Week 5
“Democracy Promotion” as Imperialism

- The World’s “Salvation Army”?
- Democracy Talk: Why?
- Public Diplomacy
- Some Myths of US Foreign Policy
- The Practice: Imposing Regime Change
- The Purpose
- Full Spectrum Dominance and “Democratization”
- Covert Politics and “Genetically Modified Grass Roots Movements”
- Iran: US Covert Action and “Democracy Promotion”
“According to these books, the United States had been a kind of Salvation Army to the rest of the world: throughout history, it had done little but dispense benefits to poor, ignorant, and diseased countries...the United States always acted in a disinterested fashion, always from the highest of motives; it gave, never took” — Frances Fitzgerald America Revised: History School Books in the Twentieth Century
Democracy Talk: Why?

(1) Patina of legitimacy, thus congenial rhetoric (why?)
(2) Manifest Destiny, self-image
(3) Specific meanings and implications
(4) Separation of politics and economics: “democracy” does not threaten
(5) Global standardization of political, legal…and investment regimes
(6) Imposition: reason for force—global counterinsurgency
(7) “Transition”—pacification, “winning hearts and minds”

William Blum, America’s Deadliest Export: “Has there ever been an empire that didn’t tell itself and the rest of the world that it was unlike all other empires, that its mission was not to plunder but to enlighten and liberate?”

“Like most powerful leaders...American officials would have the rest of us believe that the policies they pursue in their quest for domination are beneficial to their own people and to most of the world”
George W. Bush’s Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy, Karen Hughes: “The mission of public diplomacy is to engage, inform, and help others understand our policies, actions and values” — “to preserve the peace, sometimes my country believes war is necessary”

1. US foreign policy means well, and is about helping people worldwide to achieve better, happier lives.
2. The US is deeply concerned with promoting democracy around the world. (Taken at face value: that US liberal democracy is the only democracy.)
3. That anti-American terrorists are motivated by religion and by their hatred of freedom and democracy.
4. That the US always stands opposed to terrorism.
5. That Iraq attacked the US, or at the very least, that it posed a direct threat to the US.
The Practice: Imposing Regime Change

Stephen Kinzer, *Overthrow: America’s History of Regime from Hawaii to Iraq*: 14 cases where the US played a leading and decisive role in successfully overthrowing foreign governments

“No nation in modern history has done this so often, in so many places so far from its shores”.

“The United States has used a variety of means to persuade other countries to do its bidding. In many cases it relies on time-honored tactics of diplomacy, offering rewards to governments that support American interests and threatening retaliation against those that refuse. Sometimes it defends friendly regimes against popular anger or uprisings. In more than a few places, it has quietly supported coups or revolutions by others”

But why choose the method of the foreign coup d’etat?
William Blum, ex-U.S. State Department, America’s Deadliest Export:

- Endeavored to overthrow more than 50 governments, most of which were democratically elected;
- Interfered in democratic elections in at least 30 countries;
- Attempted to assassinate more than 50 foreign leaders;
- Dropped bombs on more than 30 countries;
- Attempted to suppress a populist or nationalist movement in at least 20 countries.

“In total, since 1945, the United States has carried out one or more of the above-listed actions, on one or more occasions, in seventy-one countries (more than one-third of the countries of the world)”
Kinzer: “Throughout the twentieth century and into the beginning of the twenty-first, the United States repeatedly used its military power, and that of its clandestine services, to overthrow governments that refused to protect American interests. Each time, it cloaked its intervention in the rhetoric of national security and liberation. In most cases, however, it acted mainly for economic reasons—specifically, to establish, promote, and defend the right of Americans to do business around the world without interference”

US rose to great power status at a time in history when multinational corporations, often based in the US, were becoming a decisive force in world affairs:
→ government action to defend corporations
→ corporate directors working in the highest levels of US political administrations, military and intelligence apparatuses.
US government opposition to forms of social or economic democracy

Why?

“The first thing they have in mind is making sure the target country has the political, financial, and legal mechanisms in place to make it hospitable to corporate globalization.”
Full Spectrum Dominance and “Democratization”

→ US global counterinsurgency, and its political dimensions.

→ military superiority, diplomacy, and “development”
→ democratization—pacification & psychological operations, democracy-promotion as a tool for intervention
Covert Politics and “Genetically Modified Grass Roots Movements”

Civil Society 2.0: [http://www.state.gov/statecraft/cs20/](http://www.state.gov/statecraft/cs20/)

- promoting social and economic opportunity;
- ensuring the safety of our citizens;
- strengthening effective institutions of democratic governance;
- and addressing the challenges of energy security and climate change". 
Secretary Clinton Announces Civil Society 2.0 Initiative to Build Capacity of Grassroots Organizations:
http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2009/nov/131234.htm

“The United States is a strong supporter of civil society around the world. Civil society activists and organizations work to improve the quality of people’s lives and protect their rights, hold leaders accountable to their constituents, shine light on abuses in both the public and private sectors, and advance the rule of law and social justice. They are key partners for progress. The Forum for the Future is a joint civil society initiative of the countries of the Broader Middle East and North Africa region (BMENA) and the Group of Eight (G8). It brings together leaders from government, civil society and the private sector to exchange ideas and form partnerships to support progress, reform, and expanded opportunities for the people of the region…. Building the capacity of grassroots civil society organizations will enable them to do the work that, in the past, Western NGOs and governments have done.”
Crowd sourcing empire:

Google Ideas, paid for 80 former Muslim extremists, neo-Nazis and gang members to take part in “Summit Against Violent Extremism” (SAVE), Dublin, 2011: to explore how information and communications technology could be used in “de-radicalization” efforts around the world—led by Jared Cohen, Google executive, previously spent 4 years on the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff
Alliance of Youth Movements:

Led by Jared Cohen (State Department, Google):
https://diigo.com/01jzp0

“Jared Cohen is the Director of Google Ideas, a new entity at Google aiming to re-frame and act on old challenges in new and innovative ways. He is also an Adjunct Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, where he focuses on terrorism and counter-radicalization, the impact of connection technologies, and ‘21st century statecraft.’ Previously, he served for four years as a member of the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff under both Secretaries of State Condoleezza Rice and Hillary Clinton. In this capacity, he advised on the Middle East, South Asia, counter-terrorism, counter-radicalization, and the development of the ‘21st century statecraft’ agenda.”
AYM “began with a summit in December 2008, where the State Department partnered with MTV, Google, YouTube, Facebook, Howcast, AT&T, Jet Blue, Gen-Next, Access360Media and Columbia Law School, to identify, convene and engage 21st century movements online for the first time in history”:
http://www.counterpunch.org/2009/06/22/the-fog-machine/

“Launching in late 2008 with a Summit in NYC, the AYM gathered together an ensemble of media corporations, Obama consultants, social network entrepreneurs, and youth organizations, under the auspices of the State Department. Representatives came from Media Old (MTV, NBC, CNN) and New (Google and especially Facebook). The AYM produced a Field Manual and a series of How-to videos (How to Create a Grassroots Movement Using Social-Networking Sites, How to Smart Mob, How to Circumvent an Internet Proxy). The goal was to have youth leaders from around the world learn, share & discuss how to build powerful grassroots movements....I wrote about this Alliance, calling it a ‘Genetically Modified Grassroots Organization’ (GMGO). Neither wholly emerging from below (grassroots) nor purely invented by external forces (the Astroturfing done by public relations groups), these emergent groups are seeded (and their genetic code altered) to control the direction of the movement”.

Young African Leaders Initiative:

http://youngafricanleaders.state.gov/

“The Obama Administration’s Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) is a signature effort to invest in the next generation of African leaders.... President Obama launched YALI in 2010 to support young African leaders as they spur growth and prosperity, strengthen democratic governance, and enhance peace and security across Africa.... o enhance leadership skills, spur entrepreneurship, and connect young African leaders with one another and with Americans”
“Most of the NED, and its affiliated organizations, deals with influencing political processes abroad. The means employed range from influencing civil society, media, fostering business groups, lending support to preferred politicians/political parties, election monitoring, and fostering human rights groups. Depending on the level of development of the political system and the sophistication of politicians, different strategies are applied. In underdeveloped countries (e.g., Haiti), it involves developing the civil infrastructure/civil society groups, human right monitoring groups, and especially, bonding with the country's business elite. In more advanced countries, with a civil society base, the focus is on fostering politicians/elite who favor the neo-liberal economic/political model. From the NED's website it is evident that the principal regions where it seeks to influence political outcomes are the Middle East, the former Soviet republics, some countries in Latin America, and Africa. NED funding mostly flows through…four foundations…; these in turn are active in influencing ‘civil society’ and electoral processes around the world, in a process sometimes referred to as ‘cloak and ballot’ operations.”

“NED regularly provides funding to opposition candidates in elections in countries other than the USA. According to Allen Weinstein, one of the founders of NED, ‘A lot of what we [NED] do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA’ (Blum, Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower, 2000, p. 180).
“NED has principally supported candidates with strong ties to the military and who support the rights of U.S. corporations to invest in those countries with minimal restriction. The NED has not supported candidates who oppose investments by U.S. corporations or who promise restrictions on investment rights of U.S. corporations.

“Tom Engelhardt notes that ‘we’ve seen “the Rose Revolution” in Georgia, “the Orange Revolution” in Ukraine, and now “the Tulip Revolution” in Kyrgyzstan, all heavily financed and backed by groups funded by or connected to the U.S. government and/or the Bush administration’”.

“Revolving Doorways
The close alignment of the NEDs activities with US foreign policy interests comes as no surprise, especially when you consider the revolving doorways between the US Government and the NED Board of Directors, some of the most notable of which include:

“...former US Secretaries of State, Henry Kissinger (Nixon) and Madeleine Albright (Clinton), former US Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci (Reagan), former National Security Council Chair Zbigniew Brzezinski (Carter), former NATO Supreme Allied Command in Europe, General Wesley K. Clark (Clinton), and the current head of the World Bank, Paul Wolfowitz (George W. Bush). Another notable, Bill Brock, served as a US Senator, a US Trade Representative, and US Secretary of Labor, and then Chairman of the Board of NED”
National Democratic Institute:  
http://www.ndi.org/  
Sourcewatch on the National Democratic Institute:  

International Republican Institute:  
http://www.iri.org/  
Sourcewatch on the International Republican Institute:  
http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/International_Republican_Institute

See also: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Office_of_Transition_Initiatives

“In a secret US cable published online by WikiLeaks, former ambassador to Venezuela, William Brownfield, outlines a comprehensive plan to infiltrate and destabilize former President Hugo Chavez’ government. Dispatched in November of 2006 by Brownfield -- now an Assistant Secretary of State -- the document outlined his embassy’s five core objectives in Venezuela since 2004, which included: ‘penetrating Chavez’ political base,’ ‘dividing Chavismo,’ ‘protecting vital US business’ and ‘isolating Chavez internationally’”

**USAID/OTI Programmatic Support For Country Team 5 Point Strategy**
Origin: US Embassy Caracas (Venezuela)
Cable time: Thu, 9 Nov 2006
Cable Reference ID: 06CARACAS3356
[http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=06CARACAS3356&version=1314919461](http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=06CARACAS3356&version=1314919461)

“5. (S) OTI has supported over 300 Venezuelan civil society organizations with technical assistance, capacity building, connecting them with each other and international movements, and with financial support upwards of $15 million. Of these, 39 organizations focused on advocacy have been formed since the arrival of OTI; many of these organizations as a direct result of OTI programs and funding.”
US Agency for International Development (USAID):  

http://www.usaid.gov/

USAID stated in 1999: “The principal beneficiary of America’s foreign assistance programs has always been the United States”
Iran: US Covert Action and “Democracy Promotion”

→ Seymour Hersh, July 2008, New Yorker, “Preparing the Battlefield: The Bush Administration steps up its secret moves Against Iran”: http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/07/07/080707fa_fact_hersh

→ U.S. Congress: provide up to $400 million for covert activities in Iran which would involve “support of the minority Ahwazi Arab and Baluchi groups and other dissident organizations”

→ U.S. Special Operations Forces have conducted cross-border operations from southern Iraq into Iran since at least 2007

→ “the scale and the scope of the operations in Iran, which involve the Central Intelligence Agency and the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), have now been significantly expanded”

→ “about gathering information, enlisting support”

→ Kenneth R. Timmerman
→ journalist, writer, and founder and current executive director of the Foundation for Democracy in Iran
   http://www.iran.org/
   http://www.iran.org/about.htm

→ FDI received funding from the National Endowment for Democracy
→ NED has shown a consistent interest in “democracy promotion” in Iran
→ NED serves as the secretariat of the World Movement for Democracy which in 2000 admitted “Iran’s Pro-Democracy Student Movement” to its World Steering Committee: consistent interest in supporting students in Iran.
   • http://www.ned.org/search_results.html?cx=017836151405246707124%3Axq-d9lpgxk0&cof=FORID%3A11&q=%22democracy+in+iran%22&sa=Search#1015
   • http://www.ned.org/publications/00annual/pdf/WMD.pdf
   • http://www.wmd.org/search_results.html?cx=017836151405246707124%3Axcmc6hg8bk&cof=FORID%3A9&ie=UTF-8&q=iran&sa=Search#952
Iran Freedom Support Act, up to $50 million to NGOs working to support democratic change along the lines of the various coloured revolutions of eastern Europe
http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Iran_Freedom_Support_Act

Section 402 of the Act
http://www.theorator.com/bills109/hr282.html

(1) IN GENERAL- The President is authorized to provide financial and political assistance (including the award of grants) to foreign and domestic individuals, organizations, and entities that support democracy and the promotion of democracy in Iran. Such assistance may include the award of grants to eligible independent pro-democracy radio and television broadcasting organizations that broadcast into Iran.

and

(e) (1) contacts should be expanded with opposition groups in Iran [that support democratic governance, equality of women, equal opportunity, freedom of the press, etc.]
“contacts should be expanded”

Does it make sense for the U.S. to not want to influence events and not to have operatives in place? Brent Snowcroft:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brent_Scowcroft

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=Wr2SALuISyk

Obama: “It’s not productive, given the history of U.S.-Iranian relations, to be seen as meddling – the U.S. president meddling in Iranian elections”. To not be seen…