

Intervention, Reloaded: Empire Studios' Syrian Sequel

Myths about Bosnia and Kosovo bolster arguments for murder elsewhere

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Global Research, February 27, 2012

[Antiwar.com](#) 24 February 2012

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#), [US NATO](#)

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Syria is just like Kosovo, [argued one interventionist](#) two weeks ago, on the pages of the *War Street Journal*. According to Fouad Ajami, both involve a brutal dictator oppressing innocent civilians, and the Empire ought to act the same way, bypassing the U.N., and — to borrow a phrase from the late [Richard Holbrooke](#) — bombing for peace.

Sadly, Ajami's "logic" is shared by much of the interventionist camp. It appears that film and television aren't the only industries that have run out of ideas, relying instead on [remakes](#) and "reboots." Though at the time it was a near-disaster averted only through last-minute subterfuge, it is easy to see how Bill Clinton's [evil little war](#) might be mistaken for a splendid success following the megaflops that were Iraq and Afghanistan. Furthermore, Obama's administration being a [revival of Clinton's](#), it's no surprise that last year in Libya they green-lit [a sequel](#).

Trouble is, this is 2012, [not 1999](#) — and intervention cinema is being shunned by both the critics and the box office.

The Land of Blood and Failure

A perfect example is Angelina Jolie's directorial debut, *In the Land of Blood and Honey*, which opened in the U.S. in December and finally premiered in Bosnia and Croatia last week. The preachy and derivative film is a "dreary slog," as [one critic described it](#): "Subtlety and understatement become collateral damage as Jolie drives her points home as forcefully as possible and the film devolves into a grubby melodrama that fails to edify or entertain."

Most critics agree, even as they give politically correct praise to Jolie's assumptions about the Bosnian War. For example, a [highly favorable review](#) in *The Atlantic* loves Jolie's politics but chides her for lack of subtlety. The sledgehammer approach certainly didn't work on American moviegoers, who would [rather watch](#) a 3D [tribute to a German choreographer](#).

Alas, that has not stopped Jolie in fancying herself a screenwriter, director, and even international diplomat (in the Holbrooke vein, at least). Following a worshipful reception in Sarajevo, she gave an interview to [Al-Jazeera Balkans](#) (video), in which she not only demonstrated an appalling ignorance of Bosnia's history, but also used her war porn to advocate an intervention in Syria.

"Syria has gotten to the point where some form of intervention is absolutely necessary,"

pontificates Jolie, proceeding to reminisce about the beauty of Damascus and proclaim that this is no time to ask who and why, but to “do something” to “stop the civilians being slaughtered.”

Well, she *is* a [member](#) of the CFR...

Whatever Jolie’s failings as a diplomat, screenwriter, and director, though, her acting chops are still in fine form. She’s a perfect example of [hysteria politics](#), straight out of Central Casting.

Facts vs. Narrative

Jolie may actually believe her film is faithful to the reality of the Bosnian War, but it bears more resemblance to the apocalyptic reporting by the glory-hound Western media, which for years tripled the death tolls of the conflict, counted tens of thousands of soldiers as “civilians,” and ignored the jihad angle entirely — to name just three of its many sins.

Yet those are the very sins we see repeated today when it comes to reporting about Syria. How many of the civilians being supposedly massacred are actually [armed and masked rebels](#)? How many have actually died, and how much of the death toll is just plain propaganda? How come the bleeding hearts don’t care when the “unarmed civilians” actually [murder clerics preaching peace](#)? And what about [terrorists in rebel ranks](#)? Let’s not forget that much of the Syrian “news” last year was provided by an American blogger [posing as a Syrian lesbian](#). As usual, when facts get in the way of the interventionist narrative, they are either trampled or tossed aside.

Especially galling is the interventionist prattle about civilians and the supposed care for their well being. Who do they think is going to get killed by the “liberating” bombs? Perhaps they believe in the miraculous transubstantiation of anyone killed by the Empire into an enemy combatant?

Whenever Imperial ordnance atomizes a wedding party, a [refugee column](#) going the wrong way, or just plain civilians minding their own business (the nerve!), the first response is to deny everything. Once that’s no longer possible, spokesmen say “terribly sorry” and the planes (or drones) keep bombing. It never occurs to the interventionists that this callous disregard of common decency may have something to do with the missing gratitude of the “liberated.”

How About Kosovo, then?

Not only have the myths about Bosnia and Kosovo contributed to needless bloodshed there, they have also been [used to bolster arguments for murder](#) elsewhere, from Iraq to Libya and now Syria. Invoking Kosovo to justify an attack on Syria was predictable. Yet what is going on in Kosovo is actually the best argument *against* the laptop bombardiers.

Four years ago, the ethnic Albanian provisional government set up under NATO occupation declared Kosovo an independent country. The “Republic of Kosovo” is a [bit of a joke](#) in many respects, but the few Serbs who have managed to survive in the province aren’t laughing. Over a thousand have been murdered since the beginning of the occupation in 1999, while some were [carved up for body parts](#). In 2004, a [three-day pogrom](#) compared to *Kristallnacht* raged across the province, while most NATO “peacekeepers” stood by or hid in their

bunkers.

Western talk of “human rights” and a multi-ethnic future is science fiction to the Serbs. Most of Kosovo is now completely Albanian, with the few remaining Serbs surviving in ghettos guarded by NATO troops and barbed wire. In the north of the province, several counties have successfully resisted Albanian occupation and have refused to recognize the “independent” government. Last summer, the regime in Pristina [tried to conquer them](#); they said no.

In their [peaceful standoff](#) against the combined might of NATO, EU, the U.S., and even the quisling government in Belgrade, they’ve been gassed, shot at, and smeared in the press but have remained steadfast. Last week, they held a referendum — on the anniversary of Serbia’s 1804 rebellion against the Ottoman Empire — in which they [overwhelmingly rejected](#) the self-proclaimed independent Kosovo. Over 75% of registered voters showed up at the polls, a remarkable feat given that the entire area was blanketed by several feet of snow and ice, the worst winter in recent memory.

Yet what is the reaction of the Empire to civilians nonviolently protesting to protect their right to life, liberty, and property? Do the self-anointed champions of democracy and human rights applaud the Serbs of Kosovo? Are columnists lining up to support [peaceful dissent](#) against the government, whether in Belgrade or in Pristina? Think again.

Mainstream Western reports [dismiss](#) the Serbs as “nationalists” who “want close relations with Russia and are against joining the EU,” [quote](#) Belgrade quislings who declare the vote irrelevant or harmful, or [obsess](#) over the anniversary of “independent” Kosovo.

A Question of Power

So, alleged civilians allegedly being murdered are cause enough to reject the entirety of international law — except when it’s the Empire and its clients doing the murdering, because then it is magically OK. Democracy is the embodiment of virtue, but only the Empire [gets to decide](#) who is a democrat and what is democratic. Sovereignty and territorial integrity apply to Bosnia and “Kosovo,” but not to Serbia or Russia. And so on.

Interventionism isn’t about principles; it’s about power. Even champions of intervention [admit](#) that Syria isn’t being bombed yet because that would be *too difficult*. That doesn’t mean they won’t try. The “American Century” [may be over](#), but the imperialists haven’t gotten the memo.

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