

## **ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACKWARD: THE UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE**

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### **Abstract**

This essay applies critical theories of knowledge-producing institutions to demonstrate the utility of a conceptual framework about elite institutions that are deployed by powerful authorities to suppress anti-establishment knowledge. It asserts that knowledge-centric institutions which are appendages of power structures act to consume radical grassroots ideas in society and replace them with sympathy, loyalty and obedience to the establishment. It uses the case of the United States Institute of Peace to test the framework and show how this think tank has been consistently used by US foreign policy elites as an instrument to counter the peace movement. The conclusion offers thoughts on structural conditions through which more objective and people-centric think tanks can be built.

### **Knowledge-Producing Institutions and Hegemony**

Hegemonic power structures, be they domestic or international, rest on a tissue of ideas that is beefed up with economic and military muscle. Rationality dictates that powerful actors in a society or international system cannot permanently rely on coercion to achieve their ends. This is due to the impossibility of policing each nook and cranny of the space that is subject to rule, as well as the natural instinct of the weak to attempt “everyday forms of resistance” (Scott, 1985). No system of rule can completely avoid slippage and subversion at the margins, but it can employ a vast intellectual apparatus to ensure that dissenting knowledge is contained at manageable levels or quarantined, so that the whole forest does not catch flame. Successful power operators tend to recognise the seductive talents of the intelligentsia in winning general consent for their rule and edging out anti-systemic nuisance value. The case of government-sponsored think tanks bears this strategy out in clear-cut terms and serves as an apt illustration.

The conceptual framework of this article posits that certain elite institutions produce knowledge and ideas with the intent of arresting the growth of anti-establishment knowledge in society. While punitive institutions like the police force, prisons, and the security apparatus overtly discipline societies through strong arm tactics, ideational institutions like governmental think tanks perform a subtler task of marginalising

alternative voices that seek to restructure the means and ends of policymaking. If the former crush and liquidate dissent in the name of law and order, the latter mould the space of understanding about critical issues in society and push radical perspectives to the fringe.

This essay argues that knowledge-centric institutions beholden to political power work on twin tracks of *appropriation* and *distortion*. If they are unable to fully obstruct existing ideas emanating from the grassroots that are contrary to the interests of their patrons, they try to consume and repackage them in a manner that retains the form but not the content. Such an act of appropriation of dissenting ideas helps the patrons to claim that their visions and preferences are shared by the ‘mainstream’ of society. The target idea that is being poached by elite institutions in the process of appropriation need not meekly give in. If it is a product of social mobilisation and advocacy, its progenitors will try to resist the cooptation and a tug-of-war could ensue. If the balance of power between the elite institutions and the social movement is not overly lopsided in favour of the former, the final outcome of this struggle could be a compromise rather than outright obstruction or total appropriation. For the movement, compromise is a necessary adjustment to the structural pressure placed on it by the establishment so that at least the core of the idea is preserved. For the power wielders, compromise is a tactical concession to the initial momentum generated by the movement and a temporary *modus vivendi* prior to full appropriation of the idea.

Secondly, knowledge-based institutions attempt to popularise their patrons and their schemes by painting them as beneficial for greater good of humanity. By releasing a steady output of views and opinions that burnish the track record of their patrons, they aim at marshalling public sympathy, loyalty and obedience for the establishment. Distortion is thus a function of propaganda and manipulation of mass opinion with the objective of constructing a justificatory cushion for illegitimate or immoral actions of the powerful.

Theoretically, the intimacy of knowledge to power was spelt out by Michel Foucault. Power can be visualised in the Foucaultian lens as a set of techniques and tactics of domination that are subtler and more nuanced than brute force, “delicate mechanisms that cannot function unless knowledge, or rather knowledge apparatuses, are formed, organised, and put into circulation” (Foucault, 1997, 33). Concrete institutions and organisations can be knowledge apparatuses that are “more readily definable macro-objects, grosser instruments for the finer, more elemental workings of power” (Caputo and Yount, 1993, 4, 5). Through such institutions, “the production of knowledge and the exercise of administrative power intertwine, and each begins to enhance the other” (Allen, 1999,70). Foucault titled this reciprocal relationship “power/knowledge.”

There is a mutually reinforcing relationship between the circulation of knowledge through institutional discourses and the control of conduct. In particular, dominant discourses always define boundaries of exclusion by imposing limits to ‘normal’ knowledge and excommunicating competing constructions that end up becoming

‘subjugated knowledges.’ Institutions are meant to reform the abnormal persons who stray beyond the limits or to contain and marginalise those who do not submit to the officially designated ‘Truth’.

“A whole series of knowledges have been disqualified as non-conceptual knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges, naïve knowledges, hierarchically inferior knowledges, knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity” (Foucault, 1997, 7).

Antonio Gramsci’s notion of hegemony demonstrates that structures of domination are underpinned by both material reality and ideational constructions. To Gramscians, ‘social structure’ includes inter-subjective ideas, ideologies and social institutions, besides materialistic socio- economic system and political power relations. Hegemony is much more than raw force advantages enjoyed by militarily and economically strong states. It is a “structure of values and understandings about the nature of order that is stable and unquestioned” (Gill, 1993, 42). Gramscians discern a critical role for civil society institutions (parties, unions, religious centres, education system, media, art, literature etc.) as instruments through which hegemonic values are transmitted (similar to Foucault’s ‘circulation’ of knowledge) through society at the domestic and international level. The manufacturing of ‘consent’ for hegemony is achieved through these allegedly ‘non-governmental’ cultural institutions that are integral to the hegemonic regulatory complex known as “extended state.”

### **An Ideational Weapon**

This essay examines the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), a leading American think-tank of peace and conflict resolution, as one such cultural institution that performs a legitimacy-affirming and consent-winning function for American global supremacy by projecting the US as a benevolent hegemon that unswervingly pursues peace in various conflict zones. Its study reveals how the twin tracks of our conceptual framework actually pan out. Firstly, USIP is an ideational weapon that subjugates the knowledge of the American peace movement on behalf of the state. The core argument made in this exegesis is that the USIP acts as an important intellectual implement of the US government’s foreign policy by validating certain ideological strands of peace research as ‘objective’ while disqualifying others as biased or ‘unscientific’.

Secondly, the USIP’s research mythology is geared towards proving that the US state’s foreign policy acts not just for American ‘national interests’ but on behalf of ‘universal interests’. The Institute’s focus on the alleged beneficial impacts of US policies worldwide fits well into Gramscian framework of production of hegemony through cultural organisations. Studying the USIP and its evolution as a premier think-

tank on peace is all the more important in an age when the US is touted to be losing global consent for its hegemony and developing a serious “image problem” (Schorr, 2004).

### **Compromised Trajectory**

Compromise is writ large in the evolution of the idea of the USIP and its implementation. The Institute is the by-product of failed attempts to create a US ‘Department of Peace’ and, later, a US ‘Academy of Peace’. The proposal for a Department was mooted by peace advocates after World War I to counterbalance the influence of the War Department, only to be muted by the build up to World War II. Between 1945 and 1968, more than 90 bills calling for the Department were introduced in US Congress, but none of them garnered enough support to pass both houses and all were opposed by entrenched bureaucracy (Miller, 1994, 23).

Obstruction was natural because supporters of the Department wanted it to have “a perspective transcending the narrow parochial interests of national security” and to introduce “a possible internecine power struggle that would force the State Department to defend its positions” (Miller, 1994, 26). Obstruction was the first resort of the opponents of the Department idea in the decades after World War II because the balance of power in US Congress and in presidential administrations was overwhelmingly conservative due to the Cold War hysteria. The tug-of-war suggested by the conceptual framework, however, developed into more of a contest by the 1970s because the Department idea steadily gained supporters, although not to the extent of pushing its way through the obstruction.

In 1975, chastened from past failures that the Department proposal was doomed to be a lost cause, peace advocates watered down their demand to an educational ‘Academy’ bereft of policymaking prerogatives that would promote “understanding of the process and state of peace” (Academy Act, 1976). As our conceptual framework hypothesises, compromise was seen by peace activists as a prudent step in the face of structural pressures that favoured permanent blockade. Despite its more modest scope, the Academy concept still asked for a quantum leap in the American political firmament by positing itself as a counterweight to the US Military Academy, Naval Academy, Air Force Academy and War College. Fear of nuclear war and the need to “do something about it” were the major themes running through all the public hearings about the Academy in the early 1980s. The hope was that the ‘Academy’ would be able to bring about “an eventual change in the definition and use of the term ‘national security’ and an improvement of approaches not based on violence” (Mapes, 1985, 134, 135).

The social movement backing the Academy’s formation drew upon citizens’ distrust of government “experts” in foreign policy and aimed to not only redefine ‘national security’ but also balance the might of the military-industrial complex (Miller, 1994, 38, 42). The traditional American yen for checks and balances as a means of

limiting abuse of authority played a big role in galvanising the spirited eight-year campaign involving researchers, practicing mediators, academic leaders, diplomats, peace groups, retired military officers, a citizen's lobby with some 45,000 members, and the sponsorship of 55 US Senators and nearly 200 members of the House of Representatives (Laue, 1985, 181).

Interestingly, several conservative lobbies joined the National Peace Academy Campaign (N-PAC) and made sure that radical groups would not be in the agenda-setting seat. The World Without War Council (WWWC), a CIA-affiliated 'peace' group, collected 90,000 signatures in favour of the Academy. Its Board member, George Weigel, warned against a "tax-supported challenge to our present reliance on military strength for national security." For the right wing that wanted the Academy, it would be "a complementary effort advancing the prospects of American leadership" (Weigel, 1984, 192).

Cold war hawks favouring the Academy expected it to highlight human rights abuses under totalitarian states in the Soviet sphere and reconnect peace to democracy promotion, the Reagan administration's pet device to attack the 'unfree' part of the world. Weigel exhorted the Academy to "expose the machinations of front organisations and propaganda agencies" that the Soviets were putting forth as 'peace' institutes. Further, he suggested that it should monitor and assess "dissident citizen peace efforts" in the USSR and Eastern Europe by "coordinating with already knowledgeable US agencies such as Freedom House" (Weigel, 1984, 195). Richard Solomon, the long-time president of USIP, concurred with this vision when he insisted that the rationale for the Academy was provided by the need to counter "the Communist world that had co-opted the notion of peace" (Solomon, 1996).

One goal of the peace community was that a federal Academy would legitimise the fields of peace education and research as bonafide academic disciplines. A prime motivation was the "deep longing among peace advocates for acceptance, respect and a permanent place in mainstream American society" (Miller, 1994, 5). Kenneth Boulding, a key protagonist in the social movement, saw deliverance in an Academy that would bring succour to the field of conflict management and its struggle to gain acceptance as an academic pursuit. Boulding's hope was that the Academy "will help the cause or study of conflict management by legitimation that a national peace institute would provide" (Boulding, 1985, 129).

The phrase 'conflict resolution' (supposedly more ambitious than 'conflict management') was added to the Academy provision in 1978 to add respectability to the enterprise, as peace by itself was suspect in the halls of government and needed justification (Miller, 1994, 35). This proved to be another compromise since "the attempt to harness the horse of conflict resolution to the cart of peace studies will influence peace studies to lean toward a less value-conscious and more nationally oriented strategic studies perspective" (Miller, 1994, 37).

Scholarly opposition to the Academy emanated mostly from academics in institutions for the study of international relations who feared competition from peace studies (Dugan, 1989, 76). This was a reaction to testimonies before the Spark Matsunaga Commission enquiring into the case for an Academy that “support for scholars working in peace research was needed because most funding was going to studies operating within a narrow interpretation of power politics” (Matsunaga, 1981).

The larger backdrop to academic objections was the sharp divide between security studies and peace studies and fears of the former school that the Academy would erode its dominance over American thinking on conflict. Many of the anti-Academy intellectuals from the Fletcher School and the Heritage Foundation went on to actually dominate proceedings in the USIP after its formation. The pro-*realpolitik* community of defence intellectuals first objected to the Academy and then harnessed its connections with the Reagan administration to hijack the USIP once its establishment became inevitable.

Reagan and his bureaucracy were highly sceptical of the Academy idea and allowed a truncated ‘Institute’ (lacking the vast training school functions of an ‘Academy’) to be finally enacted in 1984 as a reluctant concession to forces with a more genuine interest in peace. The post-natal backlash of the Reagan administration plagued the USIP’s start-up and funding and suggested that the administration would merely pay lip service to peace, while continuing to prepare for war. Funding cuts and delayed naming of the Board of Directors were the first salvos fired after 1984 to cripple USIP. Amendments were sought to convert the Institute into a small, grant-giving agency under State Department control. When these sabotage efforts failed, Reagan infiltrated the Institute with a Board of white males with ultra-conservative backgrounds, only one of whom had involvement in the USIP’s creation process. The peace community spearheaded by the American Friends Service Committee had reiterated the need for a highly diversified funding base and an intellectually free board of trustees, but the voices of the strategic community prevailed in the appointment of the Board members (Miller, 1994, 87).

Reagan’s obstructionism paid dividends in shaping the staff profile of the Institute. Conscious of his discomfort, Institute supporters have been at pains to stress the non-radical nature of its proposed research programmes. To put conservatives at ease, the Board of Directors includes as ex-officio members the Secretary of States, the Director of ACDA and the Secretary of Defence (or their nominees). In the view of one cynical staffer on Capitol Hill during Reagan’s time, the Institute would “be more appropriately called the ‘Peace Through Strength Institute’” (Mack, 1985, 58).

Right wing think-tanks promoting a hard line aggressive US foreign policy like the Hoover Institution, Heritage Foundation, Washington Institute on Near East Policy, WWWC and Committee on the Present Danger had an excessively high proportion of representation on the USIP Board during the Reagan and George H Bush administrations. Nearly half the Board members, as of 1990, played some role in the Iran-contra

operations and many of its grantee scholars were recipients of substantial funding from military and intelligence agencies (Diamond & Hatch, 1990). The Director of the CIA was authorised to assign officers on a rotating basis to the programmes of the Institute. Several grantees worked on classified projects with joint funding from the intelligence community (Diamond & Hatch, 1990, 111).

Recipients of the largest number of grants from USIP represent the class of strategic elites, viz. Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis at Tufts University, School for Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University (SAIS), the RAND Corporation, the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, the James Madison Foundation, the Foreign Policy Research Institute and the Institute for Contemporary Studies in San Francisco (Group Watch, 1990). Contributors to the USIP Journal, consistent with its selection of grantees, tended to represent institutions and private sector bodies that are supportive of current US governmental directions and policies. The conservative bias of USIP carried over to its working groups, conferences and public workshops.

The USIP was used as an instrument to achieve hegemony over the meaning of 'peace' through its high profile Public Workshops and campus outreach visits that are over-represented by administration mouthpieces. Another hegemonic tactic is a strategy of grants that ensures that "the more money state-approved academics get, the more graduate student sub-contractors they can hire to produce an even larger proportion of the available literature on a given topic" (Diamond & Hatch, 1990, 115). By channelling grants into chosen streams of scholarship, USIP played the distortion track of our conceptual framework to the hilt. Academics who were handpicked by ruling presidential administrations utilised the platform and financial clout of the USIP to manufacture domestic consent for wars, military interventions and 'regime change' operations in the name of advancing 'freedom' and 'democracy'. Some USIP funding did go to grassroots peace advocates, but it was confined to "sessions on philosophical issues where they can sit and talk about pacifism. In areas where concrete policies are raised, progressives were personae non-grata" (Diamond & Hatch, 1990, 116).

Other investigators observe in the evolution of USIP an effort to steal leadership of the Peace Studies field from 'liberals', 'pacifists', anti-nuclear activists and anti-interventionists. USIP appointed as staff members academics with a long history of service to the US foreign policy establishment and rightwing think-tanks. Scholars in the Peace Studies field who grew dependent upon the Peace Institute for funding of their research projects "largely remained silent about the takeover and started shifting their research proposals towards research of utility to US dominance" (CMD, 2005).

USIP labels itself a 'think-and-do tank' that takes a hands-on pro-active approach to peace and conflict resolution through dialogues, conventions and workshops. Of special prestige to the Institute are Study Groups to consider current topics and offer advice to the US government. USIP knowledge production has added more sophisticated information and widened the range of options to assist decision makers in pursuing US

national interests. Had there been no USIP, similar policy backup would still have emanated from other governmental think-tanks like the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), but the uniqueness of making strategic gains in the name of 'peace' gives a moral edge to the USIP that CFR lacks.

Representatives of conservative think-tanks, the State Department and the National Security Council dominate the membership of USIP's Study Groups, whether they are on North Korea, Eastern Europe or Iraq. If one examines the Iraq Study Group hosted by USIP, its 'Expert Working Groups' hail from CSIS, PFC energy consulting firm (a strong presence in the US oil industry whose Chairman is also the current USIP Board Chairman), Bechtel, RAND Corporation, the National Defence University, Heritage Foundation, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, AEI, International Republican Institute (NED affiliate), Hudson Institute, Nixon Centre, and Stimson Centre. Of the 136 persons in and out of government consulted by the Study Group, not one qualifies as a civil society representative or peace activist, either from the US or Iraq (USIP, 2006a). The much-publicised report of this Study Group suffers from serious lacunae on account of this packing of the USIP experts panels with hawkish pro-establishment voices. The knowledge that gets regurgitated through such elitist means embellishes the 'peace through strength' camp and adds a sheen of acceptability to US military misadventures.

The Institute has been hostage to successive American administrations' quest for hegemony in the realm of ideas from its first day in existence. It is a tragic metaphor of how countless US administrations have paid lip service to peace, while remaining primarily concerned with securing American domination of the world (Montgomery, 2003, 493). The compromised trajectory of USIP's birth pangs and its kidnap by the right wing exemplifies the 'appropriation' track of our conceptual framework. Grassroots ideas that were initially radical in content were consumed by the machine of state power and tamed into a manageable institution that spoke the language of the American establishment.

### **Champion of Negative Peace**

The USIP's principal traction over the American discourse of peace comes from its grant programme for research, which is at the discretion of its Board members. Roger C Peace notes on the basis of careful evaluation that grants made by the USIP have tended to keep progressive ideas out of peace research (Peace, 1991, 195). Miller's synopsis of USIP grants up to 1994 reveals that they unduly favour regional conflicts of particular interest to US foreign policy, superpower relations, coercive diplomacy, low-intensity warfare, deterrence and arms control and barely touch conversion from military-based to civilian-based economies, alternative defence systems, ecology, feminist theory, dependency theory and the inter-relationship of domestic and international relations. The

least amount has gone to studies on pacifism and peace movements, “seemingly ignoring the important role of non-violence in effecting social change” (Miller, 1994, 136, 132). The jeremiad that feminism, ecological approaches and peace movements were entirely glossed over in the Cold War-era USIP is equally valid for the Institute’s post-1991 prioritisation. Hopes that the USIP may slowly evolve toward the original goals of the movement that resulted in its creation have thus been belied, even though Cold War hysteria subsided in American foreign policy.

Put differently, USIP continues to be a flag bearer for the paradigm of ‘negative peace’ (peace as absence of war and as a product of the threat of violence) that has an honoured status in the security studies field. Right from the Matsunaga Commission Report, USIP privileged ‘negative peace’ research. The Report envisaged that the ‘Academy’ “will devote significant resources to questions of war and the arms race, nuclear and other, in collaboration with the ACDA.” While the Commission saw “research on peace as social justice (‘positive peace’) as highly important to development of the field of peace learning”, it ended up recommending that

“peace as social justice may not be the most useful priority *research* area for the Academy at this time, but from the pedagogical side, it should be an integral part of the Academy’s *education* and *training* programmes and information services” (Matsunaga, 1981).

The most dramatic evidence that USIP is biased against ‘positive peace’ comes from its public spat with the renowned alternative paradigm scholar, Johan Galtung, in 1989. The Institute’s ‘New Brief’ to promote a USIP-funded director of *Peace Research in Western Europe* carried a broadside against the Norwegian Galtung alleging his “narrow-mindedness” (Diamond & Hatch, 1990, 115). It is important here to recall the contributions of Galtung to peace research. Restricting the ambit of research to ‘negative peace’ has conservative implications to him since it sidelines the question of justice, “social integration” and attitudinal change that will erode the goal differentials deemed to lie at the heart of social conflict. Peace research’s role, in his mind, is to “fight for, imagine and promote a non-violent world” (Lawler, 1995, 81). Galtung broadens the conception of ‘imperialism’ by encompassing non-economic criteria and including socialist states as its perpetrators. He insists upon the inseparability of domestic and international social relations, thereby challenging the orthodox assumption that international relations “constitutes a distinctive realism” (Lawler, 1995, 85). For Galtung, the eradication of global exploitation requires also the transformation of social relations within (developed) Centre states, a profound linkage that the USIP religiously disavows (Lawler, 1995, 104).

Inspection of USIP’s grants between 1991 and 1998 intimates that precious little changed since the end of the Cold War in terms of the Institute’s priorities for research funding. Negative peace still claims the lion’s share of USIP’s financial outlays and

overall ideological mission. Twenty six types of specific projects funded by USIP in the George H Bush and Bill Clinton administrations fall within the zone of negative peace, while only ten are relevant to positive peace (USIP, 1991-1998). Even among the ten positive peace projects, state-centric and anti-human tendencies persist, such as the acceptance of repatriation of refugees as the only durable solution even when they face protection dilemmas or the usage of cultural relativism to insist that pacifism is a uniquely Western notion while fighting is normatively good in non-Western cultures (Salem, 1993).

### **The Nationalist Trap**

A secular pattern of USIP funding has been to shun researchers critical of empire, hegemony or US military interventions. There is a veritable unwritten rule at the Institute that endeavours uncovering American foreign policy's underside would never be solicited. For example, a news reporter monitoring the sudden mammoth increase in the USIP budget since the war on Iraq notes,

“What it doesn't do with public funds is criticise this or any other U.S. administration.” “Nothing would happen if we took sides, except we'd be out of business,” Institute President Richard Solomon said” (Linzer, 2005, A17).

During the Cold War years of USIP, peace education and research that delved into the structural causes of violence and questioned the status quo were condemned by the US government as promoting weakness in the American system (Harris, 1989). USIP funding was turned down for conferences proposing changes in capitalism, which is “a sacred synecdoche for Americanism in the lexicon of the Institute's grant-givers” (Miller, 1994, 132).

For all its pretensions of being “independent” and “objective”, the Institute represents what Galtung calls “a fundamental contradiction between honest research in the field of peace and that conducted by a government agency.” Patriotism and an unquestioning conviction that the US is always a force for good in the world are, to Galtung, “blind spots” and a “hidden axioms” working within the walls of the Institute (Diamond & Hatch, 1990, 116). Galtung symptomises the ideal of eschewing personal, regional and ideological biases in peace research such that the researcher in his professional activities is without a fatherland and has “a relatively de-ideologised mind” (Lawler, 1995, 51, 78).

In contrast, what the Institute has is a corporate code to advise and research on topics relevant to US foreign policy and improve the negotiating and bargaining skills of American diplomats. USIP frequently seeks the advice of the State Department for possible topics and regions of special concern and reflects a self-imposed mandate to

advise on US foreign policy (Miller, 1994, 140). Former Institute President, Samuel Lewis, openly admitted that “we want to select the topics carefully and in consultation with key people in government, who would be the primary end users” (Diamond & Hatch, 1990, 113). An instance of this toeing of the government line is USIP’s profuse attention to producing knowledge on the American government’s obsession with “low intensity warfare” in the late 1980s.

A decade earlier, David Singer had foreseen the hijacked eventuality for USIP, whereby the Institute might take on an overly nationalistic “America-is-always-right orientation” and become essentially an instrument of US foreign policy (Singer, 1990, 84). That Singer was clairvoyant about USIP becoming a tool of the American foreign policy establishment’s appropriation and distortion agendas even before it actually played out shows the dilemmas inherent for social movements to agree to compromise on their goals in order to see their dream idea take shape. Advocates of the Institute like Singer were aware at the outset that the balance of power in the US was such that their well-intentioned and radical proposals could play into the hands of skilful manipulators of knowledge.

So comprehensively guided is the USIP’s attitude by the strategic interests of the US government that even its curriculum development modules and the National Peace Essay Contests for American high school students foster appreciation of US foreign policy (Miller, 1994, 134). The gist of topics chosen by the Institute since 1991 for its Peace Essay Contest is emblematic (Miller, 1994, and USIP, 2006b). It reads like a preparatory school manual for enlisting youth to the US foreign or military service, what with themes like nuclear non-proliferation (USIP never promotes universal nuclear disarmament), post-conflict reconstruction (with a heavy neo-liberal dose of ‘integrating’ the country into the world economy), democracy promotion (with no reference to the US’ continued support for dictatorships after the end of the Cold War), justifications for war/US military action and formulation of triages of vital US strategic goals. On the rare occasions when the questions directly do not pertain to American strategic stakes, the background information given before asking the question proudly proclaims that the US government has done some good deed or the other for world peace. To call the whole process agitprop would not be an exaggeration.

The star status of neo-conservatives within USIP, especially under the George W Bush presidency, is characteristic of the Institute’s entrapment in ultra-nationalism and American hegemonic designs. Weigel, the intellectual who laid out the right wing’s blueprint for the ‘Academy’ prior to USIP’s birth, is a long-time associate and beneficiary of the Institute’s research grants. He is of the opinion that “the United States has essentially solved the problem of war across a continent-wide expanse of the globe by maximising freedom and opportunity for tens of millions of people.” The USIP is to him a means to export this supposedly perfect “American national experience of political community as a means of resolving conflict without resort to mass violence” (Weigel, 1984, 191). He writes that “moral reasoning” may require the US to support authoritarian

regimes to fend off the greater evils of “moral decay” and threats to the American security (Group Watch, 2005).

Weigel’s James Madison Foundation (branch of the WWWC) received a grant from the USIP to keep tabs on the activities of civil society. This crystallised fears that the government could use the Institute to bless a number of intelligence-gathering and military activities under the peace rubric or gather intelligence on peace movements and foreign nationals through double agents (Laue, 1985). The WWWC has been involved in collecting information on U.S. peace groups under the guise of building a directory of activist organisations involved in anti-war activities. Weigel has written chapters for USIP published books and is a signatory to the Project for New American Century (PNAC), the hub of neo-cons and hawks that has a seminal role in the pre-emptive foreign policy of the George W Bush administration.

Peter Rodman, currently the US Assistant Secretary of Defence, is another neo-con who has been patronised by USIP as its ‘Ex Officio Member.’ He authored a bullish book with USIP funding on how the Reagan administration outspent the USSR and defeated it in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Angola, achievements that were apparently “more precious than peace” (Rodman, 1994). He also used USIP auspices to raise the red flag as early as 1997 on the ‘China threat’ and the absolute necessity for the US to increase military spending to defeat it (Rodman, 1997). Similarly, Douglas Feith, the neo-con US Under Secretary of Defence from 2001 to 2005 who planned the invasion and occupation of Iraq with monumental blunders like ‘de-Baathification’, was also an ‘Ex Officio Member’ of USIP.

Although a huge controversy was generated in the news media about the Bush administration’s nomination of the Islamist-baiting neo-con Daniel Pipes to the USIP board in 2003, it is worth mentioning that religious right wing intellectuals wedded to American nationalism like Weigel and Feith had always been represented at the Institute. The USIP has had a regular inflow and outflow of Board members like the former CIA officer and McCarthyite, William Kintner, who publicly commented in Institute-sponsored events that the US would have won in South East Asia “if only we had continued bombing Vietnam for another ten days” (Diamond & Hatch, 1990, 116).

The shrouding of USIP in the stars and stripes with the willing participation of neo-con academics raises a larger quandary about ostensibly disinterested and objective scholarship in Political Science serving to rationalise patriotic chauvinism and repression. Ido Oren writes incisively about how, starting from the 1950s, the US Political Science profession became “enmeshed in the state to an unprecedented degree” and scholars responded to the Cold War demand for “psychological and ideological warfare expertise” (Oren, 2003, 13). Since the end of the Cold War, cooperation between professors and US intelligence agencies is “now very much to the fore. The war on terrorism may result in further retightening of the relationship between American Political Science and the American government” (Oren, 2003, 171).

Oren challenges the ‘scientific’ presupposition that the researcher and the object of study are separate and asks “whether Political Science can be an objective, disinterested science while it serves the interests of the American state” (Oren, 2003, 15). USIP’s claim to neutrality and ‘independence’ in knowledge production is one fragment of this larger disease. USIP’s compromised lot of political scientists may also be seen as a reflection of the decline of “social trustee professionalism” in the US, wherein principled stance-taking has exited from the dossier of responsibilities of intellectuals who no longer advocate for long-term societal and ethical interests. Policy intellectuals “appear increasingly to be creatures of the state and of self-contained policy communities closely tied to the state”, while the overall “conservative mood in intellectual life remains strong” (Brint, 1994, 173, 210).

Besides USIP, there are many other research institutes and think-tanks in the US that are generally geared toward the status quo rather than to the promotion of social transformation. Some might even take token stances against specific issues like the war on Iraq, but they do not go deep enough to link domestic structural violence to violence at the international level. The very visualisation of ‘policy’ around which these institutes revolve is such that it allows only reforming the existing order instead of fundamentally challenging it. The mission of both liberal and conservative institutes is to make the system work better from their respective value priorities, not to replace it. For instance, feminism, which might envisage a different set of principles for structuring the social order, has no respect in any of these institutes, least of all in USIP. A straightforward political economy explanation for this status-quoism would point at public funding, but notions of ‘respectability’ and acceptability to the ‘mainstream’ also ensure that institutes do not overstep the Rubicon. Understandings of what constitutes a ‘proper’ and ‘professional’ attitude for an institute may be traced to the narrowness of the American political sphere itself.

### **Mythmaking and Dehumanising**

USIP plays a yeoman’s role in misguiding the American public on regional conflicts, the staple funding arena of the Institute. The ideas, perspectives, values and belief systems that the Institute reproduces get internalised in the minds of its audience, who then see regional conflicts from a stereotypical or prejudiced lens which goes on to provide social acceptance in American society for US interventions overseas. Once the USIP way of seeing is thoroughly injected into society, or in Foucaultian terms, once institutions have ‘reformed’ the abnormal or deviant views, misguidance attains the condition of normalcy.

Africa, which is second to the Middle East in the Institute’s regional focus areas, has been a victim of misrepresentation and falsehood by USIP’s top echelons. Chester Crocker, the former Assistant Secretary of State and Chairman of USIP from 1992 to

2004, leads an apologist brigade of Africa ‘experts’ at the Institute that applies massive spin on the US’ immoral role in propping up apartheid South Africa and its puppet dictatorial forces in the civil wars of Mozambique, Angola and Namibia. USIP has developed a special branch of knowledge on Africa relying on theories of ‘failed states’ and chaos which essentially boil down to positing that ‘tribal warfare’ is endemic in collapsed states. The Institute’s much-touted volume, *Managing Chaos* is more a treatise on “how the Western world would manage chaos in Africa since the African people are basically geared towards violence and warfare” (Campbell, 2002).

USIP repaints the sordid history of US foreign policy in southern Africa not only by absolving Washington of any blame but also claiming that it helped usher in peace to that “rough neighbourhood.” Crocker’s self-aggrandising book (Crocker, 1992) not only spreads lies about his own diplomatic successes but also defends the US government’s “constructive engagement” with apartheid South Africa for allegedly fostering peace in the region. With USIP Board Members steadfastly glorifying the CIA’s puppet Renamo guerrillas in Mozambique, its academic output unsurprisingly moots that the US government saved poor Mozambique from “evil communists.” Joseph Hanlon, the editor of the *Mozambique Peace Process Bulletin*, describes how the history of the Mozambique war was rewritten by USIP to retrospectively justify the US role, which was partially responsible for the deaths of a million people. “The Cold War is over, and the winners are rewriting history” (Hanlon, 1999, 31). Here, we see the classic function of distortion by marrying the chaos school of Africana studies with propagandist misrepresentation of destructive US foreign policy on the continent.

Robert Kaplan, a recipient of USIP book grants and attendee at USIP conferences, is one of the shining icons of ‘chaos theory.’ He foresees the fate of Africa as “armed bands of stateless marauders clashing with private security forces of the elites” and lays the theoretical basis for Western military intervention to “save lives, stamp out hunger, poverty and disease.” Reversing facts, Kaplan feels that it is “only the unselfish military leadership by a hegemonic power that can bring peace and resolve conflicts.” (Kaplan, 1994) This ‘power’ is decidedly the United States for both the traditional conservatives and the neo-cons who are both amply represented at the USIP. Kaplan and fellow USIP intellectuals submerge alternative facts that threaten resistance under a barrage of fabricated knowledge that bears no relation with the experiences of Africans caught in armed conflict. Unless alternative ‘facts’ are given due weight, Foucault’s point of organising a resistance to dominant forms of knowledge would not materialise.

USIP is an accomplice in the dehumanisation of Africans as pre-modern morons who are hardwired to fight. Andrew Natsios, hailed by USIP as its “former specialist”, is the ex-head of USAID and the George W Bush administration’s ‘Special Envoy to Darfur’. To drive home his belief that Africans love fighting, Natsios cites so-called Somali proverbs that pit them as warmongers at the personal, family, social and international levels of analysis. (Natsios, 1994, 136) This lifelong Republican is on record saying it made no sense for US drug companies to make medicines freely or

cheaply available to combat AIDS in Africa (an issue for ‘positive peace’) since Africans putatively had no sense of time (Herbert, 2001, A17).

Primordial analyses of African conflicts, sanitised from the reality of ugly politics played by the US government, are replicated in USIP’s Middle East research projects. For example, the Director of the Institute’s ‘Muslim World Initiative’ published a Special Report in June 2006 which is couched in Qur’anic terminology and substantiated by religious citations. Its penchant for moderate “renewal movements” in Islam as a solution to political problems comes at the cost of keeping quiet on the US buttressing of dictatorships throughout the Muslim world. To an acerbic critic, the Institute “abandons democracy in practice while maintaining its desirability in theory” (Najum, 2006).

The mythmaking aspects of USIP fit well with the ‘distortion’ track of our conceptual framework. If there were no institutions like USIP to distort the neo-colonial past and present roles of the US government in Africa and the Middle East, sustaining Washington’s exploitative foreign policies in the developing world would become less tenable in the eyes of the American people.

The USIP’s attempt to whitewash Western neo-colonialism in the Global South dovetails a critical lacuna in mainstream Western peace research that has rankled radical theorists for long. Sugata Dasgupta draws attention to the conservative and neo-liberal blindness to North-South differences as the core problem generating cycles of warfare and destruction (Dasgupta, 1974, 90, 94, 106). Not a single USIP-funded research projects takes a sympathetic view of the Global South at the WTO or of the neo-colonial elements in the policies of the Bretton Woods Institutions. That globalisation directly fuels armed conflicts in the developing world, especially of an ethnic hue, has been empirically validated by informed writers (Chua, 2003), but the USIP’s conservative mindset is completely impervious to such research horizons.

### **Discussion and Conclusion -- Elite Handmaiden, ‘Knowledge Apparatus’ and ‘Cultural Institution’**

From the preceding case study, it is clear that the Foucauldian theory of knowledge-power nexus and the Gramscian theory of cultural institutions as hegemony-producing arms of the ‘extended state’ find reification in the USIP. As a GONGO that wears American nationalism on its sleeve and floods the agenda of peace research in the US with traditional and neo-conservative themes, the USIP serves its political masters exemplarily. As a champion of negative peace, USIP is a ‘knowledge apparatus’ that subjugates knowledge from the peace movements about structural violence and iniquity in the international order. As a cultural institution on behalf of the American ‘extended state’, USIP tweaks the dark underside of US interventions in developing countries into a tale of benevolent hegemony.

Louis Kriesberg has credited the USIP for being a “venue of interaction” between peace scholars and security scholars and an institution that softens the ‘peace through strength’ camp by sensitising it to non-violent means (Kriesberg, 2002, 168). This is an over-optimistic assessment, given that the evidence of this essay points to the obverse-security-centric favouritism in USIP has actually entrenched, not softened, the dominant tune of negative peace. Barbara Hall is more accurate in maintaining that the USIP has not empowered peace studies scholars to be on an even keel with the defence intellectuals, the prototypical ‘insiders’ with access to classified sources and government benefaction (Hall, 1989, 108).

The conceptual framework of knowledge-producing institutions running on twin tracks- ‘appropriation’ and ‘distortion’- can be applied to comparable sites of knowledge production with similar structural nature. For instance, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has had a USIP-like exclusive focus on negative peace and strategic issues like chemical and biological weapons control, counter-terrorism and defence policy. Like the USIP, SIPRI’s research agenda was set in the late 1960s by Swedish defence scientists in consultation with American Cold War hawks like Henry Kissinger. Like the USIP, there has been no major revolution in this Institute’s tenor ever since (Blackaby, 1996). While not discounting local contexts and specificities of institutional evolution, our conceptual framework can spur a better theoretical understanding of such institutions in different parts of the world. One is likely to find elements of the twin tracks, as well as their sub-plots of obstruction and compromise, in the institutional histories of many quasi-governmental think tanks and academic bodies.

Where the conceptual framework does not explain the trajectory and important trends of a quasi-governmental think tank, the particular case will merit more detailed study. For example, the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI) was established by an Act of Parliament in Denmark in 1985 and was officially funded by the government in Copenhagen. Yet, its research priorities showed a healthy taste for positive peace topics like gender inequality, environmental problems, refugee rights and the applications of non-violence in conflicts. COPRI does not invalidate our conceptual framework as much as it raises questions about the nature of state or establishment power in different societies. The key to explaining why COPRI is unlike USIP or SIPRI may lie in the ideology, identity, purpose and objectives of the Danish state compared to the American or the Swedish states. Our conceptual framework relies on a suspicious ontology of states and their expansive power-accumulating motives, an assumption that may not hold good in every case.

### **Restructuring After the Hijack**

USIP’s founding was one step forward in the sense that it institutionalised, if only in principle, peace as an authorised field of scholarly enquiry and public education.

Singer, who was alert to the perils of state hijacking of USIP's agenda, nonetheless averred that one should not "deny the importance of finally having, somewhere in the government, one agency whose mission is peace and whose message is clear" (Singer, 1990, 84). The facts that grassroots peace scholars like Elise Boulding and Gene Sharp managed to get some toehold in USIP and that a few critical peace researchers like John Burton and Herbert Kelman became its Distinguished Fellows allows for imagining a USIP that is a potential ally for the peace movement.

The 'appropriation' track of our conceptual framework assumes that pro-governmental knowledge-producing institutions will succeed in co-opting and hijacking grassroots activist projects. What has not allowed for is the potential for these institutions to be reformed or infiltrated by the very dissidents it intends to sideline. To the extent that the potential of restructuring the institutions remains, one must address future research to why and where there are crevices and gaps through which counter-hegemonic elements can enter the institutional citadels of the establishment. Perhaps the clue lies in the Foucauldian premise stated in the introduction that dissenting knowledge can be contained but not fully eliminated.

Cooptation strategies of hegemonic institutions might fail to fully appropriate their designated fields of knowledge and leave gaps outside their ambit. That there still exists, however muted, a progressive peace movement and scholarly circle in the United States despite the exertions of USIP is a pointer to the fact that hegemonic projects seldom manage to weed the field of all resistance. Hegemonic institutions functioning in a liberal socio-political space might even tolerate bounded dissent since it appears innocuous to launch structural challenges. There is also the possibility that dissent simmers under the surface in hegemonic institutions as unnoticed 'soft noise' in a loud conservative ambience.

Is the presence of a few genuine peace activists in the USIP ranks clever tokenism to camouflage the overall conservatism of the institution or an inherent weakness of hegemonic knowledge apparatuses? While our conceptual framework supposes a highly organised and robust set of ideational institutions that do the hatchet job for the establishment, it did not foresee the potential for chinks in their armours

From a normative point of view, the irony in talking of 'potential' is that the USIP is now 22-years-old with an organisational culture that is deep set. Can such a long hijacked institution be repaired or restructured toward a more balanced and objective course? The question is relevant in light of Galtung's pitch for a "trilateral science" that includes not only theory and empirics but also prescriptive values advocating a better world (Lawler, 1995, 229).

Much depends on the level of comprehension of civil society in the US to the problem and whether it wakes up to the damage done to the discourse of peace through the mass infiltration of USIP with crypto-militarists. Since the Institute has exhibited a conservative core irrespective of presidential regime changes for nearly three decades, it would be wishful to expect that tinkering from above by a progressive future US

government can execute meaningful change. So entrenched are USIP's negative peace and chauvinism that only another social movement with cross-cutting alliances of concerned academics, peace organisations and politicians can alter its personality. A mass movement to vest the USIP with a second life can draw strength from the memory that the federally-funded Institute was a creation expected to advance something akin to "people's research" (Mack, 1985, 88).

USIP's history proffers lessons in careful institutional design while setting up national peace institutes in other countries. A three-layered checks-and-balances model could avoid USIP's pitfalls. In the first stratum, despite receiving legislative finances, the institute should be conceived as a community resource rather than a quasi-governmental agency. Staffing of the institute should reflect a balance of issue experts and activists from movements. Public servants and government nominees can be included as experts, but they should not pack Boards and Departments of the institute. This design principle refers to identity and culture of a research institution, two factors that can instill a sense of mission towards public good and protect the entity from becoming easy prey for appropriation. In the second stratum, a panel of eminent international peace scholars and activists, existing outside the walls of the institute, should act as an editorial body of reviewers that screens out any militaristic, jingoistic or discriminatory content generated by the institute before it reaches the public realm. This principle will safeguard the research institute from the perils of distortion and misrepresentation of history for partisan ends. In the third stratum, the publics of the country in which the institute is being planned should form a citizen's committee of non-politicians that can express a collegial vote of confidence or no-confidence on the institute at the end of each financial year, akin to a 'social audit'. This vote from the grassroots should be considered by legislators when they debate allocations for the next year's budget of the institute. This principle will inaugurate democratic accountability in research organisations and deter agents of state from attempting subversion by throwing around their weight. Such a three-layered watchdog mechanism can pave the way to more humane peace institutes.

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