

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://chris-floyd.com>

Other People's Blood: New Ground for the Great Oil Game

BY CHRIS FLOYD

2/27/2012

A few days ago, UK Prime Minister David Cameron hosted a [high-profile international conference](#) on the fate of war-torn Somalia. It seemed a bit incongruous at first. Dave -- the Old Etonian toff turned PR apparatchik turned Slasher-in-Chief of Austerity Britain -- is not exactly renowned for his abiding commitment to the betterment of the kind of folks his illustrious predecessor, Winston Churchill, liked to call the "recalcitrant tribes" who burden the earth with their wearisome presence.

Yet here was Dave -- and yes, one calls him Dave, in token of the hearty, plain-man persona he affects (about as successfully as Mitt Romney) -- emoting his patrician heart out over the need to build a stable future for the people of Somalia. Now is the time for decisive action, Dave declared, to a crowd that included heavy hitters like Hillary Clinton and Bai Ki-Moon: "For two decades politicians in the west have too often dismissed the problems in Somalia as simply too difficult and too remote to deal with. Engagement has been sporadic and half-hearted."

Some Somalis might take issue with that statement. For who can forget (except everybody, that is) the decisive "engagement" that "politicians in the west" inflicted on Somalia just a few short years ago? This would be the Ethiopian invasion and lengthy occupation that was armed, financed, green-lighted and directly assisted by the United States government. The invasion and occupation that killed thousands of innocent Somalis, drove hundreds of thousands into exile, gave rise to vast destruction, social ruin and famine, utterly destroyed the first stable government

the country had known for 15 years and fuelled the spread of religious extremism, violent crime and piracy. The invasion and occupation that was accompanied by U.S. bombing raids on fleeing refugees, of U.S. death squads operating in the country, of U.S. agents snatching refugees and "rendering" them back to torture chambers in Ethiopia. The invasion and occupation that was followed -- when the Ethiopians finally tired of their role as imperial proxies -- by further bombing, droning, death-squadding and arms dealing by the Nobel Peace Laureate who took over from his greenlighting predecessor. [For more of this glorious history, see [here](#) and [here](#).]

Now, you can call this continual involvement a lot of things -- a war crime, a murder spree, a sick and sinister folly, a sinkhole of war profiteering, a deliberate attempt to foment the unrest and suffering and extremism that it is the lifeblood of the Terror War imperium, which requires chronic instability and fearmongerous threats to justify its existence -- but what you *cannot* call it is a "sporadic" or "half-hearted" engagement.

So one perused the stories about Dave's big conference and thought: what's this all about? Why now? It all sounds so altruistic, so concerned and compassionate -- so when is the other shoe going to drop?

Well, that Gucci loafer was not long in falling. Three days after the conference ended -- with the proclamation of a grand, bland plan for a "more representative government" to be achieved, in some unspecified fashion, by the warring factions -- the Observer revealed the real impetus behind all the earnest Etonian emoting: "[Britain leads dash to explore for oil in war-torn Somalia](#)."

Oil? Oil driving the ruthless geopolitical strategies of western politicians behind a cynical facade of humanitarian concern? Boy, that's a new one! Yet hard as it is conceive of such a thing, it seems to be the case:

Britain is involved in a secret high-stakes dash for oil in Somalia, with the government offering humanitarian aid and security assistance in the hope of a stake in the beleaguered country's future energy industry.

...David Cameron last week hosted an international conference on Somalia, pledging more aid, financial help and measures to tackle terrorism. The summit followed a surprise visit by the foreign secretary, William Hague, to Mogadishu, the Somali capital, where he talked about "the beginnings of an opportunity" to rebuild the country.

The Observer can reveal that, away from the public focus of last week's summit, talks are going on between British officials and Somali counterparts over exploiting oil reserves that have been explored in the arid north-eastern region of the country. Abdulkadir Abdi Hashi, minister for international cooperation in Puntland, north-east Somalia -- where the first oil is expected to be extracted next month -- said: "We have spoken to a number of UK officials, some have offered to help us with the future management of oil revenues. They will help us build our capacity to maximise future earnings from the oil industry."

...Somali prime minister Abdiweli Mohamed Ali said his government had little choice but to entice western companies to Somalia by offering a slice of the country's natural resources, which

include oil, gas and large reserves of uranium. "The only way we can pay [western companies] is to pay them in kind, we can pay with natural resources at the fair market value."

Same as it ever was. The poor give up their resources to the rich, who ... keep the resources and make themselves richer. Sure, they kick back a little gravy to the local satraps, arm and train the satraps' security goons to keep the tribes in line, maybe build up their armies for proxy work; but the wealth and benefits of the natural resources run in one direction -- and it's rarely purchased "at the fair market value."

And the resource robbers believe there is sure enough some oil to be had in Somalia. Especially offshore -- where those pesky pirates make maritime mischief. Which is one reason why the United States and others are taking an increasingly militarized line in "securing" the area. The Observer reports:

Last month oil exploration began in Puntland by the Canadian company Africa Oil, the first drilling in Somalia for 21 years. Hashi, who sealed the Africa Oil deal, said the first oil was expected to be extracted within the next "20 to 30 days".

The company estimates there could be up to 4bn barrels (about \$500bn worth at today's prices) in its two drilling plots. Other surveys indicate that Puntland province alone has the potential to yield 10bn barrels, placing it among the top 20 countries holding oil. Chinese and US firms are among those understood to have also voiced interest about the potential for oil now that, for the first time in 20 years, the country is safe enough to drill.

Yet it is the extent of oil deposits beneath the Indian Ocean that is most exciting Somali officials. One said the potential was comparable to that of Kuwait, which has more than 100bn barrels of proven oil reserves. If true, the deposits would eclipse Nigeria's reserves – 37.2bn barrels – and make Somalia the seventh largest oil-rich nation.

The seventh biggest pool of oil in the world? No wonder Hillary and Bai came to Dave's party. For our patricians and peace laureates -- and all the other grubsters atop the world's greasy poles -- that's a prize well worth fighting for. With other people's blood, of course.