How NGOs and the CIA Hijacked Ukraine

Mike Benz is a former Deputy Assistant Secretary at the U.S. State Department and the current Executive Director of the Foundation for Freedom Online. Benz discusses how the intelligence agencies use "non-governmental organisations" (NGOs) to hijack the civil society of other states, and how the US and its partners seized control over Ukraine. Benz has also given interviews to Tucker Carlson, Joe Rogan, Russel Brand and others. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: https://glenndiesen.substack.com/ X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_DiesenPatreon: https://www.patreon.com/glenndiesen Support the channel: PayPal: https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/Diesen79 Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: https://gofund.me/09ea012f

#M2

Hi everyone, and welcome back. Today we are joined by Mike Benz, former Deputy Assistant Secretary at the U.S. State Department and currently the Executive Director of the Foundation for Freedom Online. Thank you so much—it's a great honor to have you here on the program. Likewise. Thanks, Glenn. So, an active and organized civil society is important for any democratic society. And you are, I guess, the main critic of how civil society around the world has been hijacked by what's often referred to as non-governmental organizations, or NGOs, that are actually funded by governments and cooperate closely with intelligence agencies. Now, this is a very important aspect of how foreign policy is being conducted, and I think it's very much underreported given how significant it is. I was wondering—perhaps this is a good place to start—what is the origin of this? Where does this actually go back to, this huge monster which has been growing now for so long?

#M3

It's a great question. You started by saying "an active and organized civil society." And I think what is now reaching peak public awareness is just how that organization is structured. There can be an organic organization, and then there can be an astroturfed one or a sponsored one, as you mentioned, by organs of statecraft or intelligence. This goes back to essentially the intelligence structure that grew out of World War II. In World War II, you had the United States supporting Europe against, obviously, Hitler and Mussolini.

And in the course of that, the predecessor to the CIA, the OSS, had to make allies with various organs of civil society during the war—made allies with church institutions and the Vatican, which was being persecuted by Mussolini, had to make allies with trade, labor, and union groups, which ran logistics in Europe and therefore supplied weapons, cash, and all manner of aid. And when World War II ended and the OSS, our wartime spy agency, became the CIA, the peacetime spy agency, we essentially kept those practices of partnership with civil society—not for a hot war, but for a cold war.

And so the utility, for example, of relationships with media organizations—which, before there was a peacetime spy agency, were run by our War Department in the 1940s, in 1941 and '42—the Office of War Information essentially centralized the U.S. military's relationship with media institutions. Those proved to be even more essential in a democracy than they were in kinetic war, because a democratic outcome depends on the hearts and minds of the people, which depends on the media inputs they have. And so, as the Cold War raged across Europe, across Africa, across Latin and South America, across Southeast Asia, these civil society partnerships—in media, in labor and unions, in universities, in the legal field through rule of law programs, basically every institution in arts and culture, obviously—became seen as a national security imperative to co-opt all parts of civil society in places that were of geostrategic interest to the United States.

#M2

Well, it seems that in the 1980s, the development of the National Endowment for Democracy really became, I guess, a cornerstone for a lot of these NGOs, because they also finance other NGOs. Now, I always found this to be fascinating because with political propaganda, one often attempts to develop mental shortcuts for having people interpret the world very simply—as us being good, others evil. Of course, source credibility is always important, which is why the ability to advance foreign policy through a humanitarian NGO is the ideal instrument. Because now all geopolitics is simply a struggle for human rights and human dignity. But how significant, though, is the National Endowment for Democracy? And what do we know, I guess, about its origin and purpose?

#M3

So I'll address that, but I do want to codify, if you will, the point you just made about the credibility of NGOs. I think I have this quote memorized. This is from the CEPPS program—the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening. It is a joint program that is run by the State Department, sponsored by USAID, and technically implemented by the National Endowment for Democracy. So this is all three corners of that kind of intelligence front statecraft operation. They have a quote on this where they say, "Government has the money, but not the credibility."

Civil society has the credibility, but not the money. And this is why the government must fund civil society to run its talking points for them, is essentially what they say. They are acutely aware, Glenn, of what you just described, and government documents and videos that I've made public corroborate that directly. But the story behind the National Endowment for Democracy is a fascinating one. As we discussed, in the 1940s—for example, in April 1948—the State Department policy planning staff put out a national security memo that was a predecessor to that, but it was called the Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare.

It was written by George Kennan, who would famously give the CIA its plausible deniability powers two months later in NSC 10-2. In that memo, the State Department lays out how the CIA is going to

have to carry out organized political warfare under the cloak of civil society, NGOs, and voluntary citizen committees and councils that would be fronts for statecraft. It's a fantastic memo—I recommend everyone in your audience look this up. It's called "The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare." It was written 12 days after the CIA's first successful regime change operation—or I should say, election rigging operation. That was the Italian election in 1948, the first democratic vote after World War II in Italy, which pitted a US-UK-backed pro-democracy candidate against a Soviet-backed pro-communist candidate. This is how it was pitched.

And the CIA did not at that time have authorized powers to do what it did, but it scrambled at the last minute because it looked like the US-backed candidate was down in the polls. And so it worked with mafia unions, it worked with Hollywood, it worked with Catholic charities, it pumped money into media organizations and all manner of, kind of, the sort of dirty tricks that we would call a national security threat. They were done here, but it was very successful. It successfully did tip and tilt that election. The folks who were associated with that—Miles Copeland wrote a book afterwards saying that if the CIA had not interfered, then the Soviet-backed candidate would have won, and this was a good thing that we did it. But essentially, the State Department decided at that moment that this is something that we should operationalize around the world.

And from the 1940s through the 1970s, the CIA would do this, moving through NGOs and civil society fronts, but often creating CIA proprietaries. And it was just getting its feet wet in terms of the sophistication of essentially laundering influence and laundering money to be able to maintain plausible deniability. But within the United States, particularly within the Democratic Party here, there began to be a significant amount of blowback in the 1960s and '70s. Today, the CIA, the Pentagon, USAID, and the State Department have been funding NGOs and civil society fronts to pick sides in the civil war within the Republican Party—predominantly because of the MAGA populist side of the Republican Party that is for prioritizing domestic affairs and limiting the international affairs budget, the warmongering, the USAID expenditures, and the like.

And that obviously runs straight against the interests of the U.S. foreign policy establishment. And so what we see today against the Republican Party has been a national security apparatus that appears to be anti-Republican, although it's really not. It's just picking sides in the civil war. They would not be anti-Republican, for example, if Nikki Haley were the frontrunner, or Mitt Romney, or John McCain. They're simply picking sides in the Republican civil war in the same way they would back a tribal guerrilla movement in Sudan over a rival. And this is what was being done to the Democratic Party in the 1960s and '70s. The CIA, the Pentagon, USAID, and the State Department were funding media organs, intelligence fronts like the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and the like. They were funding student movements through the National Student Association.

They were funding union groups. They were funding the teachers' unions, including the largest teachers' union in the United States, the National Education Association, as well as teachers' unions, CIA proprietaries like the World Confederation of Organizations in the teaching profession. And they were targeting Democrats, in particular the populist Democrat side. And the Democrats, by the mid-

1970s, had had enough. These scandals had piled up so high that they became one of the things that Jimmy Carter ran for president on. There was the first oversight in Congress of the CIA in its entire history in 1975 and 1976—the Church Committee and Pike Committee hearings. Those are what established the Senate Intelligence Committee and the House Intelligence Committee here.

Jimmy Carter won the presidency in 1976 on the back of CIA malfeasance and quickly had his new CIA director, Stansfield Turner, fire 30 percent of the entire operations division of the CIA. There was a legal requirement to have a, quote, "presidential finding" for all CIA covert action, which meant that the CIA could no longer have the arrangement with the U.S. president where the president didn't know what the CIA was doing, because every covert action had to be authorized in writing by the U.S. president. So what this did is it made it much, much, much more difficult for the CIA to maintain plausible deniability, and for the National Security Council, the White House, and the president to be able to have this cozy relationship with the CIA where the president could say, "I want this done, but I don't want you to tell me how you're doing it."

So the Republicans won the presidency in 1980 on the heels of what were seen as foreign policy disasters by the Democrats. In particular, in 1979, the U.S. lost control over Iran—Iran, which was the linchpin, in many respects, of the U.S.-U.K. oil and gas supply. The partnership, essentially from 1953 to 1979, was very strong after the CIA-backed coup in 1953. But it was perceived by the Republicans that the reason the U.S. lost control over Iran was because it no longer had a robust Central Intelligence Agency. If the CIA had never been neutered, the Republicans argued, we would have never lost Iran. The problem was, though, that Ronald Reagan was still beholden to Democratic control over the House of Representatives.

They could not legislatively get the CIA's old powers back, so they resorted to an executive branch expansion through the creation of new NGOs like the National Endowment for Democracy in 1983, the U.S. Institute of Peace in 1984, and Internews in that same period—I think it was between 1984 and 1986. These were all CIA jobs, but they would simply be handled by NGOs that were set up through, effectively, a bill that was driven by the executive branch. And they structured it in a way to try to make Democrat stakeholders in on the money. For example, the structure of the National Endowment for Democracy—let me just, I presume, I know that you have a very educated and informed audience. So, would you like me to go in depth on what the National Endowment for Democracy is and how it operates?

#M2

Yeah, no, that would be great. That is a very central institution in this whole sea of NGOs.

#M3

Right. Okay. So the picture that I'm trying to paint here is that you started off with the State Department in the United States in 1789, which would do all of this international meddling. But then

in 1948, it transitioned primarily to the CIA in order to maintain plausible deniability for U.S. statecraft. And then in 1983, with the advent of the National Endowment for Democracy, it transitioned from having the CIA be responsible for these sorts of international meddling or civil society fronts to places like the National Endowment for Democracy. And just a little bit on what it does.

So I think it's best described by its original founder, Carl Gershman, who told the Washington Post in 1986 that the CIA... I think the direct quote was, "The CIA used to get in trouble in the 1960s and '70s when democratic groups around the world were seen as subsidized by the CIA. That got these groups in trouble. And that is why the endowment was created. We don't do that sort of thing anymore. And that is why the endowment was created." So this is the founder of the National Endowment for Democracy saying the reason the National Endowment for Democracy was set up was to fund the organizations that the CIA wanted to fund, but did not want to risk the plausible deniability of being seen as directly subsidized by the CIA. OK, so it is a CIA front.

In fact, the very idea came from the CIA director, William Casey, and his right-hand man, Raymond Green, who worked closely with the CIA during the Reagan administration. Raymond Green was in the unit for CIA propaganda and disinformation for 30 years before he worked on the legislative bill to form the National Endowment for Democracy. At the last minute, Democrats were initially okay with the idea because of the structure that gets them paid off and all—I'll explain that in a minute. But the initial agreement for the formation of the National Endowment for Democracy was that there would be a firewall between NED and the CIA, that they would be funded by Congress, set up by Congress, accountable to the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Senate Foreign Relations Committee, but that there would be a firewall in place to make sure there was no coordination.

At the last minute, that provision in the bill was stripped. So the CIA gets a copy of every single grant that NED makes. I'm just going to say that again: the CIA gets a copy of every grant that NED makes now. We don't get a copy of that anymore. The Biden administration, by the way—not that we ever got those internal documents, but this was designed—they called this "overt action" as opposed to "covert action." This idea was that it was simply public-facing pro-democracy work rather than cloak-and-dagger CIA work.

But that was always a lie. None of this was ever public. For a long time, Americans could at least see what the grants were on usaspending.gov, the public government grant database, even though these grants would be highly misleading and you could never get internal documents. But even that is now completely destroyed. The Biden State Department signed this stealth agreement with NED so that every single grant NED makes has blanket sensitivity, and even Congress and the White House only get cryptonym names for these grant recipients. The whole thing is a complete covert action. So American taxpayers are paying for this. But since 2022, not a single NED grant is publicly visible.

The whole thing is now moved completely into the secret intelligence sphere while trying to hold itself out as some sort of public-facing pro-democracy group. The lies and contradictions are simply at fever pitch now, which is one of the reasons there is this budget fight and showdown between the Trump administration and the foreign policy establishment on this. But let me break down the structure of NED and how it works so you can see just how wide-spanning this is. Because the Reagan administration, when this was being set up, had to overcome resistance from Democrats, they structured NED in a very clever way. They said this will not be a Republican tool that can be used against Democrats or a Democrat tool that can be used against Republicans.

It will explicitly have two political branches: the IRI, the International Republican Institute, and the NDI, the National Democratic Institute. Each of them will get equal funding in the allocation. It will also have two others in its core four to make sure—one called the Center for International Private Enterprise, which is the Chamber of Commerce wing of NED, and something called the Solidarity Center, which is the union arm of NED—in order to make sure that both labor and management are co-equal partners in this as well. At the time, it's worth noting that the Chamber of Commerce was an almost exclusively Republican thing. Big business during the Cold War was one of the stalwarts of the Republican Party, and big labor unions were one of the big stalwarts of the Democratic Party.

And so even within the civil society institutions, the CIA was trying to make all of the stakeholders happy in order to ensure that this movement—this foreign influence operation—maintained bipartisan support and was never at risk of being cut the way the CIA was in the late 1970s, just a few short years before. What this ended up doing was helping to be a tool—well, first, immediately what that does is give the CIA the ability to directly interface with both sides of the political aisle, the big international and multinational corporations and hedge funds, and the biggest unions in the world, including the AFL-CIO, under which the Solidarity Center is tucked. The AFL-CIO is the largest union in the United States of America and has international branches in almost every country on earth.

Leftists in the 1960s and '70s used to call it the AFL-CIA because of how tightly wound up it was in CIA operations. And now it is wound up in CIA front operations through NED's Solidarity Center. But it also has—it's also a co-opter of international media. Another branch of NED is called CIMA, the Center for International Media Assistance. Well, what kind of assistance do you think international media needs? What do you think NED is referring to? It's the money. They fund the media. They fund the unions. They fund the political parties. They fund the arts and culture groups. They fund the censorship organizations to control what is defined as mis- and disinformation. Every vector of civil society influence in any country on earth is a target of NED.

And this is why it is seen as so indispensable and why it is one of the last bastions standing in terms of the current fight with Trump and the most pernicious of these foreign policy institutions gone rogue. NED was completely aligned against President Trump. They organized meetings, they organized policy drives to completely destroy the Trump presidency. I can run down that litany if

your audience would like to hear it. It's kind of incredible... Every aspect of NED was weaponized to that effect against the Trump administration. At the same time, you have Trump donors and allies and partners in the business world who rely on NED's Rolodex of contacts, the relationships that it's built up over 40 years.

These are things that are very difficult to build from scratch. And so there are many geopolitical hotbeds that the Trump administration, I believe, would still like to maintain influence over, whether that is Venezuela or Ukraine or Iran or parts of Africa—places that are not as contested, I would say, on political grounds. For example, the Democratic and Republican Party differences about Hungary or France or Germany. But there are many places where there is bipartisan support for international development work—I'll put it charitably—of these civil society organizations. And so I think that has caused this kind of schism within Trump world about what to do about NED.

#M2

Well, you mentioned before the founding president of NED, which is Carl Gershman. He once referred to Ukraine as the biggest prize in the geopolitical struggle between the West and Russia. Now, I was wondering, to what extent have these NGOs had a key role in Ukraine, both in terms of, I guess, toppling the government in 2014, but also organizing the government, civil society, media, and the rest of capturing Ukraine after 2014?

#M3

Totalizing. The NED is all over Ukraine. They're all over Ukraine and Belarus. In fact, Carl Gershman was on the Belarus side of things, if you recall, in the summer of 2020. The US foreign policy establishment tried to organize a color revolution against Alexander Lukashenko. And Carl Gershman was actually prank-called by several people who were posing as civil society activists. I believe The Grayzone covered this and has good coverage of it. But you can listen to—I believe it was Carl Gershman—on a Zoom call, laying out all the ways that NED interfered in Belarus to make those protests happen, to provide support to the various union groups in the Solidarity Center, and to provide support for so-called independent media.

That just means independent of our adversary, but completely dependent on the National Endowment for Democracy and USAID for funding and direction. And the protesters as well—I highly encourage folks to look up that NED Belarus video so that you can listen straight from the horse's mouth about how these things are structured. But NED was all over Ukraine from the 1990s onward, and arguably before that. They were all over the Orange Revolution. They were all over the Maidan Revolution.

They were a part of that soup when Victoria Nuland referred to the $5 billion of financial assistance given to Ukrainian civil society. Victoria Nuland made that speech while she was the Assistant Secretary for Europe and Eurasian Affairs in December 2013, at an event in front of two signs for

ExxonMobil and Chevron, which had each signed multi-billion dollar partnership deals with Naftogaz, the state-owned gas company of Ukraine. George Soros had been working for years in a tug of war against Vladimir Putin to try to privatize Naftogaz so that the proceeds from the linchpin of Ukraine's economy—its gas infrastructure and gas transits—would be earned by Western energy companies that Soros was invested in, rather than by Russians in Gazprom. This is why the IMF, World Bank, U. S. State Department, and U.K. Foreign Office red lines and terms always demand that Ukraine continue the path to privatization of its energy resources. Maybe that's a separate side issue.

But NED effectively operates as a kind of private CIA for the Soros enterprise. And the State Department goes along with it because Soros is the single largest donor to the Democratic Party. It's not just Soros; it's also all of these Western energy firms, as I mentioned—ExxonMobil, Chevron. Chevron signed a $10 billion deal with Naftogaz. Shell signed another $10 billion deal with Naftogaz. British Petroleum, Norwegian LNG companies, Qatari LNG companies, which are partnered with British banks. The play was to knock out Russian natural gas companies. I call this the grand Ukraine energy play. If you cut out Russian natural gas, then the only other way to be able to get gas into Ukraine and then leverage Ukraine's gas pipeline architecture is through LNG, which is much, much more expensive than natural gas.

But you can sell it from the West. That means Houston, Texas suddenly opens up a giant market to Ukraine because, without the natural gas from Russia, you now sell to them—essentially at diplomatic gunpoint through the sanctions regime—massively marked-up and expensive LNG from Houston, Texas, or from Norway, or from Qatar. Any of these places with giant gas fields can simply ship into Poland and use the new LNG terminals there to then direct it into Ukraine. This is part of why it was so important for the Biden foreign policy establishment to ensure that Poland remained under the thumb of this blob architecture within NATO, so that they maintained a permanent war footing against Russia—a sanctions footing against Russia—to not disturb the profits for Western oil or gas companies.

#M2

You mentioned George Soros a few times. I remember an article he wrote back in the '90s where he argued that NATO needed partnerships with Eastern European countries because the NATO countries—the Western Europeans and Americans—were always apprehensive when too many body bags began to pile up. But if they could mix Western weapons technologies with, I guess, Eastern European "meat" or men, then this was effectively what they needed for NATO to be a big fighting force. But I do want to ask, because George Soros is always mentioned as a very key player—indeed, as someone financing the Democratic Party and the Open Society. These NGOs which he operates seem to work very much hand in hand with the US government. Why is George Soros so important in this larger use of NGOs to capture the civil society and media of various countries?

#M3

Well, it's because he's the single largest political donor to Democrat political campaigns. For example, in the last election cycle, he gave $100 million to Democrats. The second largest donor gave only $40 million. So the Soros enterprise is two and a half times more influential. He who pays the piper calls the tune. The biggest donors get to pick the personnel. These are favors that are owed by the president to their donors, lest they no longer get the donations in following election years. And so the Soros network gets to effectively pick the personnel who man and staff the State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Pentagon, USAID. And this extends not just to the direct personnel there, but also within Congress.

Mark Warner, for example, who is the Democrat head of the Senate Intelligence Committee, got over $14 million from Soros family members just for his Senate races under the Friends of Mark Warner. And so this determines what Ned does. This determines what the CIA does. And what you see is this very, very deep relationship between the CIA and the hedge fund world. I don't look at the Open Society Institute as being an NGO; I look at it as simply the action arm of the George Soros Management Fund. Whenever you see a Soros protest or a Soros political push in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Mongolia—you name it—you can bet that there is a Soros portfolio company that the Soros hedge fund is either long or short on, and that Open Society Institute action is designed to maximize the profits of.

Now, it's important to understand that Soros is not the only person who's involved in this game. It's hard to find a hedge fund in the United States, or a private equity fund, or an alternative asset fund, or a London banker who's got billions of dollars of assets under management, who does not play this political influence game to some extent. But the reason that Soros is just a very clean, concrete figure to analyze to understand how this power structure works is because these roots go back a very, very long time with the Soros family. And it was how the hedge fund effectively operated from the 1980s onward. And if you go, for example, to WikiLeaks and you look at the State Department cable leaks and you simply plug in the name Soros, you will see the U.S. State Department doing favors for the Soros family going back to 1973. This is how long this has been going on.

George Soros had an older brother, Paul Soros, who was a magnate in shipping, freight, infrastructure, and port development. In the Cold War, 1973—this is before the Church Committee hearings in '75 and all of that—you can simply read WikiLeaks emails of State Department cables with U.S. embassies in Iran and Gabon working to make sure that Paul Soros landed the contracts for infrastructure and port development deals in Iran and Africa. And this, again, was when Iran was under U.S. and British vassalage in the 1970s, pre-revolution. But the Soros family was in on this game, where their own personal portfolio companies and business enterprises were tied at the hip with U.S. diplomacy.

This is more than 50 years ago, 1973. And this is something that has always been a part of U.S. foreign policy action because it's very powerful. This was how the U.S. waged war during the Monroe Doctrine. In 1823, the United States announced essentially a kind of détente with Europe: that Europe would stay out of the Western Hemisphere and America would stay out of Tripoli and

the like. And the way that the U.S. attained a kind of political vassalage over Central and South America was through U.S. commercial ventures—United Fruit and the like. These were the Banana Wars and the associated big agriculture and big sugar ventures that were backed by the U.S. War Department, and backed diplomatically by the U.S. State Department.

And so you had this kind of trickle-down economic theory way before Reagan—this idea that Americans would have cheap bananas and cheap sugar and these bountiful supply chains that would be administered and taken over by U.S. private companies, but that would be protected and secured as a market by the U.S. War Department and the U.S. State Department, long before we ever had a CIA, long before we ever had a USAID. But once those were established in the 1940s and 1960s—the CIA first, and then USAID, and then the 1980s with NED—this became totalizing for control, not just in a kind of military way through the War Department or in a kind of sanctions or top-down pressure from the State Department, but in the ability to have this kind of bottom-up civil society control over media, unions, universities, academics, arts, and culture.

But it has always been this way. It was not a new phenomenon. But essentially, what George Soros did in the 1980s—a lot of people think of George Soros as being this kind of, you know, Democrat and Democrat only. And that is not the case. There's a tremendous amount of Republican overlap because of the big business side of the Republican Party, the international affairs side of the Republican Party—the John McCain, Mitt Romney, Nikki Haley side. And George Soros partnered in the 1980s when NED was set up. George Soros was a co-investor in those functions under the Republican Party executive branch. He partnered with the Republican Ronald Reagan world. John McCain was running the IRI at the time, by the way, and there's been a very close relationship between McCain and Soros from then until the day John McCain died. But this has been an operation.

George Soros was betting on the currencies of all the different Central and Eastern European countries where he was working with NED, the CIA, the State Department, and USAID to overthrow governments. So he had insider trading knowledge. Think about this: he is competing against the entire market in terms of foreign exchange speculation, but also in terms of the fate of all the different industries. If you know that the CIA is going to topple a government because you're helping them do it, and you've got the national security clearances, and you've got boots on the ground, and you're working every day with the local embassy—way before the market knows this is happening—George Soros is able to take early positions with this insider knowledge to make billions of dollars in profits that the market has no hope of competing against, because they're not working directly with the State Department, CIA, and USAID to know whether or not this is even happening, let alone know its chances of success.

But this happens today with folks like Tom Donilon. Tom Donilon is the chairman of the BlackRock Investment Institute. Before that, he had never worked a day in his life outside of government. He was the national security advisor for Barack Obama. He was a high-ranking State Department official in the 1990s, helping on NATO expansion. He won the CIA Director's Award. And according to The New York Times, he was Joe Biden's first pick to be CIA director over Bill Burns. But Tom Donilon

turned down the CIA director position so that he could continue to make millions as the chairman of the BlackRock Investment Institute.

Meanwhile, Tom Donilon's brother, Mike Donilon, was the number one senior adviser to Joe Biden in the White House and had been Joe Biden's senior adviser since 1986. So you have the CIA Director's Award winner, in charge of U.S. intelligence and diplomacy, as well as NATO expansion, who's also on the board of the Global Leadership Coalition—the formal lobbying group for USAID—and the State Department budget on Capitol Hill, running the BlackRock Investment Institute, the in-house think tank for BlackRock's investment decision-making.

While he comes from the Central Intelligence Agency and was directly offered the number one chief position of the Central Intelligence Agency, he turns it down so that he can continue running BlackRock's investment arm, but can get updates every day from his brother, who's the number one advisor to Joe Biden within the White House. This is how Soros, Inc. operates. And it's important that this be completely restructured because U.S. foreign policy no longer serves U.S. citizens. It serves these reclusive, secular billionaires who use U.S. foreign policy for their own personal profit, whether it's good for the American people or not. And that has to end immediately, regardless of the collateral damage.

#M2

I was recently in Georgia—the country, that is—and the prime minister there also attended the same conference and made the same point: that the NGOs in his country were effectively trying to stage a regime change, or another color revolution, to use Georgia as a second front line against the Russians. Also, all the way in India, you had the foreign minister being very vocal about how undesirable George Soros is within India, as well as these other so-called non-governmental organizations.

But when we had, for example, USAID cut its financing—again, it's not an NGO; it's directly funded by the State Department—but then there was all this interesting, well, it became a bit of a watershed moment because suddenly we saw that 85 to 90% of Ukrainian media had been financed by this. I mean, how extensive, especially in Ukraine, because the former General Prosecutor of Ukraine, Viktor Shokin, was making the point that after 2014, they were being run as a colony, more or less. And it seems as if the so-called NGOs had a very key role in this. What is the relationship, then, with the media?

#M3

Well, Viktor Shokin would know—his firing as prosecutor happened because of USAID as well. If you recall, when Joe Biden made that famous confession to the Council on Foreign Relations that he personally flew to Kyiv and threatened the Ukrainian government that if they didn't fire Viktor Shokin, they would lose a billion-dollar loan guarantee. So it would cost a billion dollars to keep

Viktor Shokin as prosecutor. What was that billion-dollar loan guarantee in reference to? It was a USAID loan guarantee conditioned on governance reforms—governance which is folded into rule of law, which effectively allows the U.S. to control the Ministry of Justice within Ukraine. Every aspect of Ukrainian civil society is funded top to bottom by USAID and has been.

From the media, as you mentioned, up to 90% of Ukrainian media—including some of the largest outlets like the Kyiv Independent—are USAID funded. The NGO organizations like OCCRP, the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, which ended up digging up dirt on Rudy Giuliani with USAID dollars and that spiraled into the impeachment of the president in 2019, get half of their budget from USAID and the State Department. There's an amazing documentary that folks can look up, filmed by a German production team, with all their insider confessions on how this works in terms of editorial control and hiring and firing rights by the State Department and USAID. But it's also the union groups.

For example, Randi Weingarten, the head of the American Federation of Teachers—one of the most influential teachers' unions in the United States—was constantly going overseas to Ukraine to work with the teachers' unions there to make sure that the children are being taught a new mythology about their own history, and that any affinity with Russia or Russians, any sort of positive involvement between the Russian and Ukrainian people, and the different ethnic cleavages, is purged from Ukrainian textbooks. And so the minds of Ukrainian schoolchildren are controlled by the U.S. State Department—even the arts and culture.

If you recall, there was an incredible scandal ahead of the 2016 election here in the United States around a woman named Marina Abramović, who was responsible for the "spirit cooking" scandal. This phenomenon is this kind of ghastly, almost ghoulish, almost satanic kind of cultural development. It involved strange things with bodies made to look like they're dead, and these very strange, almost devil-worship-like things. She then partnered with the U.S. State Department to run arts and culture development within Ukraine.

And again, this is to curate Ukraine's museums, and it's sponsored graffiti on buildings and public artworks so that they are all purged of any kind of legacy affiliation with Russia. They're trying to "memory hole" Russia, 1984-style—you know, erase the idea that there ever was a Russian language within Ukraine or a kind of shared history—so that Ukraine can become fully European in that way and be folded into NATO and into EU markets. And so its own natural gas, rare earth minerals, and agricultural assets can be completely gobbled up by Wall Street and London.

But it's completely totalizing in terms of USAID in Ukraine. In fact, USAID was even paying for the pensions and retirement funds for Ukrainian firefighters, police officers, and school teachers, while the United States is struggling with veterans who are poor and dying under bridges in our big cities. Instead of paying for their pensions or their retirements, or trying to pay for affordable housing or health care in the United States—where the average homeowner now has to wait until they're 40 years old. A generation ago, it was almost half of that.

That money is going so that—I think it was $15 billion in USAID funding to Ukraine alone—could pay off the agriculture workers, the pensions, the government employees' salaries, the folks in Ukraine. This is done to keep vassal state control over Ukraine's internal politics. The money is the hook to keep them voting for that system. We call it "hearts and minds" work—this kind of influencing domestic groups. But it's not really hearts and minds. It's hearts and minds and cash. The cash is what pays for the hearts and minds much, much more effectively than propaganda itself. You obviously pay cash for the propaganda to influence the hearts and minds.

But when people's livelihoods depend on USAID funding, they will vote for, they will be in the streets for, they will do what they're told to make sure that USAID funding keeps flowing. That's what we saw. And this is one of the reasons that I think the State Department was behind the decision to cancel elections in Ukraine, and why there was no outcry about the threat to democracy from elections being canceled against Zelensky—because that hearts and minds question is the critical one. If Ukraine were allowed to vote their way out of their foreign policy, they'd choose a different one. And the U.S. State Department to date has not wanted to allow that to happen.

#M2

Well, the Ukrainians did have an opportunity, though, to vote their way out of this conflict. In 2019, they actually voted 73% in favor of Zelensky's peace platform. And this was all, effectively, make peace with Donbass, make peace with Russia, implement the Minsk Agreement, allow people to speak their own language in the eastern parts of Ukraine—that is, the Russian speakers. But this is why I also thought it was fascinating, because at this time it wasn't just these fascist groups which threatened Zelensky quite openly, but it was also complemented by huge pressure from NGOs such as the Ukraine Media Center. And what do you know of the "red lines" memo? Because they did essentially ban him from doing anything that the vast majority of Ukrainians had voted for.

#M3

I was actually just going to bring that up and read that out loud. So this is in May. I believe that election was in March 2019. And in May 2019, the Ukraine Crisis Media Center—which is funded by the U.S. State Department through the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv, funded by USAID, and funded by NATO, as well as a coterie of other USAID and CIA fronts like Chemonics—issued a memo. Chemonics is one of the top five largest USAID grantees every year and has been for decades. Its founder told the press that he set up Chemonics because he had always wanted to do two things: make the world a better place and have his own private CIA. This is USAID's, I think, second largest grantee every year.

So this is who funds the Ukraine Crisis Media Center: NATO, two major CIA fronts, and the US government directly through the State Department. The Ukraine Crisis Media Center is a conglomeration of all effectively USAID-funded media within Ukraine. What they did is what they

normally do in this situation: they get together all their different minnows to form a giant shark of a threat. They brought together 70 media and NGO organizations—70 of them—within a month and a half of Zelensky's election. Again, Zelensky was voted in, I believe, in March. I think he took power in April 2019. And in May, the very next month, he gets this famous red lines memo. So again, it had only been a month since he had taken office.

And here's how it begins. As civil society activists—again, as USAID-sponsored pawns for US, UK, and NATO foreign policy—we present a list of "red lines not to be crossed." And they actually put "red lines not to be crossed" in direct quotes. Should the president cross these red lines, such actions will inevitably lead to political instability in our country and deterioration of international relations. Now, if you speak State Department, "instability" is quite a word to use there. Instability was the only reason Zelensky was in office in the first place. Instability is what got Viktor Yanukovych out of office in a color revolution. Instability is people in the streets, police cars being set on fire.

Bulldozers being driven over railways so that freight can't be transferred. Instability is the National Endowment for Democracy spending $80 million buying protesters. Instability is a shutdown of your government. Instability is the ouster of your government in a color revolution. So the Ukraine Crisis Media Center—aka NATO, USAID, the State Department, and CIA contractors like Chemonics—are effectively telling Zelensky, "Here are 20 red lines you shall never cross unless you want us to overthrow you in the same kind of destabilization revolution that allowed you to rise to power in the first place." Now, I'm going to read a few. They give about seven or eight different categories of red lines that Zelensky is not allowed to pursue as a policy initiative.

So first is security issues: holding a referendum on the negotiations format to be used with the Russian Federation on principles for a peaceful settlement. Now, again, this is directly sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv. This is directly sponsored by NATO. This is directly sponsored by USAID. And they are forbidding the newly elected president of Ukraine, who, as you mentioned, ran on a peace platform, from pursuing a peace settlement with Russia. This is the State Department, USAID, the CIA, and NATO immediately—month one—blocking the democratically elected president from fulfilling the thing he ran on to win the democratic vote.

From the outside, they are sponsoring 70 undersigned signatories from within Ukraine. This is creating a monster within Ukraine so that it looks like it comes from Ukraine, but the money is all coming from outside Ukraine to do the bidding of the foreign policy consensus outside of Ukraine. The second item on the red lines list is conducting separate negotiations without the participation of Ukraine's Western partners with the Russian Federation, members of the occupation authorities, and their armed groups and gangs in the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, Crimea, and Sevastopol.

Now, why, Glenn, why on earth would organic, grassroots, spontaneous Ukrainian organizations threaten the president of the country not to conduct negotiations with Russia without the

participation of non-Ukrainian Western countries? This makes no sense unless you account for the fact that these groups are sponsored by those very, quote, "Ukrainian Western partners." So while the media reports this as being Ukrainian NGOs, these are little marionettes of the CIA, the State Department, USAID, the British equivalents, and NATO, and they are threatening them not to exclude their sponsors. It's an outrage.

The third red line is fulfilling the ultimatum requirements demanded by the aggressor state or achieving compromise with the Kremlin at the cost of making concessions to the detriment of national interests, national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the independent domestic and foreign policies of Ukraine. So, essentially, this is any appeasement whatsoever. This is basically holding a gun to the brand new president of Ukraine, saying, if you—who have the democratic mandate by a long shot from the election you just won—decide in your discretion that it's worth compromising with Russia because five years earlier we had overthrown the Ukrainian government and that's what triggered the Crimea referendum and the breakaway states in Eastern Ukraine, well, you can't do that anymore. You can't negotiate with Russia. You definitely can't negotiate without us being present.

You can't hold a referendum with the Ukrainian people, deferring to what the Ukrainian people vote to do. And then the fourth one: inhibiting the implementation of security and defense policies outlined in the Strategic Defense Bulletin in Ukraine, or delaying, sabotaging, or rejecting the strategic course for EU and NATO membership. This is the U.S. State Department, USAID, and NATO threatening to regime-change Zelensky within a month of him taking office if he does anything to delay or reject NATO—his own country from being swallowed up by the EU and NATO. This is NATO accession by gunpoint, by political gunpoint. Another red line is reducing political dialogue and destroying bilateral institutional mechanisms for cooperation with European and Euro-Atlantic partners.

Again, the very people sponsoring 70 different coordinated civil society groups within Ukraine are threatening to destabilize the country if they don't comply. Any reduction in political dialogue with Europe or Euro-Atlantic partners—the gun is back over his head. Initiating any actions that might contribute to the reduction or lifting of sanctions against Russia by Ukraine's international partners—so anything Zelensky did from month one in 2019 that might result in the alleviation of sanctions against Russia—anything that might lead to normalization of trade with Russia—done if you do it.

Another red line: attempting to review any actions aimed at supporting international solidarity for Ukraine, restoring its territorial integrity, and protecting the rights of all persons who have suffered under Russian aggression. Again, attempting to review any actions—Zelensky was not even allowed by the U.S. State Department, USAID, or NATO to even review anything that had been done in the intervening five years before, in terms of the international network of support and actions around international partnerships. He wasn't even allowed to investigate it. They're protecting their own crimes. And I can go on—economic issues, another red line: any implementation of policies against existing agreements with the International Monetary Fund and other foreign partners.

Any attempt to challenge the bankster gangsters who are privatizing Ukraine's industries and cutting them up to be sold at fire-sale prices to the George Soros clan and to Wall Street and London, any renegotiation with the IMF, any attempt to have your own national sovereignty—you can't do that either. Exerting pressure on regulators as opposed to supporting reforms to strengthen their independence—okay, so making sure that essentially the IMF and the NGOs maintain total control over the regulatory groups. But it goes on, and it includes cultural issues: any attempt to review the Russian language law, any attempt to allow the Russian language on Ukrainian TV or in Ukrainian schools.

So USAID, through its money gun, the State Department, through its sanctions arm, NATO, through its military and security network, as well as its civil affairs branch—they had Zelensky by the balls from month one. Not a single thing, whether it's culture, media, trade, security, economic policy, or energy policy—every single thing was blocked under threat of him being couped out of office the same way Yanukovych was. Ukraine never got to vote for a president. The only thing they could vote for after 2014 was which puppet would do the bidding of the blob.

#M2

I remember I criticized these NGOs, their role in Ukraine, and the same NGO—the Ukraine Crisis Media Center—you just referred to, they even had an article about me under the title "Kremlin Shady Horses." And then you go up to the donor list to see who's financing it, and on top of it, I find my own government, which is incredibly creepy because they would never do this directly, this kind of smearing, but as long as you do it through an NGO, then it's okay. So it's...

#M3

Well, and let me tell you, there was probably pressure on your government by the U.S. State Department to invest in this. This is a very, very common thing. The U.S. State Department will work with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Norway or Finland or Germany. Norway, for example, was one of the biggest beneficiaries of this war because of the oil and gas exports that completely took over the Russian market due to these sanctions policies. And so you're going to have the same sort of internal forces, in terms of the Chamber of Commerce and the domestic energy players, who are going to invest in the politicians. They are going to lobby for the government to support this. And if the government still doesn't want to do it, the U.S. State Department will condition various trade or security arrangements on them being a co-investor in these sorts of projects.

That's how you see this kind of big coalition that tends to support this. But that is exactly what was done. And these are the same forces that tried to take out Trump and effectively took out Trump from 2016 through 2020 in the United States. David Kramer, for example, was deeply associated with the Ukraine Crisis Media Center. He's the one who effectively kicked off Russiagate by funneling the Steele dossier to BuzzFeed. This was something that had been rejected by other U.S. media

outlets because it was deemed non-credible. But David Kramer from the Ukraine Crisis Media Center, funded by USAID, the State Department, NATO, the governments of Norway, Germany, and the like—this is the exact Ukraine Crisis Media Center that kicked off Russiagate.

And again, that was all because they wanted red lines against the American president the same way they put red lines on Zelensky. They did this because Trump threatened to leave or scale down U.S. involvement with NATO, and he ran on détente with Russia and said that they weren't really the enemy—China was. And so you had all these billions of dollars of investments by George Soros and Bill Browder and the whole Chamber of Commerce in Eurasia. They were terrified they'd lose control without Trump continuing to provide billions of dollars of support post-2014 to the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense to recapture the eastern Ukraine oblasts and Crimea, that these would be breakaway states forever. Trump had crossed the red lines. So they Russiagated him with the Ukraine Crisis Media Center the same way they did to Zelensky.

#M2

Well, Mike Benz, I've already taken too much of your time, so thank you so much for your insights on this. I think, again, this is a topic which is often ignored, but if you look at the literature, the role in the color revolutions, what was done thereafter—I mean, the documents exist on the partnerships between NED and the CIA—it's all there, but it seems to have very little position in the discourse. So, yeah, thanks again.

#M3

Thank you, Glenn. Hope to talk again.