

AMERICA'S AFRICA: Hollywood Celebrities Provide “Mood Music” and “Star Appeal” for US “Humanitarian Wars”

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It's a sign of the times: Hollywood heart-throbs, pop divas and TV chat show celebrities are turning on the mood music for America's never-ending global war.

In a world of lawlessness, state terrorism, rank mendacity and war criminals masquerading as government leaders, what better than to engage the glamor of reassuring celebrities to add a certain “star appeal” to otherwise barbaric endeavours?

George Clooney, Rihanna, Oprah Winfrey are just some of the big names lending their faces and voices to a script worthy of Hollywood – only the script is coming out of the Pentagon.

Perhaps unwitting agents, these consumer-culture icons are ironically lending cover and justification to crimes and human suffering that they claim to be opposed to.

Take actor George Clooney. Last month, he caused a media stir when he was arrested for his part in a demonstration outside the Sudanese embassy in Washington protesting against Khartoum's alleged violations in neighboring South Sudan. The day before his arrest, Clooney had a private meeting with President Barack Obama in the White House to discuss the Sudanese conflict.

Two weeks later, Obama hosts Salva Kiir, the president of South Sudan, the newly formed North African state which broke away from Sudan last July after decades of civil war. Media reports claimed that Obama urged South Sudan to not engage in conflict over border disputes with its northern neighbour.

Another two weeks later, South Sudan's army dramatically escalates conflict by invading northern Sudan and seizing its vital oil installations in the district of Heglig. The attack triggered much sabre-rattling by Khartoum with President Omar Bashir all but declaring war on South Sudan. Fears of all-out war have subsided in the past few days after South Sudan's forces withdrew across the border. This may be just the first of many renewed skirmishes to come.

There is no way, as Glen Ford, editor of Black Agenda Report, points out, that South Sudan would have embarked on such reckless aggression without prior tacit approval from Washington.

On that score, the likes of Clooney provide a crucial propaganda function. The genial screen star lends credibility to the long-running Washington narrative that the villain in the

Sudanese conflict is the northern state of Omar Bashar. After all, Bashar is wanted as an alleged war criminal by the Western-controlled International Criminal Court. Clooney's campaigning, no doubt motivated by well-meaning human concern, nevertheless adds a Hollywood dimension to the fraudulent "responsibility to protect" principle that Washington and other Western powers have been deploying as a cover for neo-imperialist intervention.

Meanwhile, pop diva Rihanna and chat show queen Oprah Winfrey have joined other celebrities in giving emotive public support to Washington's posse of Special Forces sent to hunt down African renegade Joseph Kony. The elusive rebel commander shot to notoriety after the release of a documentary film, *Kony 2012*, which accuses his Lord's Resistance Army of kidnapping, raping and murdering thousands of children in the jungles of Africa. The outpouring of public anger engendered by the film, made by a little-known charity group Invisible Children, coincided conveniently with President Obama announcing the dispatch of American Special Forces to go after Kony across four African countries: Uganda, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan.

Sceptics have pointed out that the modern-day bounty hunter saga of Kony and the LRA is long out of date. The height of his alleged depredations was 6-10 years ago during the LRA's guerrilla war against Uganda state forces. In recent years, the LRA has faded into relative obscurity. To suggest that Kony and his rabble of a few hundred fighters present a threat to African state security or American vital interests is risible.

Moreover, the alleged crimes of Kony's LRA need to be put in perspective. If the fate of kidnapped, child slaves is the genuine motive of charity groups and celebrities, then they would find much greater cause for concern in the hundreds of thousands of African children who are exploited and killed every year in the legalised mining and cocoa growing industries that operate across Central and West Africa. While the mining and chocolate companies cannot be held directly responsible for these "malpractices", this continental-size exploitation of African children is, nonetheless, part of a profit driven economic agenda which is rarely addressed by the so-called "international community".

An understanding of the process of impoverishment, oppression and human suffering in what is best described as "America's Africa" is drowned out by the public hysteria whipped up by tearful celebrities, paving the emotional way for the Pentagon to dispatch its "humanitarian forces" to track down "evil monsters".

Hysteria also conceals, conveniently, important historical facts about the causes of conflict in all of these African countries. Conveniently, because Washington's proxy war-making is a major cause of ongoing conflicts, and yet Washington is posturing, thanks in part to homey celebrities, as a savior of the suffering.

Far more culpable of crimes against humanity than Joseph Kony is Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni. For more than 25 years, Ugandan forces under Museveni have been waging scorched-earth campaigns of genocide against his own people to displace them from mineral-rich northern territories. The death toll runs into millions. Down through the genocidal years, Museveni has been backed by successive White House administrations. The notion that Obama has just sent Special Forces to Africa belies the fact that American covert operations have been active in Africa for decades.

In 1996, US Special Forces backed Uganda's invasion of the Democratic Republic of Congo

unleashing a covert war that continues to haunt large swathes of Central and East Africa, with a death toll that again runs into millions.

Another advantage of the US-backed plundering by Museveni in northern Uganda was the provision of a conduit for arms and supplies to the separatists in southern Sudan in their decades-long civil war with Khartoum, which resulted in over two million dead. Humanitarian crises in Sudan from famine and war are therefore a legacy of Western intervention. Yet celebrities like George Clooney are calling for more of this kind of intervention in the guise of “humanitarianism”.

Oil-rich and strategically located, Sudan has been a long-held prize for Washington and other Western powers. When Sudan fragmented along a North-South divide last year, it can be seen as a success of Washington’s proxy war-making and a mere staging post on the way to eventual control over the entire territory. Recall that Sudan was one of the seven countries – along with Iraq, Somalia, Lebanon, Libya, Syria and Iran – disclosed by former US General Wesley Clark as part of a 2001 Pentagon plan for hegemony in the world’s oil-rich regions. The re-ignition of Sudanese conflict this month is consistent with a continuation of Western policy of regime change towards Sudan, north and south.

Sudan is one of the main oil producers in Africa. But in recent years, Khartoum’s antagonism with the West meant that China became the dominant partner in Sudan’s oil industry, building refineries and pipelines. Over two-thirds of Sudan’s oil exports were shipped to China in 2010.

US regime change in Sudan would kill two birds with the one stone: gaining control of Sudanese oil and dislodging global competitor China from an important foothold on the African continent.

Uganda is set to become a new African oil giant, with the recent discovery of more fields on its western border with the Democratic Republic of Congo. The DRC is known to have vast deposits of metals and minerals.

Untold rich natural resources across the continent of Africa are the real reasons for Washington’s proxy wars that have been responsible for massive misery and poverty and ongoing conflicts that threaten to explode again into all-out wars.

Covering the ugly truth of America’s destruction in Africa are brainless, fact-less, hysterical “documentaries” about African bogeymen and humanitarian crises. Celebrity angst and voice-overs add star quality to the deception and set the scene for the yet more “humanitarian intervention”.

One thing these American celebrities need to get straight in their heads is the fact that their government is on a murderous rampage across the globe from Africa to Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and beyond. Syria and Iran show the bloodlust is far from over. The psychopathic mass murders by individuals like Sgt Robert Bales are just the shadows of the criminal wars of American government.

Pleading with this same government to take up humanitarian causes in Africa is like expecting a psychopath to deliver medicine down the barrel of a gun.

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