

Westminster Foundation for Democracy



The **Westminster Foundation for Democracy** (WFD) describes itself as the UK's 'Democracy-building foundation', and was established in 1992:

"To provide flexible and imaginative funding assistance to countries managing the difficult transition to democracy in central and eastern Europe and sub-Saharan Africa. Throughout the 1990s WFD's work expanded to support countries emerging from conflict and authoritarian rule and to support the consolidation and effectiveness of existing democratic regimes."(WFD, 2007)

WFD's open approach is to bring together funding for civil society organisations and for political parties in 'coherent thematic' and country programmes. This work is undertaken with a grant-in-aid, currently £4.1 million, from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). Half of this grant is distributed between the three major UK political parties (the Conservative Party, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats) and smaller UK parties on a proportional basis. The other half is allocated by the Foundation to national and international organisations whose work supports WFD's programme priorities.

As well as being sponsored by the FCO the Foundation also contributes to the FCO's aim of making

"globalisation work for sustainable development in the UK and internationally (particularly in Africa) by promoting democracy and the rule of law, good economic and environmental governance and security of long-term energy supply, measured by specific underlying targets."(WFD, 2007)

Although it states it remains independent of government — in setting its priorities and programmes — it is tied to the strategic drives underlying government's human rights policies. It should be remembered that 'human rights' have long been a policy tool of the US and UK government. In practice the WFD funds the Westminster-based political parties then: "They establish contact with, offer assistance to, and work with individual political parties or movements with which they have a political affinity," in certain parts of the world. (WFD, 2007a)

I would argue that this affinity contains elements of the UK's (and US) covert foreign policy.

With all this rhetoric of 'democracy' we are supposed to ignore the paradox of members of WFD's 14 Governors being appointees of an entirely undemocratic House of Lords, and that similarly, no one voted for them to join WFD — they are appointed by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. With all its talk of 'independence', the fact of the matter is that independent members

are outnumbered and that WFD's nine Patrons are the leaders of the main political parties (plus the Speaker of the House of Commons) with which they work. But we are also supposed to ignore just exactly what public money is being used for. WFD organise conferences through Wilton Park, an executive agency of the Foreign Office. Their March 2004 event (Wilton, 2006) and others, included representatives of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, particularly the former Legal Adviser to the U.S. Department of State, Thomas Carothers (Carneigie, 2006) who has written on the double standards of the U.S. and the international backlash against democracy promotion efforts. (Carothers, 2006)

"First, the U.S. government must not make the mistake of confusing regime change with democracy promotion. Regime change policies, in which the U.S. government seeks to oust foreign governments it views as hostile to U.S. interests, whether through military force or diplomatic and economic pressure, fail to gain international legitimacy and contaminate democracy promotion when they are presented as democracy promotion efforts."(Carothers, 2006)

This is a somewhat lightweight rebuke from the position of a somewhat ubiquitous insider —the National Endowment for Democracy (upon which the WFD was based as we shall see) are so fearful of his excoriating prose that they commission and promote it in their Journal of Democracy:

"One example of a topic that merits the combined attention of economic aid providers and democracy promoters is privatisation programs. These programs have major implications for how power is distributed in a society, how ruling political forces can entrench themselves, and how the public participates in major policy decisions."(Carothers, 2002: 19)

This — the text is largely a reformulation of Samuel P. Huntington's, 1991 *The Third Wave* —conjectures the US, the World Bank and the IMF suddenly discovering and converting to the works of Che Guevara.

And other conceptualisations are more apparent than real: organisations like the WFD remodel the Cold War strategies into an apparent change in foreign policy from supporting dictatorships to an 'open' promotion of 'democratic' regimes — where the democracy is defined almost exclusively by the existence of elections which ushered in factions supported (created at times) by the hidden hand of democracy promotion.

Take the example of Zimbabwe. The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) plans to take over and govern Zimbabwe, in the place of President Mugabe and his party. In an article published by *The Guardian* on March 7 2002 headed "Colonialism and the new world order", Seumas Milne wrote:

"Now the British government (through the Westminster Foundation for Democracy) and the Tories (through the Zimbabwe Democracy Trust) along with white farmers and corporations — are all funding the MDC, committed as it is to free market policies and the restoration of white farms to their owners."

The money came from the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and the US TransAfrica Forum's (TAF) President Bill Fletcher Jr. (Egbuna, 2006)

WFD was designed at the end of the Cold War as a more flexible approach to expanding Western interests into the territory opened up by the 'transition to democracy,' and similarly with the offer of "assistance in consolidating post-conflict democracies":

"The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) works to achieve sustainable political change in emerging democracies. Working with and through partner organisations, it seeks to strengthen the institutions of democracy, principally political parties, parliaments and the range of institutions that make up civil society — non-governmental organisations (NGOs), trade unions, free media, etc. WFD believes that, for a democracy to function well, all these institutions must be strong."(WFD, 2007b)

That phrase 'make up civil society' is unfortunately ambiguous given the tendency for Democracy building to construct organisations. What the nature of the transition phase is can be indicated by the WFD's belief that: "Iraq is going through a transition phase." (WFD, 2007c) But what are the WFD's ideas on a free media?

The WFD boasts that it funds The Sudan Mirror, "a monthly newspaper developed by the Sudan Development Trust (SDT) to offer objective, factual, independent and professional coverage of Sudan's affairs." But it does not add that this publication was started up by Dan Eiffe, a "former Catholic priest from County Meath, Ireland, and a veteran of Sudan's serial humanitarian crises."(Griffin, 2005)

"Widely known as Commander Dan for his unwavering support for the SPLA's often-vicious war for secession, Eiffe came under fire scores of times as a field worker for Norwegian People's Aid, an organisation that was also pummelled in the media for taking sides during a war that pitted Muslim against Christian."(Griffin, 2005)

The US government funded Eiffe's activities. The Office of Transitional Initiatives (OTI), a subsidiary of USAID, in conjunction with the Sudan Development Trust (run by Eiffe) set up The Sudan Mirror and the Sudan Radio Service, (USAID/OTI, 2004) (Griffin, 2005b) with help from Norwegian People's Aid (which also involves Eiffe and was funded by USAID and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign affairs). (Norwegian, 2005: 27)

This is deliberately convoluted. Eiffe was variously described as the "operations officer for the non-governmental organisation Norwegian People's Aid" the "liaison officer". Oxfam Netherlands also funded the Trust. (Griffin, 2005b) Eiffe was even known as 'Commander De Mabior' because of his close association with US trained, John Garang de Mabior and the SPLA. (Gerald, 2006 ; Kang'ong'oi, 2005)

Reports say that Eiffe would “organise and co-ordinate meetings and interviews between Dr Garang and foreign dignitaries.”

Eiffe keeps some odd company, which casts his role in democracy building in the more traditional manner of the CIA:

“Michael Harari, the Israeli gun-runner who helped supply John Garang’s Sudanese People’s Liberation Army in a covert operation involving Roger Winter of the U.S. Committee on Refugees and Dan Eiffe of Norwegian Peoples Aid, is currently wanted for arrest by the government of Norway. The Norwegian warrant, issued through Interpol in June 1998, stems from Harari’s co-ordination of assassination operations against leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization in revenge for the terrorist massacre of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics.”(About Sudan, 2000)

This lurid account would seem unlikely but Father Eiffe is an unlikely man of God: “He justifies supporting violence: ‘I’m tired of aid...’ he says. ‘What these people need are guns to defend themselves ...I found God in Africa....’”(Vignoles & Peelo, 1999)

Guns would certainly seem to be what Father Eiffe felt should be delivered. Certain reports — and we must be wary of any report in the PR battle — have alleged a covert arms and logistical supply network run out of the US State Department, which mirrors the Iran–Contra arms supply operation of the 1980s.

“A November 1999 Norwegian television documentary, entitled ‘Weapons Smuggling in Sudan,’ has highlighted the role played by some aid agencies in logistically and politically perpetuating the Sudanese civil war. The documentary clearly outlined the actions of Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA) in supplying the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) with weapons in the course of the Sudanese civil war in the 1990s.”(Hoile, 2000)

This information stems from right-wing libertarian David Hoile, who formerly promoted the public images of Renamo in Mozambique and Inkatha in apartheid-era South Africa now with the European Sudan Public Affairs Council —but is he correct here: the documentary is mentioned elsewhere. (Assal, 2002: 63–96) Norway was forced to suspend all aid to NPA following an official report certifying that the NPA has been assisting the war efforts of the SPLA for at least ten years. Eiffe is named as part of the operation as the then co-ordinator for Central Africa of Norwegian People’s Aid, which posed as a relief organisation. Indeed the report traces the links back to the US National Security Council, who have pushed for a policy of politicisation of relief agencies:

After the US previously supporting the government of Sudan, the Clinton administration launched a covert campaign to destabilise it, which it chose to consider a key supporter of international terrorism and instability in the Middle East. More than \$20 million of military equipment, including radios, uniforms and tents were shipped to Eritrea, Ethiopia and Uganda earmarked for the armed

forces of those countries, much of it passed on to the SPLA according to the Sunday Times. (Adams, 1996)

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright even met with John Garang to further pressure Khartoum's Islamic fundamentalist leaders. Albright told reporters that Washington sought to show top-level support for efforts to secure political change in Sudan, where Garang's SPLA fought troops of the Moslem North since 1983, according to a December 10, 1997 Deutsch Presse Agenteur report.

The Guardian argued that the SPLA were being trained and armed by the CIA to topple a sovereign government, with the whole destabilisation exercise backed by international sanctions and a massive propaganda campaign. "It sounds like Nicaragua or Angola circa 1984. In fact it's Sudan 1998." (Steele, 1998)

Harking back to the first invasion of Africa we also find that 'religious' groups have joined in the process of military aid as democracy promotion:

"CSI [Christian Solidarity International], along with the U.S.-based groups Voice of the Martyrs and Samaritan's Purse (run by Franklin Graham, the son of Billy Graham), are among a handful of Christian groups that have taken sides in the dispute. They work exclusively in southern Sudan—and provide not only humanitarian aid but also political and sometimes logistical support for the southern rebels...Even during the peace talks, they've lobbied the U.S. government to provide military aid and weaponry to the SPLM...According to Human Rights Watch, the SPLM, like Khartoum, has committed numerous human-rights violations." (Skinner, 2003)

Eiffe uses carefully stage-managed platforms and his own guise as a priest to push U.S. propaganda:

" "Sudan is the hell of the world," said Daniel Eiffe of Norwegian People's Aid at recent hearings sponsored by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. "Apartheid is nothing compared to Sudan." "(Christianity, 2000)

To add to our suspicions about the 'religious groups', it should be noted here that the chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom at this time was Elliott Abrams. Nothing is sacred. (Wikipedia, 2007)

Both Eiffe and the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (together with the Freedom Association's Baroness Caroline Cox) push the line that the war in Sudan was fuelled by religious persecution. Similarly 'genocide' is used tactically: if nations of the world agreed (they do not) that a verifiable genocide were occurring, it would allow the US to further pressurise the Islamic government in the North and render it a 'failed state', one more step towards its oil assets. Sudan has more oil than Saudi Arabia and Iran together. (Ryan, 2000)

WFD also fund International Alert, which has Francis Deng on its board who worked closely with Elliot Abrams in formulating the US position on Sudan. And they are by no means alone in funding Eiffe's mission.

Start-up funding for the Sudan Mirror came from Pact, a high level 'charity' staffed by ex-ambassadors, intelligence and financial planners including a close relative of the Bush family.

USAID, DFID, the UN, the Norwegian Government, and UNHCR fund its Sudan work. Michael Griffin, who in his report for Pact glosses over the allegations concerning Norwegian People's Aid and Dan Eiffe, is described as "a freelance journalist, broadcaster and... a former editor of Index on Censorship magazine in London." (Pact, 2007)

The USAID's Sudan Field Report August 2004 states that the USAID Office of Transition Initiatives:

"... implementing partners are PACT and Educational Development Center (EDC). PACT manages the Southern Sudan Transition Initiative (SSTI) which is a two-year small grants program that focuses on promoting and supporting good governance, local-level peace initiatives, the development of civil society and an informative and balanced media. EDC has established the Sudan Radio Service which is a short-wave radio station that transmits six hours of programming daily on current events, civic education, health and culture in nine languages... The Sudan Mirror received an OTI grant to produce a special English and Arabic edition of its bi-weekly newspaper on the Naivasha protocols to be distributed throughout southern Sudan." (USAID, 2007)

Roger Winter, current USAID assistant administrator for democracy, conflict and humanitarian assistance, is Special Representative for the Deputy Secretary of State, on Darfur. (USAID, 2007: 385) Keeping it in the NED family the USAID's reports authors, The Coalition for International Justice (CIJ) are a group of lobbyists targeting decision-makers in Washington and other capitals, media, and the public. Follow the trail and it emerges the organisation provided legal and technical assistance to the to the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia. (Open Society, 2004) (Hayden, 2005)

'Developed' by Central and East European Law Initiative to 'support' the mission of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and its counterpart for Rwanda (ICTR) in December 1997, CIJ was 'asked by the Twentieth Century Fund to serve as a secretariat' for their Task Force On The Apprehension of Indicted War Criminals. Yes what would democracy be without due process of law? (Central, 1998)

The Central and East European Law Initiative is funded (\$19,169,313) by The American Bar Association, The World Bank, "Agencies of the United States Government," US Agency for International Development, US Department of State and the US Department of Justice. (American, 2007)

Although politically biased (and as of 31 March 2006 it ceased to function —this a matter of days after Milosevic died) CIJ material greatly influences how the mass media view the situation although its material is entirely unreliable and unaccountable.

"In an April 2005 report, the most comprehensive statistical analysis to date, the Coalition for International Justice estimated that 400,000 people in Darfur had

died since the conflict began, a figure most humanitarian and human rights groups now use.”(Wikipedia, 2007a)

Stephanie Frease was the CIJ director of programs, but what are we make of validity of her research — what the New York Times termed Guesswork with a cause — what social, political and economic forces are impacting upon it: how could notions of democracy be said to be served here. Being close to the formation of policy can mean you tack on your collected unbiased data to your master’s designs:

“In 2004, Frease directed a project in which a multinational team of interviewers collected over 1,200 statements of refugees from Darfur. The program was conducted in co-operation with the U.S. State Department and USAID over a six-week period in July and August 2004. The study was commissioned by Secretary of State Colin Powell, who said he wanted to “collect a large body of unbiased data in order to come to his own conclusion” about what was happening in the western region of Sudan. In September 2004, after reviewing the team’s findings, Powell went before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and declared the actions of the Sudanese government to be genocide. Before joining CIJ in September 2000, Frease worked for the Investigation Section in the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.”(North, 2005) (Lacey, 2005)

CIJ are funded by Soros and seem to have ties with Freedom House. Its board members include Nina Bang-Jensen (who served as the Deputy Director of the Presidential Commission that ‘investigated’ the bombing of Pan Am 103); and Susan Blaustein —formerly with the International Crisis Group. (Freedom House, 2002)

If my investigation seems at an early stage here, consider that the fly-by-night nature of these organisations precludes much research of these researchers. Blaustein has also written in the Washington Post on Saddam’s WMD and helped in the advocating for the scrapping the oil for food programme. (CASI, 2002)

“Judith Armatta, an American lawyer and observer for the Coalition for International Justice (another Soros-funded NGO) goes further, gloating that “when the sentence comes and he disappears into that cell, no one is going to hear from him again. He will have ceased to exist”. So much then for those quaint old notions that the aim of a trial is to determine guilt. For Armatta, Dicker and their backers, it seems that Milosevic is already guilty as charged.”(Clark, 2004)

To conclude I will make some final remarks on the WFD. The consultant to the FCO on the setting up of WFD, and the founder governor from 1992–8, was Dr. Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, an International consultant for numerous democracy organisations and development institutions, among them the NED itself (upon whom WFD was modelled and by whom it is evaluated today). (FCO, 2006)

Pinto-Duschinsky is also with the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) (IFES, 2007) which was established by F. Clifton White who worked with CIA director William Casey on the Reagan administration’s pro-contra propaganda network. (Zoom, 2007)

On the formation of the WFD Pinto–Duschinsky has stated:

“In December 1988, the Policy Planning Staff of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office commissioned me to carry out full-time research for one year into the topic of “political aid” with special reference of the US National Endowment for Democracy and the (West) German political foundations. This work was carried out in 1989–90. In June 1989, the Planners asked me to speak to a high level seminar of ministers and officials on political aid. Following this meeting, the Planners (under Robert Cooper and Jonathan Powell) submitted a set of recommendations — eventually to result in the creation of WFD — to the Foreign Secretary.

Following his approval, the proposal to create a capacity for delivering “political aid” was approved in turn by the Cabinet.”(FCO, 2005: 16)

On the question what was the intended function of the WFD? He has stated this (Emphasis in the original):

“The WFD was intended as an instrument that would permit the British Government to fund political activities within foreign countries, thereby promoting democracy and British influence.

Such interference in the political affairs of foreign nations had previously been covert and had caused problems when secret financial assistance had leaked into the public domain (as occurred in the United States in the 1960s concerning certain political projects of the Central Intelligence Agency of the US).

The propositions presented in 1989 onwards were that such interference in the internal politics of foreign countries would be more legitimate and more effective (1) if it was OPEN, (2) if it was at ARMS LENGTH from the governmental bodies which provided the funds and (3) if aid could be given to a PLURALITY OF RECIPIENTS within a single country.

The aid to be funded by the WFD was to be distinguished by the fact that it would be “political” rather than technical or educational. The WFD was to give grants that were recognised as sensitive and risky. For this reason, the size of grants was generally to be much smaller than the “good government” projects funded by DFID (then titled the Overseas Development Administration).

The distinction between technical and educational projects on the one hand and political projects on the other hand required a special legal status for the WFD. The leading firm of solicitors, Allen and Overy, was therefore approached to provide the necessary legal advice.”(FCO, 2005: 16)

‘Such interference’ i.e. a continuity. Outlining the nature of the activities of the WFD (and we must recall the subversion, subterfuge and cloak and dagger such as that practised by Father Eiffe and the slaughter in Sudan), Pinto–Duschinsky adds: “The WFD, for example, could give money to political forces which were in direct opposition to existing governments [...] It is evident that, at least in the short run, such ventures may provide training for the propaganda agencies of dictators and, far from promoting democracy, may thus risk consolidating undemocratic regimes

[...] In practice, as shown later by the experience of the WFD, support for controversial publications in foreign countries needs to be sanctioned by an independent organisation at arm's length from the donor government. The damage to official government-to-government relationships is likely to be far greater if the grant is given directly by the donor government.”(FCO, 2005: 16) Strangely after such candour Pinto–Duschinsky argues in the Times (London) that the work of WFD is ‘not subversive’ and somewhat distanced himself from this world. (Pinto–Duschinsky, 2006) (DuVall, 2006)

Pinto–Duschinsky is also a member of International IDEA (which has Thomas Carothers mentioned above on its board), the British Know How Fund, the Inter–American Development Bank, UNDP, USAID, OECD, the Council of Europe, and the Canadian International Development Agency. He works with the British Council to form and co–ordinate a “network of African anti–corruption activists” with the Open Society Institute, and to “produce a popular guide based on attempts to prosecute the “Top Ten Bad Guys” in the World.”

He has also worked for Transparency International. (IDEA, 2007) (British Council Report, 2002; TI, 2006). The committee of the WFD at the time of its foundation are given as:

- * Sir James Spicer, MP, (Chairman)
- * Mr. George Robertson, MP, and
- * Sir Russell Johnston, MP, (Vice–Chairmen)
- * Mr. Tony Clarke
- * Mrs. Margaret Ewing, MP
- * Professor Peter Frank
- * Mr. Timothy Garton Ash
- * Lady Howe, JP
- * Mr. Gavin Laird, CBE
- * Mr. Ralph Land, MP
- * Mr. Patrick Nicholls, MP
- * Dr. Michael Pinto–Duschinsky
- * Mr. Ian Taylor, MP
- * Ms. Carole Tongue, MEP

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