

US Struggles to Keep Asia in Dark Age. US-Funded “Newspapers” and “Activists”

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Global Research, November 03, 2014

[New Eastern Outlook](#)

Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [Environment](#), [Media Disinformation](#)

US-funded newspapers promote US-funded NGOs in their efforts to halt infrastructure projects that would reduce flooding, produce clean, renewable energy, and provide jobs and development for millions.

“[The Irrawaddy](#),” which claims to be “a leading source of reliable news, information, and analysis on Burma/Myanmar and the Southeast Asian region,” has doggedly covered efforts by so-called “activists” to prevent the construction of dams all across Southeast Asia – [from Myanmar](#) (still called by its British imperial nomenclature “Burma” by the Western media), across Thailand, and in Laos.

Its most recent article, “[Thai Power Firm’s Business Tactics ‘Use Burma’s Weak Laws’](#),” is a typical representation of these efforts. It reports that:

One of the chief financiers of hydroelectric dams planned on Burma’s Salween River is accused of investing in countries where there is “oppression and limited transparency” in order to achieve its objectives.

Having been restricted in its activities at home, the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) wants to use Burma and Laos as proxy suppliers of electricity via environmentally damaging river dams, the US-based NGO International Rivers told The Irrawaddy.

Dams are undoubtedly disruptive to the surrounding, existing environment and surely governments and special interests regularly sidestep their responsibility to ensure dam construction results in equitable outcomes for surrounding human populations as well as wildlife. However, to oppose their construction entirely is a regressive, politically motivated agenda peddled by some of the most sociopolitically and environmentally destructive special interests on Earth.

To understand this, one must understand what both The Irrawaddy and International Rivers have in common, and specifically why their agenda has become entwined in the battle against real development across all of Southeast Asia.

US-Funded “Newspapers” and “Activists”

Both The Irrawaddy and International Rivers are creations and perpetuations of the US State Department and several Fortune 500 corporate-financier funded foundations. These include foundations that represent the interests of corporations including Exxon, Chevron, British

Petroleum (BP), Total, as well as big-finance and the World Bank. Already, it should be easy to understand why Western energy giants and financiers would be interested in arresting the development of sustainable energy independence across Southeast Asia.

The Irrawaddy is literally a creation of the US State Department via its National Endowment for Democracy (NED). This is revealed in a 2006 report titled, "[FAILING THE PEOPLE OF BURMA? A call for a review of DFID policy on Burma](#)," published by the Burma Campaign UK. In it, it states specifically:

The NED sub-grant program also has fostered the development of three well-known Burmese media organizations. The New Era Journal, the Irrawaddy, and the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) radio have become critical sources of independent news and information on the struggle for democracy in Burma.

NED, while claiming to be "a private, nonprofit foundation dedicated to the growth and strengthening of democratic institutions around the world," [has upon its board of directors \(past and present\)](#) an unsavory collection of Fortune 500 representatives, pro-war Neo-Conservatives, and establishment politicians tied to some of the most regressive global agendas. These include Goldman Sachs, Boeing, Exxon, the above mentioned Brookings Institution, and many more.

It is clear that this collection of special interests is not concerned with the human or environmental impact of hydroelectric energy production – considering many are directly overseeing the global petroleum racket. Instead is a desire in eliminating both potential competitors, as well as any semblance of geopolitical independence in regions of the planet they seek to project their power into. With think tanks like Brookings drawing up battle plans for everything from the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, to decade-spanning occupations, to proxy wars against Syria and Iran, it is not difficult to understand lesser forms of projecting power – through co-opted NGOs masquerading under the guise of "environmentalism" and "social activism," are also amongst their tools. International Rivers, over the years, has been funded by the following; The Sigrid Rausing Trust, Tides Foundation, Google, Open Society, the Ford Foundation, to name a few. Many of those contributing to International Rivers, are themselves creations of corporate-financier interests. Direct sponsors, such as the Sigrid Rausing Trust, Ford Foundation, and Open Society, are also involved in funding policy think tanks such as the Brookings Institution – a pro-war, pro-corporate conglomeration [that features alongside the Sigrid Rausing Trust as donors \(.pdf\)](#), banking empires including JP Morgan, Bank of America, and Barclays Bank, big-oil interests including Exxon, Chevron, Shell, and Statoil, as well as big-defense corporations Boeing, Northrop Grumman, and Raytheon,

In fact, International Rivers makes a very interesting point that frames America's war on Asian dams perfectly. Under "[Banks and Dam Builders](#)" it claims:

Traditionally, the World Bank Group has been the most important financier of large dams. For decades, the World Bank funded the construction of mega-dams across the world.

In recent years, however, Chinese financial institutions have taken over this role, and have triggered a new boom in global dam building. Other public

sector national banks, including Brazilian banks, Thai banks, and Indian banks, have also financed an increasingly important share.

And there in lies one of many problems Wall Street and London and their “World Bank” have with Asia’s dam boom – their fingers aren’t in the pie in a region they openly seek to influence, manipulate, and even use as a collective proxy against China.

The River Ruse

✖ How exactly does one go about demonizing sustainable, renewable energy production that doubles as a means of flood management and river navigation?

International Rivers and the well-intentioned activist subsidiaries it dupes into propagating its regressive agenda focus on several angles to demonize hydroelectric power – ranging from the plausible to the absolutely ridiculous. Upon International Rivers’ website filed under “Our Work,” one will find perhaps the most ridiculous excuse International Rivers proposes a nation should not build a dam because of – “[Climate Change and Rivers](#).” Citing an obscure study regarding methane producing bacteria found in virtually all permanent freshwater bodies from ponds to lakes and everything in between, International Rivers claims that dams and the reservoirs they create are contributing to “global warming” and therefore should not be built.

Upon International Rivers’ “[Mekong Mainstream Dams](#)” page, it claims: Other excuses International Rivers uses to obstruct dam projects that will bring electricity for modern infrastructure, industry, and other necessary requirements for producing job opportunities and a better quality of life is the defense of indigenous populations and their unsustainable fishing of various rivers’ dwindling fish populations. In reality, a dam’s construction would provide the means for many of these fishing communities to switch over to more productive occupations allowing fish populations to either recover, or be relocated to areas they can be carefully managed and nursed back to healthy levels.

The revival of plans to build a series of dams on the Mekong River’s mainstream in Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand presents a serious threat to the river’s ecology and puts at risk the wellbeing of millions of people dependent on the river for food, income, transportation and a multitude of other needs.

Only these people fishing and living along the rivers exist in a condition of abject poverty, trapped in a cycle of poor education, menial labor, exploitation, and dwindling natural resources being increasingly overtaxed – specifically because the Mekong is not being developed as project after project is “shelved” as International Rivers proudly puts it, due to their regressive work. These fisheries are being plundered by people who are unable to make any other living – again – primarily because of the lack of real, tangible, infrastructure development along the Mekong.

Real Problems, Real Solutions

This is not to say there are no real issues to debate when it comes to dam construction. Governments and investors seeking to build such projects have a responsibility to both the local people and the surrounding environment to ensure that the inevitable disruption and displacement that occurs is duly compensated for and that the benefits of the dam

demonstrably outweigh the inconveniences it causes before construction.

Flood management, transportation, and other benefits provided by the proper, well-planned construction of dams have raised millions out of poverty and literally lit up the lives of people around the planet from the rural south in the United States during the Great Depression, all across Europe for generations, to China today. Special interests in the West, already having constructed their dams and enjoying the fruits of well-developed infrastructure and industrialization are leveraging the disparity such development has granted them over impoverished, developing nations to kick-over any attempts to catch up – at least as long as that catching up isn't accomplished through Western corporations, banks, and other monopolies. A middle ground must be found between those who seek to construct dams, and those who will be affected by them. Provisions for protecting or even expanding fisheries after a dam is completed, utilizing the reservoir that will form is one way of accomplishing this. Ensuring that energy produced by the dam will lead to industrialization and local development that will provide better jobs and opportunities for local communities is another. Creating modern means of bypassing dams for improved river navigation is another way dams can demonstrably improve the lives of local communities and businesses.

When a large-scale infrastructure project is ready to move from the drawing board toward breaking ground, there is much to debate about, and even potentially protest against regarding the manner in which the project is built, by whom, and to whose benefit. However, the topic of whether or not real, tangible, infrastructure development should be build should never be up for debate. It is the inherent right of all to move forward and upward. Those irrationally protesting any infrastructure project of any kind based on the tenuous arguments of disrupting the environment or unsustainable practices carried out by desperately poor people who need such projects to thrive, are the true enemies of progress, the environment, and ultimately the very people they claim to help.

Local activists caught up in lies and propaganda can be forgiven for being misled, and should work to fulfill their role as a true check and balance against infrastructure development – not a perpetual, irrationally obstruction to it. Organizations like International Rivers, however, cannot be forgiven. Affiliated with the planet's worst socioeconomic and environmental criminals, activists the world over should ostracize and avoid them – lest they be tainted too by the regressive agenda of special interests.

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