

By [Gayle Kimball, Ph.D.](#)

British journalist and historian Frances Stonor Saunders charged in *Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Lectures*

that the CIA funded the non-communist left since the late 1960 through pass-through organizations. She mentioned the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the US Institute of Peace, the Ford Foundation, The International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, CANVAS (Center for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies in Serbia) and the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Professor Noam Chomsky described NED (in reference to Nicaragua) as “an attempt to impose what is called democracy, meaning rule by the rich and the powerful. Without interference by the mob but within the framework of formal electoral procedures.”

A *New York Times* article echoed the list of democracy groups funded by the government: International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, Freedom House, Egypt's April 6 Youth Movement, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, and individuals such as Entsar Qadhi, a Yemeni young woman activist.

The State Department's staffer Michael Posner stated in 2011 that the government spent \$50 million in the previous two years on new technologies for activists; training sessions were held for 5,000 activists around the world, including Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and Lebanon.

Posner added, “They went back [home], and there's a ripple effect,” in the Arab Spring.

Some blame a global group of wealthy bankers for current inequality. President Franklin Roosevelt wrote in 1933, “A financial element in the larger [financial] centers has owned the government since the days of Andrew Jackson.” He told bankers, “You are a den of vipers. If the people only understood the rank injustice of our money and banking system, there would be a revolution before morning.” President Dwight Eisenhower warned about the power of the military-industrial complex in 1961. The same year John F. Kennedy stated, “We are opposed around the world by a monolithic and ruthless conspiracy, that relies primarily on covert means for expanding its sphere of influence.”

President George W. Bush led a covert democratization movement in MENA spelled out in a 2003 speech to NED. He said, “The United States has adopted a new policy, a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East.” Undersecretary of State James Glassman reported in 2008, “Mainly behind the scenes, we help build networks and movements—put tools in the hands of young people to make their own choices, rather than dictating those choices.”

Secretary of State Hillary stated in a 2010 speech that, “I'm proud that the State Department is

already working in more than 40 countries to help individuals silenced by oppressive governments,” with emphasis on MENA, Asia and the Pacific.

A recent target is to oust the socialist government of Venezuela.

WikiLeaks diplomatic cables revealed that Middle Eastern leaders vehemently protested the work of these foreign groups to destabilize their governments, especially Mubarak and his son Gamel in Egypt. For example, a 2006 cable from an official in the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs protested to American Embassy officials about the US government’s “arrogant tactics in promoting reform in Egypt.” The *New York Times* article quoted Stephen McNerney, director of the research group Project on Middle East Democracy, commenting on the Arab Spring: “We didn’t fund them to start protests, but we did help support their development of skills and networking. That training did play a role in what ultimately happened, but it was their revolution. We didn’t start it.” Dr. Stuart Jeanne Bramhall, author of a free ebook 21

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Century Revolution

traced CIA involvement in the Arab Spring,

citing evidence in

L’Arabesque Americaine

by Canadian Ahmed Bensaada (2011)

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Bensaada maintains that the CIA, US State Department and Pentagon backed many of the youth uprisings by funding democracy organizations including the National Endowment for Democracy, National Democratic institute for International Affairs, the International Republican Institute, Freedom House, the Albert Einstein Institution, CANVAS, USAID, and George Soros’ Open Society Institute. These groups developed new technologies such as the Tor Project that gets around Internet censorship. They were involved in the color revolutions in Eastern Europe, attempts to destabilize Venezuela, Bolivia, Cuba and Iran, and in the Arab Spring by supporting Google employee Gael Ghonim with paid leave, discussed in Chapter 10.

An Egyptian court, not known for their fairness, recently referred to the January 25 revolution as part of a regional “American-Hebrew plot” designed to destabilize the region in support of Israel.

Washington Times

reporter Charles Hanley maintained, “the USAID grants, from an \$800 million budget for developing ‘political competition’ and ‘civil society’ in 67 nations, have proved vital to activists in a half-dozen Arab lands, from Morocco to Yemen.”

Young activists were trained to use social networking to promote democracy. Hanley reported that since 2005 an estimated 10,000 Egyptians participated in USAID programs sponsored by 30 Egyptian and international organizations.

The US State Department realized that the youth bulge in the Middle East and other regions required a cyberdissident (CDD) strategy to “combat the enemy” by empowering youth and “benefiting business,” to use State Department employee Jared Cohen’s terms. He led the creation of the Alliance of Youth Movements (AYM) described in Linda Herrera’s *Revolution in the Age of Social Media*

. It held its first international youth conference with representatives of 15 countries in 2008 at Columbia University Law School. Livestreamed on MTV, AYM aimed to “launch a global network that seeks to empower young people to mobilize against violence and oppression.” AYM speakers represented the US State Department in partnership with US corporations marketing youth lifestyles: the Hoover Institute, Freedom House, AT&T, Google, Facebook, Howcast, Pepsi Cola, etc. AYM pointed to the Serbian group Otpor as its model for activism, also funded by the US government, discussed in Chapter 7. Another summit took place in London in 2010.

AYM promoted Gene Sharp’s manual *From Dictatorship to Democracy* along with instructional videos and the AYM handbook

Grassroots Movements for Social Change

. The manual gives examples of movements considered successful by AYM: Oscar Morales’ campaign against FARC in Columbia, the Turkish group The Young Civilians, a Facebook campaign called “Support the Monks’ Protest in Burma,” One Million People Against Crime in South Africa, Fight Back in India, Youth for Tolerance in Lebanon,

Iluminemos

in Mexico,

No Mas Chavez

in Venezuela,

Raices de Esperanza

in Cuba, and Saudi Women Petitioning the Government for Driving Rights. The manual refers to numerous Howcast action videos such as “How to Smart Mob” that features a Middle Eastern-appearing actor in a bright blue shirt.

AYM participants learned to use social media including Facebook (over a billion users) and Twitter (by 2015 it had about 284 million monthly users). Cohen left the State Department in 2010 and founded

Movements.org

as an extension of AYM.

In 2012,

Movements.org

became a division of Advancing Human Rights. The movements.org

website explains its purpose is “opening closed societies.” Similar websites such as Cyberdissidents.org

were funded by Republican billionaire Sheldon Adelson.

WikiLeaks showed that the Serbian group CANVAS worked for Stratfor, an intelligence gathering company in Texas, to destabilize Venezuela. Professor Julia Buxton reported that US interests that oppose socialism decided to use Venezuelan students as their tool, focusing on students in private universities as the leaders of “democracy promotion.” She stated that a large percentage of the \$45 million annual funding to opposition groups went to youth outreach programs such as Juventud Activa Venezuela Unida (JAVU) mobilized after 2010. In Venezuela, three US officials were accused of organizing students to protest and were exiled from the country in 2014. The US budgeted \$5 million in its 2014 budget to fund the opposition. The CIA was accused of backing an attempted coup against Venezuelan socialist President Francisco Madero in 2015.

Canadian professor Michel Chossudovsky and others charge that reactionary US government forces instigated the recent uprisings in Ukraine, creating causalities to mobilize media and public opinion. The US spent over \$5 billion since Ukrainian independence in 1991 to “help” pro-western parties, according to US Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland. Similar charges are made in regards to the Libyan overthrow of Gaddafi.

Gene Sharp’s advice about how to use non-violent tactics is widely used to train activists globally. His Albert Einstein Institute is housed in Sharp’s Boston home, with a small annual budget, and only one assistant—evidence given by those who dismiss charges that the institute works for the CIA in an ongoing debate about his funding sources. His board of directors has links to the US military or pass-through foundations and he has received funding from CIA-linked foundations such as NED, IRI and the US Institute of Peace, and the Defense Department, according to Dr. Stuart Jeanne Bramhall.

Others disagree and state the Institute’s consulting policy prohibits them from political action and efforts to discredit Sharp are dishonest.

The Albert Einstein Institute states on the website, “

From Dictatorship to Democracy

was first published in Burma in 1993. It has since been translated into at least 34 other languages and was used by the campaigns of Serbia’s Otpor, Georgia’s Kmara, Ukraine’s Pora, Kyrgyzstan’s KelKel and Belarus’ Zubr.” Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian governments also used his writings during the breakup of the USSR. Lithuanian Defense Minister Audrius Butkevicius is quoted on the website; “I would rather have this book [

Civilian Based Defense]

than the nuclear bomb.”

This raises the question of how much recent youth contentious action is funded by the US government to shape governments, encourage business development, and to “win the war of

U.S. Government Influence on Global Uprisings

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Samedi, 21 Novembre 2015 01:56

ideas,” as Undersecretary of State James Glassman said in 2008. He reported, “Mainly behind the scenes, we help build networks and movements—put tools in the hands of young people to make their own choices, rather than dictating those choices.” US State Department officials seems proud of their undercover work to influence other countries, although they would probably be outraged if a foreign country aimed to manipulate US young people.

The US State Department “democracy assistance” initiative funded Egyptian opposition to Egypt’s first democratically elected President Mohamed Morsi and other Islamists, according to Emad Mekay, former reporter for the *New York Times* and founder of the America in Arabic News Agency. The US government spent hundreds of millions via the Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, the Middle East Partnership Initiative (it spent close to \$900 million on democracy projects), USAID (spends about \$1.4 billion a year in the Middle East, with nearly \$390 million for democracy) and the National Endowment for Democracy. The latter was the main spender in Egypt, providing grants as for Esraa Abdel-Fatah’s NGO called the Egyptian Democratic Academy. Estimates are the government spent about \$65 million in 2011 and \$25 million in 2012 on democracy efforts.

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