find people representing corporate-financier interests notorious for instead, exploiting and subjugating “the people.”

Unfortunately, for those receiving the millions upon millions of dollars the NED hands out annually to “nongovernmental organizations” (NGOs) around the world, few bother to actually check who it is underwriting their daily activities, and fewer still have the integrity to both turn down the money let alone inform the people they claim to represent just who is attempting to reach into their respective nations and subvert their political systems, and to what end.

Quite literally, each and every member of the NED’s board of directors represents Fortune 500 corporations, insidious corporate-financier funded policy think-tanks, and a wide variety of other obvious conflicts of interest unbecoming of an organization truly interested in, “the

growth and strengthening of democratic institutions around the world.”

NED: Who's Who

The worst part of NED's activities worldwide and the fact that allegedly liberal progressive NGOs are taking money from them and aiding and abetting their agenda, is the fact that the background of NED's board of directors is posted directly on NED's *own* website. This means recipients of NED cash either recklessly didn't bother to look into the organization sponsoring them, or simply do not care about the compromised nature of their sponsors.

For example, [Marilyn Carlson Nelson \(NED secretary\)](#) is co-CEO of one of the largest privately held companies in the world, Carlson Holdings operating hotels around the world. She also serves on the board of Exxon Mobil and chairs the U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board. She alone represents such a tangled web of compromising and conflicting interests, it calls into question the integrity and true agenda of NED.

Carlson Nelson's company, Carlson Holdings, deals in hotels, yet she concurrently sits on a government board under [the International Trade Administration](#) which makes decisions and policies on behalf of the US that directly benefits private industry specifically like that of Carlson Holdings. Her position upon Exxon Mobil's board of directors is also troublesome. Exxon, a gargantuan multinational corporation, conducts business around the world and by necessity, requires political (and military) interventions to enter into and overwhelm those few remaining markets it has yet to dominate.

Carlson Nelson's role in the NED, then, could be (and is) easily abused to subvert foreign governments that pose barriers to Carlson Holdings or Exxon, and put into power opposition parties that would deal in favor of such multinationals – all under the guise of *“the growth and strengthening of democratic institutions around the world.”*

Other NED board members representing compromising corporate-financier special interests include [Marne Levine](#) (Facebook, Coo, Instagram), [Mark Ordan \(WP Glimcher – real estate\)](#), and with Carl Gershman, Princeton Lyman, Stephen Sestanovich, and Melanne Verveer serving as members of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) – [a corporate-financier funded](#) think-tank representing the collective economic and geopolitical ambitions of Wall Street, London, and Brussels' most powerful special interests.

The CFR's corporate sponsors include Bank of America, Chevron, Citi, Exxon, Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan, PepsiCo, Shell Oil, Coca-Cola, BP, Google, Lockheed Martin, AT&T, Boeing, Facebook, DynCorp, Northrop Grumman, Pfizer, Raytheon, Microsoft, and Merck – a virtual who's who of abusive special interests plaguing the world with socioeconomic disparity, compromising “free trade” deals, and driving conflicts ranging from “color revolutions” and proxy wars to full-scale invasions and decade-long occupations.

NED – which poses as a liberal-progressive organization – includes a surprising number of right-wing Neoconservatives (Neocons). This includes [Vin Weber](#), a Bush-era Neocon who strongly advocated the invasion and occupation of Iraq – a war now revealed to have been predicated on an intentional lie regarding Iraq's supposed chemical and biological weapons program.

Weber is a partner at [the public strategy firm, Mercury](#). There, he consults and lobbies for multinational corporations, governments, and corporate-funded foundations including

Microsoft, Visa, Pfizer, AT&T, Ebay, the Ford Foundation, pharmaceutical firm Gilead, NBC, the government of Qatar, and many others.

For what reason would NED include a pro-war corporate lobbyist on its board of directors if not for the fact that NED itself is but a facade for carrying out pro-corporate-financier agendas under the guise of promoting “democracy” around the world?

Other Neocons populating NED’s board of directors includes [Elliot Abrams](#), [Francis Fukuyama](#), [Zalmay Khalilzad](#), and [Will Marshall](#). One pro-war Neocon could have been an anomaly – five begins to fit a pattern. It should be noted that NED’s subsidiary, Freedom House, also hosts corporate lobbyists and pro-war Neocons as well, including Kenneth Adelman.

NED Funds Your Local “Pro-Democracy Activists,” But Who Funds NED?

One of NED’s subsidiaries, Freedom House, is [admittedly funded by](#) multinational corporations including AT&T, defense contractors BAE Systems and Northrop Grumman, industrial equipment exporter Caterpillar, tech-giants Google and Facebook, and financiers including Goldman Sachs.

NED itself – [according to a 2013 disclosure \(.pdf\)](#) – is funded by among others, Chevron, Coca-Cola, Goldman Sachs, Google, Microsoft, and the US Chamber of Commerce.

What do these corporations have to do with *“the growth and strengthening of democratic institutions around the world?”*

The US Chamber of Commerce in particular is also heavily involved in post-regime change operations carried out by the US government either through direct military conflict or proxy wars and “color revolutions,” being the first to appear in front of new proxy governments to establish Western corporate-financier hegemony over newly “opened” market space.

NED’s individual donors also are telling. They include Frank Carlucci of the notorious Bush-family linked equity firm, the Carlyle Group. There is also former NED board member [Kenneth Duberstein](#), a board member of defense contractor Boeing, [big oil’s ConocoPhillips](#), and the Mack-Cali Realty Corporation. Duberstein also served as a director of Fannie Mae until 2007. He too is a CFR member [as are two of the companies he chairs, Boeing and ConocoPhillips](#).

Also listed as an individual donor to NED is Neocon Paula Dobriansky – a trustee at NED’s subsidiary Freedom House, as well as former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice who served during the Bush administration.

Supposedly liberal-progress NGOs around the world taking money from corporate-financiers, warmongers, and right-wing ideologues embodies perfectly the notion of a fraudulent front used to conceal criminal intentions under the guise of a noble cause.

How it Works: A Case Study

✖ The Southeast Asian state of Thailand is currently gripped by a long-running political crisis centered around Thailand’s indigenous institutions and political order, and that of US-backed proxy Thaksin Shinawatra. Shinawatra himself was – like NED individual donor Frank Carlucci, a member of the Carlyle Group. Before becoming prime minister in 2001,

Shinawatra would pledge to his friends in the US business community that he would use his office to serve as a “matchmaker” between Wall Street and Thailand’s people and resources.

Upon taking office, he would carry out a series of abusive and unpopular moves including the commitment of Thai troops to America’s illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq, the hosting of the CIA’s abhorrent rendition program on Thai soil, and an attempt to ram through a US-Thai free trade agreement in 2004 without parliamentary approval.

In 2006, Shinawatra would ultimately be ousted from power by the Thai military. Since then, he has been represented by some of the largest lobbying firms in Washington, including by the above mentioned Freedom House trustee Kenneth Adelman. However, that is not the limit to which the NED has helped prop up Shinawatra’s political front in Thailand.

The NED also funds a myriad of “NGOs” in Thailand aimed specifically at undermining Thailand’s institutions – most notably the military, monarchy, courts, and even the economy itself. These are included on a long list [on NED’s own website and include](#):

- Thai Poor Act;
- Thai Civil Rights and Investigative Journalism;
- Thai Volunteer Service;
- Makhampom Foundation;
- [Cafe Democracy](#);
- Media Inside Out Group;
- ENLAWTHAI Foundation;
- Human Rights Lawyers Association and;
- Foundation for Community Educational Media

It should be noted that in recent years, NED has become as ambiguous as possible about listing which NGOs it specifically funds – while NGOs in Thailand receiving NED funding regularly attempt to conceal NED funding and have been caught on several occasions outright lying about it.

For instance, while NED lists “Foundation for Community Educational Media,” it actually includes organizations like Thai Netizen and [Prachatai](#) – two entwined media fronts who have habitually covered up their foreign funding all while asking for donations locally.

Such behavior indicates that NGOs like Thai Netizen and Prachatai are fully aware of the impropriety they are a party to.

Each and every NED-funded NGO in Thailand is currently engaged in daily attacks against the current government, and serves a direct supporting role in bolstering opposition fronts directly tied to the ousted regime of Thaksin Shinawatra. “Human rights lawyers” underwritten by NED regularly represent US-backed agitators rounded and charged for various crimes while media fronts like [Prachatai churn out a daily tidal wave of disinformation](#) in support of US interests both in Thailand and across Asia.

Legitimate grassroots campaigns such as opposition to foreign multinational agribusiness and attempts to impose genetically modified organisms (GMOs) upon Thai agriculture receive little to no support from this milieu of US-funded fronts. Likewise, pragmatic and constructive opposition to current government policies done within a framework of

cooperating with government agencies to arrive at compromises are also ignored entirely by NED's networks.

NED's various fronts are solely focused on pressuring the government into arranging elections and giving America's proxies, Thaksin Shinawatra and his political allies, another opportunity at seizing power.

Shinawata, once back in power, and after sufficiently diminishing the power of Thailand's existing political order, would return to destructive pro-US policies ranging from "free trade" with Wall Street special interests to supporting America's unending wars worldwide. His regime would also likely mobilize Thailand's population and resources on behalf of Washington's proxy war with China – costing Thailand a valuable trade and military partner along with peace and stability across Asia.

When political instability surfaces around the world – opposition forces mobilizing in the streets and over the airwaves must be carefully scrutinized. Determining from where they receive their funding and political support is essential in determining whether these opposition forces are legitimate or the manufactured pawns of Western corporate-financier special interests being funded through fronts like the National Endowment for Democracy – a front that is private – not national, and that is for corporate-financier special interests – only under the guise as being "for democracy."

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