

The Soros media ‘empire’: The power of philanthropy to engineer consent

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***Abstract:** Recent critical scholarship has drawn attention to the antidemocratic influence of conservative philanthropists on the evolution of global media systems, but few media researchers have focused on the similarly antidemocratic trends that have resulted from the influence of Left-leaning capitalist funders. In fact, some commentators, recognizing the successful ideological cohesion of the Right’s media strategies, have instead of calling for a democratic alternative, simply suggested that progressives should attempt to emulate the Right’s (antidemocratic) strategizing: indeed while many people may think that the pro-free market doctrine of Right-leaning philanthropoids may receive better funding than liberal (‘progressive’) foundations this is not necessarily the case. Instead, the Right has simply acted with more cohesion, and consciously worked at influencing policy makers and politicians at an ideological level, while the Left has adopted a more haphazard reactive approach to tempering the excesses of our capitalist society. In most cases researchers have also tended to assume that liberal funders have only had noble (progressive) intentions to strengthen democracy, and while this may be true to a point, this paper will demonstrate that this charity is ultimately given to sustain capitalism (albeit a less harsh version compared with that proposed by their fellow Right-wing philanthropists). Using the example of George Soros’ philanthropic foundations—the best known one being his Open Society Institute—which at one point were distributing some \$500 million a year to ostensibly progressive causes, this paper will highlight Soros’ involvement in creating and/or sustaining ‘independent’ media outlets worldwide. This paper will provide a brief sketch of the contours of Soros’ global media empire, which unlike Rupert Murdoch’s, is barely mentioned (let alone criticized) by communications researchers. It is hoped that by delineating Soros’ massive yet so far undocumented impact on global media, critical scholars will begin to think more seriously about how alternative, more democratic media systems might be launched and sustained.*

Introduction

In the past few decades critical scholars have worked hard to draw attention to the antidemocratic influence of conservative philanthropists on the ‘development’ of global media systems (Carey, 1995), and more generally on democracy itself (Covington, 2005). This is commendable work that deserves greater recognition within mass communications research, yet of arguably more importance is the fact that only a handful of media researchers have focused on the similarly antidemocratic trends that have resulted from the influence of Left-leaning capitalist funders on media trends (Roelofs, 2003). Moreover, while many people may think that the pro-free market doctrine of the Right-leaning philanthropists may receive more funding than liberal (‘progressive’) foundations this is not necessarily the case: instead, the Right has simply acted with more cohesion, and consciously worked at influencing policy makers and politicians at an ideological level, while the Left has adopted a more haphazard reactive approach to tempering the excesses of our capitalist society. So it is problematic to suggest, as some commentators have, that progressives should attempt to emulate the Right’s antidemocratic strategizing to democratise the public sphere.

To date, in most cases researchers have tended to assume that liberal funders only have noble (progressive) intentions to strengthen democracy, and while this may be true to a point, this paper will demonstrate that this charity is ultimately given to sustain capitalism—albeit a less brutal variant of capitalism than that promoted by Right-wing philanthropists. Using the example of George Soros’s philanthropic foundations, which at their peak were distributing some \$500 million a year to ostensibly progressive causes, this paper will highlight his involvement in creating ‘independent’ media outlets worldwide. Initially, the paper will review the critical literature regarding the work of liberal philanthropists, then owing to the scarcity of studies examining their influence on media organizations and researchers it will briefly summarize this media-related work. Next, the paper will introduce George Soros and his network of foundations, providing a number of examples of significant

media projects that Soros and his foundations support. Finally, the paper will conclude by suggesting how media scholars might counter the arguably antidemocratic nature of Soros' media interventions.

The power of philanthropy

Despite the massive influence welded by liberal philanthropists, and their foundations, few people write about their activities, and for the most part their work is ignored, or their power downplayed. The most influential liberal foundations of the twentieth century were the Carnegie Corporation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Ford Foundation (collectively known as the big three), all three set up by America's leading capitalists, in 1911, 1913, and 1936 respectively. For the most part these three agenda-setting foundations are best known for their support of progressive causes, as they provided key leadership in numerous fields like medicine and education. Yet this support was not provided in a disinterested manner, and a strong case can be made that their philanthropy plays a vital role in sustaining capitalist hegemony (for critical evaluations of their contributions to the fields of both medicine and education, see Arnove, 1980; Brown, 1979).

Through funding and promoting research in critical areas, the big three have been able to exercise decisive influence over the growing edge of knowledge, the problems that are examined and by whom, and the uses to which newly generated information is put. Through the education programs they fund, foundations are able to influence the world views of the general public as well as the orientations and commitments of the leadership which will direct social change. (Arnove, 1980, p. 17)

Writing in 1966, Carroll Quigley—who happened to be one of Bill Clinton's mentors (Brandt, 1993)—elaborates on the motivations driving the “philanthropic colonisation” (Faber & McCarthy, 2005, p. 13) of progressive social change:

More than fifty years ago [circa 1914] the Morgan firm decided to infiltrate the Left-wing political movements in the United States. This was relatively easy to do, since these groups were starved for funds and eager for a voice to reach the people. Wall Street supplied both. The purpose was not to destroy, dominate, or take over but was really threefold: (1) to keep informed about the thinking of Left-wing or liberal groups; (2) to provide them with a mouthpiece so that they could ‘blow off steam,’ and (3) to have a final veto on their publicity and possibly on their actions, if they ever went ‘radical.’ There was nothing really new about this decision, since other

financiers had talked about it and even attempted it earlier. (Quigley, 1966, p. 938)

It should also be no surprise that the creation of the first major foundations in the early twentieth century occurred at a time when a strong progressive movement was attempting to “evolve a liberal consensus and to chart a more equitable political and economic path for the United States” (Berman, 1983, p. 16). Critically, Berman (1983) adds that although “undemocratic elitism is inherent in a capitalist society, where authority and power always flow downward, the Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller foundations have gone to great lengths to rationalize the contradiction between democratic principles and elite dominance” (p. 6). Given these observations it is interesting to note that while some scholars have defended the need for foundations to shape democratic processes, they simultaneously fail to interrogate the contradictions posed by the necessity for extra-constitutional planning within democratic and capitalist societies (Roelof, 2003).

Working within a Gramscian theoretical framework (Gramsci, 1971) that is informed by power elite research (Domhoff, 1967; Mills, 1956), and drawing upon Roelofs’ critical insights into the cooptive strategies of liberal philanthropists, this paper will illustrate how liberal foundations and individual philanthropists (i.e. George Soros) have bolstered elite cultural domination through the use of consensual (in this case charitable) institutional arrangements, rather than simply coercive ones.

In summary, liberal philanthropy has supported progressive causes in order to sustain capitalism, that is, to undermine more radical alternatives and bolster capitalist hegemony. Arnove and Pinede (2007) concur, and note that although the Carnegie, Rockefeller, and Ford foundations’ “claim to attack the root causes of the ills of humanity, they essentially engage in ameliorative practices to maintain social and economic systems that generate the very inequalities and injustices they wish to correct” (p. 393). Indeed they conclude that although in the past few decades these foundations have adopted a “more progressive, if not radical, rhetoric and approaches to community building” that gives a “voice to those who have been disadvantaged by the workings of an increasingly global capitalist economy, they remain ultimately elitist and technocratic institutions” (Arnove & Pinede, 2007, p. 422). Roelofs (2007) also supports such analyses, concluding that foundations are “prime constructors of

hegemony”, which “promot[e] consent and discourag[e] dissent against capitalist democracy” (p. 480).

Liberal foundations: The engineers of consent

Although within academia there is little acceptance and/or discussion of Herman and Chomsky’s (1988) book *Manufacturing Consent*, paradoxically members of the power elite have always understood and accepted the need to manufacture consent (Bernays, 1955; Lippmann, 1922, p. 310). Reasons why scholars have chosen to dismiss the value of Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model have been examined by Klaehn (2005). But needless to say, one of the primary reasons why their work is ignored is because they are exposing the mechanisations of an important ideological component for sustaining capitalist hegemony. So Herman and Chomsky’s work is, as it should be in any capitalist society, marginalized from dominant discourses (Lichtman, 1968). Similarly the same phenomena of course holds true for discussions of the hegemonic function of liberal foundations.

Given the consensus within the power elite on the need to manipulate the masses (apparently for their own good), it is unsurprising that the Rockefeller Foundation sponsored and organized a number of Communications Seminars between 1939 and 1940 that “acknowledged the need to develop ways in which to manufacture public consent for desired policy changes” (Barker, 2008a). Citing the Rockefeller Seminars internal papers, Buxton (2003) quotes the Group saying: “Government which rests upon consent rests also upon knowledge of how best to secure consent... Research in the field of mass communication is a new and sure weapon to achieve that end” (p. 310). On this score, research undertaken by Parmar (1999, 2000, 2002) also demonstrates the key role played by liberal foundations—working through the elite planning group, the Council on Foreign Relations (Shoup and Minter, 1997)—to engineer consent to “build a new globalist consensus” between 1939 and 1945.

The engineering of consent did not end after World War II, and the big three liberal foundations funded many of the founding fathers of mass communications research, many of whom in turn worked closely with the US government’s Central Intelligence

Agency (CIA) to manipulate the public (Barker, 2008a). Not surprisingly the liberal foundations themselves also worked closely with the CIA (Berman, 1983; Saunders, 1999), so it is particularly noteworthy that liberal foundations also pioneered America's public broadcasting system, with the Ford Foundation providing it with over \$292 million between 1951 and 1977 (Magat, 1979). However, although there are few critical commentaries on the Ford Foundation's influence on public broadcasting a rare exception was provided by Balas (2003), who surmised that the Ford Foundation's influence "limited its range, scope, and audience base", and that its Educational Television served to "promote the speech, ideas, and public policy interests of the educated and professional classes, [and] also worked to contain a potentially disruptive popular democracy" (pp. 96, 113). Indeed, Balas (2003) writes that under the Ford Foundation's guidance public broadcasting "evolved to become not an advocate for participatory democracy and community ties, but a paternalistic, top-down provider of 'quality' and expert voices" (p. 117). For other useful critiques of the American public broadcasting system, which unfortunately overlook the antidemocratic influence of liberal philanthropy, see Hoynes (1994) and Barsamian (2001). Having briefly introduced the darker side of liberal philanthropy, the next section of this paper will examine the work of one the world's most influential liberal philanthropists, George Soros.

George Soros: Liberal philanthropist extraordinaire

Just write that the former Soviet Empire is now called the Soros Empire.
(Soros, cited in Slater, 1996, p. 135)

George Soros is an American financier who made his billions by speculating through a hedge fund; he is also a former director of the Council on Foreign Relations, and recently funded the creation of the European Council on Foreign Relations. Yet despite his establishment background, many progressive activists (particularly Democrats) hold Soros up as an important critic of the status quo, often citing as their evidence, his book *Open Society: Reforming Global Capitalism* (2000). Clark (2003), however, provides a welcome antidote to such uncritical thinking, and describes the crucial role that Soros played in facilitating the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe. Indeed, from 1979 onwards Soros:

distributed \$3m a year to dissidents including Poland's Solidarity movement [which was also sponsored by the CIA (Berstein, 1992)], Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia and Andrei Sakharov in the Soviet Union. In 1984, he founded his first Open Society Institute in Hungary and pumped millions of dollars into opposition movements and independent media. Ostensibly aimed at building up a 'civil society', these initiatives were designed to weaken the existing political structures and pave the way for eastern Europe's eventual colonisation by global capital. Soros now claims, with characteristic immodesty, that he was responsible for the 'Americanisation' of eastern Europe. (Clark, 2003, n.p.)

According to the above quote, Soros was distributing around \$3 million a year to Polish dissidents; however, more significantly, in 1996—as *Newsweek* noted—Soros' foundations distributed a phenomenal \$350 million (in just that year), which was \$2 million more than that distributed by the Ford Foundation and \$243 million more than the Rockefeller Foundation (Auchincloss, 1997). The Soros foundations most recent annual report (OSI, 2007) shows that Soros still remains a force to be reckoned with amongst democracy manipulators, as the entire Soros Foundations Network distributed over \$400 million worth of grants in 2006.

Although many people are now aware of the massive political power that George Soros and his foundations wield internationally, little appears to be being done to challenge his antidemocratic influence. Indeed, instead of being challenged for his 'democratic' interventions into global civil society he is being courted by many progressives, and is now considered an integral member of the Democracy Alliance—which ironically aims to promote democracy in the US with the funding provided by leading capitalists. That said, more people are beginning to identify his antidemocratic *modus operandi*, and as former Ford Foundation project specialist, David Korten (2001), pointed out in his review of Soros' aforementioned book, to put it simply "Soros plans to buy civil society". Similar critiques were also levelled against Soros in 1997 by Cleffi (1997) after Soros published an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* titled the "The Capitalist Threat". However, as might be expected with Korten's background, it is unsurprising that he does not draw the links between Soros' global endeavours and those of liberal foundations, even though the ties are obvious.

Much as liberal foundations have sponsored and created phalanxes of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—most prominently since the 1960s—to

promote and stabilise the capitalist status quo, Soros is doing the same. Not being ones to mince their words, Petras and Veltmeyer (2005) describe NGOs that are the creatures of liberal philanthropy as the “executing agents of US imperialism”, which have “helped turn local communities away from organizations seeking to mobilize for direct action against the system and instead promoted a reformist approach to social change” (pp. 178–179). Likewise Roelofs (2003) suggests that many “[c]ivil society organizations are convenient instruments for imperialism”, which are effectively “controlled by elites via funding, integration into coalitions, and overlapping personnel” (pp. 203–204). Writing from a more conservative perspective, but nonetheless a critical one, Smillie (1995) observes, the irony of this situation is that “[d]espite frequently repeated reassurance that NGO independence is reasonably intact, the fact is that [since the 1960s] Northern NGOs have stumbled into a contracting era without appearing to have noticed it” (p. 167). As Rodriguez (2007) points out:

[T]he Open Society's narrative of reconciliation and societal perfection marginalizes radical forms of dissent which voice an *irreconcilable* antagonism to white supremacist patriarchy, neoliberalism, racialized state violence, and other structures of domination. (p. 28)

It is impossible to do justice to the magnitude of Soros' ‘democratic’ affiliations and activities within the bounds of this article, but recent scholarship exploring this topic includes Szamuely (2000), d'Aymery (2001), Cottin (2002), Trifkovi (2004), Barker (2007), and a particularly useful article by Guilhot (2007). To date, though, no researchers have examined Soros' media work, so the following section will provide the first overview of the contours of Soros' global media empire, which unlike Rupert Murdoch's, are barely mentioned (let alone criticized) by communications researchers—be they in the mainstream or alternative press. Roelofs (2003) notes:

The left and the liberal press frequently decry concentration of ownership in the commercial media; however, little attention is paid to nonprofit information sources. These include university faculties, conferences, publications, and libraries. Can libraries be biased? Who knows? Who researches this? Currently, Eastern European libraries are being redone by the Soros and Mellon foundations. What goes in, and what stays out? (p. 206)

Coming to grasp with the full extent of Soros' media ‘empire’ within the confines of a short article is not possible, as to provide an adequate description of its sinews would

require a book in itself. Consequently, this article will examine a variety of recent media projects that have been supported by Soros, and provide a more detailed examination of just two of Soros' largest media projects, Transitions Online and EurasiaNet.

Soros' 'progressive' media sinews

As George Soros is a liberal (not conservative) philanthropist it is entirely fitting that he would distribute some money to a handful of progressive (some might even say radical) media organizations. Thus progressive American groups that benefit from Soros' largesse include the Center for Media Education, Free Press, the Independent Media Institute (whose best known service is AlterNet), Pacific News Service, and Proteus Fund Inc. (In the past MediaChannel has also received Soros funding). Given that most of Soros' philanthropy is linked to a democracy-manipulating agenda that is similar to that promoted by the notorious National Endowment for Democracy (Barker, 2006, 2008b), it could be argued that by lending his support to such well-respected progressive groups helps further shield his less democratic work (which is where most of his money goes) from critical enquiry. Thus I will now provide a non-exhaustive list of Soros-funded media projects to illustrate the range of organizations that Soros makes use of to manipulate democracy worldwide.

US-based projects

- *Youth Media Council*: a group that was formed in 2001 to “increase the media strategy and capacity of the youth organizing sector” (About Us, 2008a), that has helped to build national networks like the Media & Democracy Coalition and the Media Action Grassroots Network.
- *Public Radio International* (PRI): a group that formed in 1983 to “give listeners greater choice in radio programming than had been available” (FAQs, 2007). As well as receiving funding from a range of liberal foundations (e.g. in 2005 they received a US\$1.25 million grant from the Ford Foundation), PRI's work is also funded by the antidemocratic US Institute of Peace (Hatch & Diamond, 1990). Moreover, their former president of 17 years, Stephen L. Salyer, is now the president of the elite planning group, the Salzburg Seminar.

National projects

- *Al-Quds Educational Television* (also known as the Institute of Modern Media): an Israeli-based “nonprofit media organization dedicated to strengthening the educational, culture, social and environmental well being of all Palestinians” (Who We Are, 2008). The Institute is headed by Daoud Kuttab who founded it “with encouragement from the president of Al-Quds University Professor Sari Nusseibeh”—an individual who is well known as an Israeli collaborator. Other ‘democratic’ funders of their work include Internews (Barker, In Press), the Westminster Foundation (which is the British version of the National Endowment for Democracy—NED), and two groups that have received NED funding in the past, the Palestinian Center for Democracy and Elections, and the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy.
- *CubaNet*: a Cuban-based group which according to their website is a “non-profit organization that fosters free press in Cuba, assists its independent sector develop a civil society and informs the world about Cuba's reality” (About Us, 2008b), but significantly also receives funding from both the NED and the US Agency for International Development.
- *Instituto Prensa y Sociedad*: a Peruvian and Venezuelan-based democracy manipulator that receives strong support from the NED (see Barker, 2008c).
- *ZaMir*: an important Bosnian activist media network during the 1990s, which was supported by the NED.

International media groups

- *ARTICLE 19*: a British-based group that has in the past obtained funding from the Westminster Foundation, and Rights and Democracy (the Canadian version of the NED). Gara LaMarche, the vice president and director of US programs for Soros’ Open Society Institute, serves on ARTICLE 19’s international advisory board. For a full discussion of their democracy manipulating connections, see Barker (Forthcoming).
- *Committee to Protect Journalists*: a US group that was created “in response to the often brutal treatment of their foreign colleagues by authoritarian

governments and other enemies of independent journalism” (About CPJ, 2008). For critiques of their work, see Barker (forthcoming) and Herman (2000).

- *Global Forum for Media Development*: a group that receives funding from the NED and Ford Foundation amongst others (see Barker, 2008a).
- *International Center for Journalists*: a US group that was formed in 1984 to “improve[e] the quality of journalism worldwide”. They are also supported by the NED.
- *International Communications Forum* (ICF) was founded in 1991 and is “devoted to media ethics and freedoms of expression and information” (Home, 2008). In 2003 their annual conference was sponsored by the Open Society Institute and the Ford Foundation amongst others: two of this groups six vice-presidents are linked to Soros’s media network as Rafael Marques de Morais (who worked as a representative in Angola for the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa), and Frances Pinter (who is the former publishing director for the Soros Foundation).
- *International Journalists' Network*: a US-based group which aims to “help connect journalists with the opportunities and information they need to better themselves and raise journalism standards in their countries” (About Us, 2008c). Primary support for their work is provided by the Open Society Institute, the NED, and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.
- *Media Diversity Institute*: a London-based charity that “mobilises the power of media to lessen inter-group conflict, advance human rights” (About MDI, 2008). Their work obtains funding from the Westminster Foundation.
- *The New Press*: a “not-for-profit publishing house” that was set up in 1990 to act as a “major alternative to the large, commercial publishers” (About Us, 2008d). In addition to receiving ongoing support from the Open Society Institute they are funded by a range of liberal foundations including both the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations.
- *Project Syndicate*: “an international association of quality newspapers devoted to: bringing distinguished voices from across the world to local audiences everywhere; strengthening the independence of printed media in transition and developing countries; upgrading their journalistic, editorial, and business

capacities. Project Syndicate currently consists of 295 newspapers in 123 countries, with a total circulation of 42,812,258 copies” (About Us, 2008e).

Transitions Online and EurasiaNet: Weapons of media distortion

In July 1999, the Czech-based Transitions Online (TOL) replaced its print predecessor, *Transitions* magazine, whose last issue was printed in March 1999. The non-profit TOL was founded in April 1999 by “four of the former print magazine’s staff... [w]ith the financial and professional support of the Open Society Institute’s (OSI) Internet program and the Media Development Loan Fund” (About TOL, 2008). However, OSI was also involved with TOL’s predecessor right from its initial launch, as the OSI’s Open Media Research Institute (OMRI) published the pilot edition of the magazine in late 1994, as a new journal “covering the politics, events, and developmental issues affecting the 28 countries that resulted from the fall of communism and the breakups of the early 1990s” (About TOL, 2008). The biweekly magazine, *Transition* (as it was then called) formerly began publishing in January 1995, “provid[ing] in-depth information on issues at the heart of post-communist transformation, with in-house OMRI analysts providing the bulk of the content” (About TOL, 2008). Here it is interesting to understand why OSI created the OMRI, as according to their website, OMRI was:

Founded in June 1994 as a public-private venture between the congressionally appointed U.S. Board for International Broadcasting and the Open Society Institute, OMRI has picked up where the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute left off when it was dissolved in December 1994. OMRI maintains a staff of some 30 research analysts, supported by a team of archivists and augmented by correspondents in the region, who report on and analyze current developments and trends. (Fact Sheet, 1996)

In 1997, OMRI transferred control of its “flagship” publication *Transitions* to the Institute for Journalism in Transition (IJT)—a newly created group that was launched by OSI through a merger of *Transitions* monthly and the Institute for War & Peace Reporting (IWPR), the latter of which is an OSI-funded group which Herman and Peterson (2005) refer to as being “highly-compromised.” (After this ‘change’ in management *Transitions* went from being a biweekly to a monthly publication.) Subsequently, *Transitions* morphed into TOL, and in 2000 their website acknowledged the financial support they had received from ‘democratic’ Eurasia

Foundation (Lingua Fracas, 2000; Barker, 2007), and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. TOL are still almost completely reliant on external support for their existence, and according to their 2004 annual report their total revenue was just over \$502,000, of which some \$438,000 was derived from grants. Other notable ‘democratic’ funders of their work, other than those previously mentioned, include the Ford Foundation (see Roelofs, 2003), the US Institute of Peace (see Hatch and Diamond, 1990), Freedom House (see Barahona, 2007), the NED-funded Independent Journalism Foundation, and the US Agency for International Development (see Weissman, 1974).

Given the large amount of support that TOL receives from key democracy-manipulating organizations, and its origins in the ashes of part of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty—which was one of the US’s key propaganda outlets (Cone, 1998/9; Puddington, 2003)—it is hardly likely that TOL can be relied upon to produce impartial news coverage. It is also worth pointing out that TOL maintains direct ties to one of the American elites most trustworthy propaganda mills, *The New York Times* (Boyd-Barrett, 2004; Friel and Falk, 2004, 2007; Herman, 1999, chapter 6), because one of the founding editors of TOL’s predecessor, *Transitions*, was *The Times* commentator, Michael T. Kaufman: he was later joined on TOL’s thirteen person-strong advisory board (2000–01) by another *New York Times* correspondent, Steven Erlanger. However, of more relevance to TOL’s democracy-manipulating function in Eastern Europe, Brock (2005), along with Herman and Peterson (2007) provide ample evidence that highlights the vital role that the Western ‘liberal’ media (e.g., *The New York Times*) played in *The Dismantling of Yugoslavia* for imperial interests. Likewise, Barker (2008d) illustrates the antidemocratic nature of NED funding for ‘independent’ media outlets in Eastern Europe, and shows how this critical support facilitated timely revolutions in countries of geostrategic importance to imperial power elites.

Another influential media group which allows Soros to filter Eurasian news is EurasiaNet, an online media organization which is operated by OSI’s Central Eurasia Project. Based in New York, EurasiaNet boasts that it “is perhaps the most comprehensive source for news and information about the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia found anywhere on the World Wide Web” (About EurasiaNet,

2008). Unsurprisingly, given the Soros connection, EurasiaNet's advisory board consists of seven individuals with good democracy manipulating pedigree, and includes Patricia Carley (who is a former US Institute for Peace programme officer), Fiona Hill (who is the former Director of Strategic Planning at the Eurasia Foundation, a director of the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, serves as an advisor to Public Radio International, and a member of the US Advisory Board of the OSI initiated and NED-linked Democracy Coalition Project), Scott Horton (who has formerly been a director of the Council on Foreign Relations' Center for Preventive Action, see Barker, 2008e), Nancy Lubin (who is a former 'peace' fellow at the US Institute for Peace, a trustee of the Eurasia Foundation, and a director of Terror Free Tomorrow, see Barker, 2007), Michael Ochs (who is a former staff advisor at the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe), David Rieff (who is a member of a group that Herman and Peterson (2005) refer to as The New Humanitarians), and Barnett R. Rubin (who was also a former 'peace' fellow at the US Institute for Peace, and from 1994 to 2000 was Director of the Center for Preventive Action). Finally, like TOL, EurasiaNet is a member of the International Relations and Security Network; the other four media organizations that are affiliated to this network being the Institute for War & Peace Reporting, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, the Investigative Reporting Resource Center for SEE, and Neue Zürcher Zeitung. Principle partners of this network read like a who's who of democracy manipulators and include Soros-linked elite planning groups like the Council on Foreign Relations, and the International Crisis Group. Thus perhaps the International Relations and Security Network is an appropriate group for two of Soros' most influential media groups to be affiliated to.

The future of media

This paper has demonstrated that liberal philanthropy exerts a massive—albeit for the most part unmentioned—influence on the shape and function of global media systems. It has shown that the major liberal foundations and philanthropists of the twentieth century have used their significant financial resources to consolidate the capitalist system (from which they derived their riches) by devising ever more effective means to manufacture consent. Without a doubt there is ample evidence to support the contention that the power of liberal philanthropy has been harnessed to

protect the powerful. But liberal foundations and private philanthropists, like George Soros, are not all powerful (despite their wishes to be so), and the question remains: who is really the most powerful, the elites or the general populous? In answering this question it is clear that I am in agreement with the power elites who understand that the power of the mass public is greater than their own: however, while I seek to encourage people power, elites more than anything fear the democratic power of the people, and do everything within their means to diminish it. For a rare admission of this deep-reaching elitist fear, see the classic Trilateral Commission report, *The Crisis of Democracy* (Crozier et al., 1975).

So while the power to change our global media systems is at the present juncture highly influenced by liberal philanthropists, ultimately the power to resist their elitist interventions can (and often is) countered by people coming together to organize democratic alternatives. By delineating Soros' massive yet so far undocumented impact on global media, it is hoped that critical scholars and concerned citizens will begin to think more seriously about how genuinely alternative (more democratic) media systems might be launched and sustained in the future.

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