

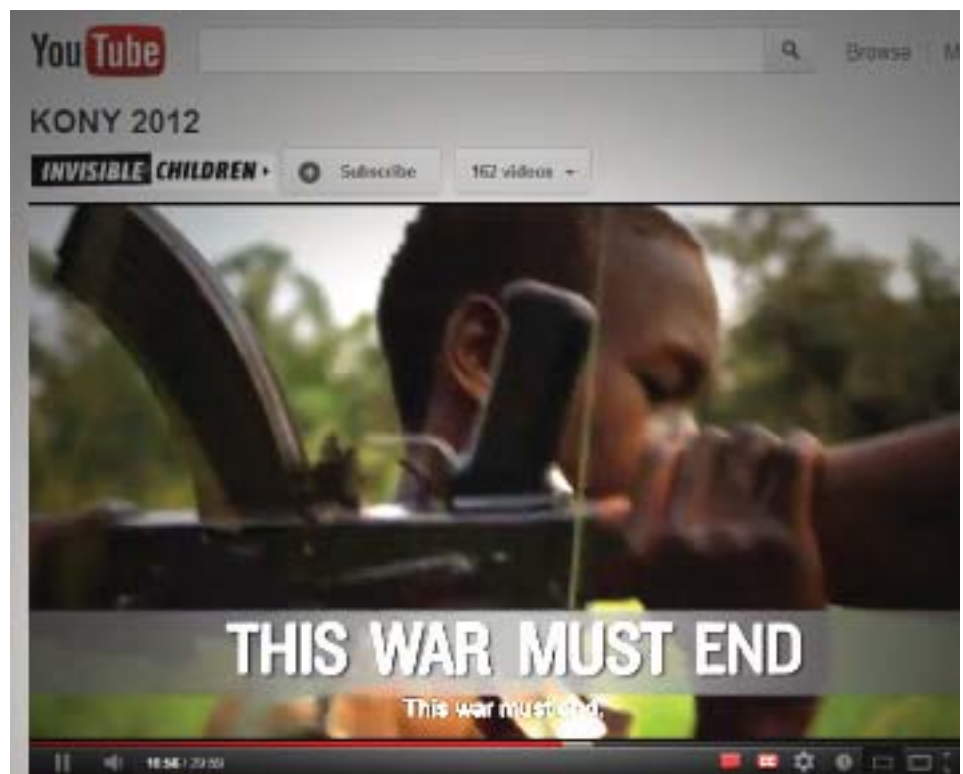
Foundations, Nonprofits and the War on U.S. Sovereignty

By Neil Maghami

Summary: Using a brilliantly effective YouTube video, a little-known American nonprofit has focused world attention on a murderous African warlord. Although various critics have complained about the group’s understanding of African affairs, almost no attention has been paid to the group’s dubious understanding of American sovereignty, which explains why it has received financial and political support from left-wing groups.

A previously obscure American nonprofit group published a video online March 5 that became a worldwide hit—accumulating 50 million views by March 8, and reaching more than 90 million views on YouTube as of press time. Through clever use of social media and endorsements by celebrities like George Clooney and Oprah Winfrey, the nonprofit Invisible Children was able to bypass the regular media to spread the word about its video, which calls on the U.S. government to do more to bring the African warlord Joseph Kony before the International Criminal Court (ICC).

And by March 21, the Associated Press reported that Invisible Children’s call had made it all the way to the U.S. Senate. On that day, a “bipartisan group of 34 senators introduced a resolution ... condemning Joseph Kony and his ruthless guerrilla group for a 26-year campaign of terror in central Africa that has been marked by child abductions and widespread killings.”



Months after the release of the now-famous “Kony 2012” video, questions continue to swirl about Invisible Children (IC). Everyone agrees that Kony is a deplorable warlord, but IC’s work has been criticized as misleading or worse by critics across the political spectrum. Some critics object that IC has received funding from center-right institutions like the National Christian Foundation; others criticize the group’s links to George Soros, chief patron of nearly all radical causes.

This issue of *Foundation Watch* will make visible some previously hidden facts regarding

Invisible Children and focus on the group’s understanding of American sovereignty. But first, we need to place the now-famous video within the wider context of foreign policy

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ideas that various nonprofits and foundations are attempting to popularize—ideas dramatically at odds with the principles on which the United States was founded and destructive to American independence.

The War on U.S. Sovereignty

Over the years Capital Research Center has documented the agenda and strategy of tax-exempt groups active on foreign policy issues and mapped out their elite liberal foundation funders. (See, for example, “The New Internationalism: Peace and Security Funders Group,” *Foundation Watch*, August 2009; “United Nations Association of the USA: Compromising U.S. Foreign Policy to Satisfy Leftist Priorities Abroad,” *Organization Trends*, October 2000.) This nexus of radical groups and their funders has a view of fundamental political issues that is far removed from that of America’s founders.

As Steven Groves and Ted R. Bromund of the Heritage Foundation have observed, “the United States was founded on the belief that the people create government and that the state’s sovereignty derives ultimately from the sovereignty of the people. In the realm

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of diplomacy, the state acts on behalf of the people, while remaining subject to their democratic control.”

In the traditional American view, this doctrine of sovereignty ensures the people a measure of protection by constraining decision-makers when it comes to foreign policy. The far Left loathes this understanding and takes the exact opposite view. As defense analyst Frank J. Gaffney put it in a CRC report, nonprofits active in the foreign policy sphere tend to “promote public policies that diminish U.S. military might, freedom of action, constitutional rights, and national sovereignty by subordinating them to the dictates of multilateral institutions” (“Wave the White Flag: NGOs and the Erosion of National Security,” *Organization Trends*, February 1999).

All countries will be better off, leftists argue, if everyone learns to share or “pool” sovereignty through global institutions to create not a “world government,” but “global governance,” weaved together through the activities of institutions such as the United Nations that exist *above* nation-states and their citizens.

In his CRC piece, Gaffney also warned about the Left’s campaign to create an International Criminal Court. This transnational authority, to be established through a global treaty, would be positioned above nation-states—including the United States.

Despite concerns about the possibility that serving members of the U.S. military could be caught up in vindictive, kangaroo-court prosecutions through the ICC, President Bill Clinton signed the treaty on December 31, 2000, and gave U.S. support to the ICC. That was “the last date on which the United States could sign the treaty without ratification by Congress,” as CRC contributor John Tierney noted. Clinton’s decision occurred after heavy lobbying by pro-ICC nonprofits, including the World Federalists’ U.S. wing

(see John Tierney’s “Lobby for International Court Gets Big Grants,” *Foundation Watch*, February 2011).

As Dr. John Fonte of the Hudson Institute explains, if we boil down the “global governance” school of thought to its essence, it means that “we the people” have no right to rule ourselves—and the United States of America has no right to that “separate and equal station” that she claimed for herself in the Declaration of Independence.

Dr. Fonte, a senior fellow at Hudson and director of the Center for American Common Culture, has studied the forces promoting world federalism over American sovereignty. In his *Sovereignty or Submission: Will Americans Rule Themselves or Be Ruled by Others?* (Encounter Books, 2011), he describes the pro-global governance camp and the leading roles played by large foundations and their nonprofit allies:

“Today forces promoting global governance represent a significant ‘driver’ or ‘actor’ on the stage of world politics. The global governance movement exerts considerable influence on Western and Westernized elites. This ‘global governance coalition’ encompasses both an ideological core (transnational progressives) and a social base (transnational pragmatists).

“Generally speaking it includes: the leadership of the European Union; the top echelons of the United Nations; deans of major American law schools; prominent international lawyers and academic experts in international relations (IR); major U.S. foundations (e.g., Ford, Rockefeller, Mott, Open Society); leading human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International; officials at international institutions like the World Trade Organization (WTO) and International Monetary Fund (IMF); and executives from major global corporations.”

When it comes to their war on national sovereignty, another long-term goal of the “global governance coalition,” and especially its foundation/nonprofit wing, has been to promote something known as “the responsibility to protect” (or R2P for short). Two very large, multi-billion-dollar foundations have lavished backers of this concept with financial support.

George Soros, godfather of the Open Society Institute, wrote an article in *Foreign Policy* in 2004 that branded the kind of sovereignty envisioned by founders like Washington, Hamilton, and Adams as “an anachronistic concept originating in bygone times when society consisted of rulers and subjects, not citizens.... Today, though not all nation-states are democratically accountable to their citizens, the principle of sovereignty stands *in the way of outside intervention in the internal affairs of nation-states.*” [emphasis added]

Soros wanted to do more than push sovereignty into history’s dustbin. As he observed at the end of his article: “Indeed, the rulers of a sovereign state have a responsibility to protect the state’s citizens. When they fail to do so, the responsibility is transferred to the international community.” That is, to transnational institutions, such as the ICC, United Nations, and so on – bodies ultimately answerable to no one, and with no particular attachment to the sovereignty of mere nation-states.

In 2009, Soros’s Foundation to Promote Open Society donated \$100,000 to help set up the New York-based Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. That same year the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation donated \$200,000. The Centre “works closely with NGOs, governments, and regional bodies which are seeking to operationalize the responsibility to protect,” according to its website. The Centre lists Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the International Crisis Group (ICG) as its “founding

partners.” Soros announced a \$100 million donation (over 10 years) to HRW in 2010, and also serves on the executive board of the ICG.

Enter Invisible Children

And this brings us to Invisible Children (www.invisiblechildren.com), the tax-exempt 501(c)(3) group that promoted the Kony 2012 video. IC is part of the “global governance coalition” described by Fonte, even if it may not have direct links to the Open Society Institute or the Ford Foundation. IC has invested considerable energy in promoting both the ICC and R2P, but with an up-to-date approach using the latest in social media.

In its latest publicly available IRS Form 990 tax return (for 2010), Invisible Children reported gross receipts of \$13.7 million for the year, including \$10.3 million in contributions and grants. It listed net assets of \$6.5 million. Just the year before, by contrast, it reported \$6 million in contributions and grants and disclosed \$1.7 million in net assets. Those are impressive statistics for a nonprofit that, as recently as 2006, included references in its annual report to the “bake sales, car washes, marathons, pizza parties, and [film] screenings” it used to raise money.

Geographically, IC’s activities have focused on various programs intended to aid children living in East Africa, particularly in the unhappy nation of Uganda, which has been wracked by conflict for years. That conflict has been fueled in part by the activities of Joseph Kony and his self-declared “Lord’s Resistance Army” and has cost the lives of tens of thousands of young people. Invisible Children’s goal has been to make the suffering of these young people visible to the rest of the world.

From its inception, foundation grants have been important to IC’s operations. Its 2005 tax return lists a \$30,000 grant from the Christian Community Foundation (Colorado

Springs, Colo.). It has lately enjoyed support from large foundations, including \$2 million from the Oprah Winfrey Foundation; (2010); \$1 million from Chase Community Giving Foundation (2010); \$330,000 from Humanity United (2010); and \$260,000 (2009) from the Wildlife Conservation Society.

The Chase donation was an early sign, perhaps, of how IC had made a strong connection with the Facebook generation, because it resulted from the group’s winning an online vote organized through Facebook. (Ben Keesey, executive director and CEO of Invisible Children, went on to serve on the Chase Community Giving Advisory Board.)

This fundraising-via-Facebook aside, IC’s success with new media was some time in coming. It initially took more of a face-to-face approach. In its 2006 annual report, IC describes how it sent “29 college-age ‘roadies’ from all around the nation” on a cross-country screening of its *Invisible Children: Rough Cut* documentary. The team visited a total of 700 high schools, colleges, and churches in 38 states, claiming to accumulate 250,000 viewers along the way and raising \$1 million “in merchandise sales and donations.”

Just what kind of college-age young people participated in this tour? IC’s 2006 annual report gives us a clue in a paragraph attributed to Eric Mecca, one of the “roadies.”

The National Tour didn’t just change my life, it changed me. It took all the awkwardness and insecurities, all the nervousness and fear, and fashioned into determination, passion, spirit, resolve, and most of all, hope. Before the tour I was jaded, I was angry at the world, and in particular, America. I couldn’t understand how there could be so much suffering, so much pain all across the globe, and yet we would just cruise on by, trying our hardest to stay ignorant and comfortable. I went on tour

half-expecting to find nothing but cynicism and apathy, but what I found was beauty and love.

Without this face-to-face interaction with its target audiences, IC would probably never have achieved its success with social media. The information gathered by the IC team while on the road no doubt provided the group with superb intelligence about its college-aged target audience – what messages they would respond to, and what messages fail to resonate.

As CRC has documented, once activist groups have selected a demographic group to mobilize, they can tap the immediacy of Internet-based organizing tactics to energize their most enthusiastic supporters. Bill McKibbin, widely regarded as the primary organizer behind the environmentalist campaigns against the Keystone pipeline, spent years working face-to-face with the green-leaning audiences he would later summon to surround the White House in protests that garnered worldwide media coverage. (See “Obama’s Keystone Decision: How Green Groups Got Their Way,” *Green Watch*, March 2012.)

The Power of Online Video

For those enthralled with the power of social media to engage the public directly, Invisible Children’s March 5 video and its tens of millions of views heralds a new age of cyber influence for nonprofits. Online media now permits what some refer to as “superdistribution” of a message via social media – that is, circulation of that message at a far faster rate, with greater impact, than could ever have been imagined possible until just a few years ago.

The success of Invisible Children shows that foreign policy-related activism by tax-exempt groups is undergoing something of a generational shift. The global governance

coalition’s activist stalwarts of yesteryear, such as the UN Association of the USA or the World Federalists, invested time and energy in such goals as publishing op-eds, circulating open letters, organizing panel discussions, publishing reports, occasional lobbying, etc.

But these tactics all originated prior to the explosion in popularity of social media like YouTube. Why waste time with the old techniques, when a single well-produced video that presses the right emotional buttons can reach millions of people in mere hours – and push (as IC’s March 5 video apparently did) politicians to align themselves accordingly?

Online videos created by nonprofit groups have become a potent way to shape political opinion, especially at a time when people routinely seek information of all kinds via the Internet. (See “Brave New Films: Using Online Videos for Agitation and Propaganda,” *Organization Trends*, November 2011.) IC’s Kony video has taken things to an entirely new level.

IC’S Videos

It’s a testament to IC’s careful planning that its March 5 Kony video reached as many people as it did. (You can easily find it via YouTube or www.invisiblechildren.com.) Professionally produced and edited, the 30-minute video has charismatic narration by Jason Russell, a long-time Invisible Children activist. The pitch to the viewer is straightforward: Help IC draw attention to the plight of children caught up in Uganda’s long-running civil war by pressuring the U.S. government to take steps to capture Joseph Kony.

How closely does the March 5 video align itself with the larger agenda of the global governance coalition? Very closely. There’s even a brief appearance by John Prendergast, a foreign policy pundit affiliated with the

Soros-funded Center for American Progress. (See “Center for American Progress: The Democrats’ Public Relations Firm,” *Organization Trends*, February 2011.)

Fonte viewed the March 5 video and shared the following analysis with CRC:

I think the video comes across as somewhat naïve. Kony is obviously a very bad guy and he should be brought to justice – I have no objection to that, and I don’t think any reasonable person would. But I am surprised that the video presents the International Criminal Court (ICC) as the way to achieve this. Kony could obviously be brought before a court in Uganda, which is the state where many of his heinous actions took place. But if Uganda is not up to the job, there is also a UN Security Council-sanctioned International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (located in Tanzania) that has had a number of successful prosecutions, and Kony could be brought there as well.

So why the focus on the ICC? Well, I think there is a clue for us in the presence of the ICC prosecutor, Luis Moreno Ocampo, in the Kony 2012 video. Moreno Ocampo has an agenda that we need to keep in mind. He wants to bring all countries under the jurisdiction of the ICC, even those like the U.S. and Israel that do not acknowledge the ICC’s authority. Moreno Ocampo has claimed the authority to investigate U.S. servicemen in Afghanistan. And he spent several years deciding whether or not to take up a Palestinian request to investigate claims of ‘war crimes’ during Israeli operations in Gaza.

The fact that he did not dismiss the Palestinian charges as outside his authority, but instead took years to decide whether to proceed, shows how far he believes his authority extends. You have to wonder if Moreno Ocampo sees Kony's case as another chance to legitimize the ICC apparatus. Remember that the global court's goal is to subordinate the sovereignty of all states to the ICC. Moreno-Ocampo's appearance in the video is troubling, from this perspective.

The presence of Moreno Ocampo makes me ask two questions. Do the people behind the video not understand Moreno Ocampo's goals? Or do they support the ICC's pretensions of sovereignty over the U.S. and all other democratic states?

On April 5 of this year Invisible Children released via YouTube "KONY 2012: Part II." This video was not nearly as successful as the March 5 video, having been viewed only about 2 million times. The video explains IC's campaign against Joseph Kony:

The idea behind Kony 2012 is not new. In 2005, world leaders unanimously agreed at the United Nations to uphold the *responsibility to protect*. This states that every single person on the planet has inherent rights that should be defended against the worst crimes against humanity. First by our own countries, and then by the global community, no matter where we live. Although most of the world has agreed to this in theory, in far too many cases, we have failed to live up to our promise. [Emphasis added.]

The speaker is referring to a 2005 discussion at the U.N. General Assembly about formally defining the "responsibility to protect" along the lines favored by George Soros (per the article in *Foreign Policy* quoted above). That is, in a way that permits "outside intervention in the internal affairs of nation-states."

But the speaker is wrong. Although in 2005 the General Assembly discussed R2P and adopted a resolution on it, John Bolton, then-U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, stated publicly that the United States did not accept the operational parts of that resolution as having "a legal character"; nor did the America "accept that either the United Nations as a whole, or the Security Council, or individual states, have an obligation to intervene under international law," because the 2005 discussion of R2P did not involve any actual treaty or binding obligation on the United States or other sovereign state.

Just as pro-International Criminal Court activists wish to elevate that body above nation-states, so the R2P advocates wish to elevate their interventionist doctrine beyond nation-states' ability to oppose it. The case against R2P is clear enough. As Steve Groves, the Lomas Fellow at the Heritage Foundation, puts it, "U.S. freedom of action [in foreign policy] would be compromised if the United States consented to be legally or morally bound by the R2P doctrine. The United States must instead preserve its national sovereignty by maintaining a monopoly over the decision to deploy its military forces."

Conclusion

The "global governance coalition" predicts the world would be more peaceful if all nation-states, including the U.S., were to pool their sovereignty together. While the Ford Foundation, George Soros, *et al.* may have faith that such a development will lead to a shining tomorrow, others see grave dangers

if the United States loses its freedom to act in its own national interest.

As Fonte observes in *Sovereignty or Submission*, "after one has stripped away all the sophisticated verbiage" of "the advocates of global governance" about how the world would be a better place if America and other countries gave up more of their sovereignty, these advocates believe that "Americans do not have a moral right to govern themselves" and that they should be forced to submit to scrutiny and oversight from multilateral institutions, who would govern us under doctrines such as R2P.

Fonte warns "there is no 'split-the-difference,' no middle ground, no possible compromise" between "American sovereignty and 'shared sovereignty.'" That's a good idea to keep in mind when reviewing the way friends of global governance promote their pet projects.

Neil Maghami is a freelance writer and frequent contributor to Capital Research Center publications.

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Many thanks.

Terrence Scanlon
President

PhilanthropyNotes

Legislation that would force nonprofit groups engaged in political advocacy to reveal their donors has been blocked for the time being in the U.S. Senate. Fifty-one senators voted to move forward with the so-called Disclose Act of 2012, falling short of the required 60 votes. The bill would compel tax-exempt groups spending at least \$10,000 on campaign activity during an election cycle to publicly disclose the identities of donors giving \$10,000 or more. Critics complain that “social welfare” organizations, or 501(c)(4) nonprofits, increasingly purchase issue-oriented campaign ads and outspend super PACs (political action committees), which must disclose their donors.

The **Center for Public Integrity**, an ambitious nonprofit investigative journalism group, is in financial trouble, the *Columbia Journalism Review* reports. In December the Center acknowledged it was running a \$2 million budget deficit and had cut more than a third of its staff. The Center had been run by **John Solomon**, a former *Washington Post* reporter and *Washington Times* executive editor who took over the nonprofit in the beginning of 2010. Solomon, who quit in May 2011, launched a new website, **iWatch**, and worked out a merger with an arm of the Huffington Post that was supposed to significantly boost the Center’s website traffic. Both the Huffington Post and iWatch deals fizzled.

How the mighty have fallen. The Stockholm, Norway-based **Nobel Foundation**, which has had trouble covering operating expenses in recent years, said it intends to cut monetary awards for its annual prizes by 20 percent this year. Prizes of 10 million Swedish krona (US\$1.4 million) will be cut to 8 million krona (US\$1.1 million). This year’s Nobel Prizes are expected to be announced in October.

The **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**, **Bloomberg Philanthropies**, and 15 other foundations, governments, and United Nations agencies plan to up their giving to family-planning programs by \$2.6 billion, the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* reports. Their stated goal is to help an extra 120 million women worldwide gain access to contraception. The Gates Foundation intends to double its annual giving for such programs to \$140 million per year over the coming eight years, to a total of \$1.12 billion. Bloomberg Philanthropies is kicking in \$50 million for the effort.

Goldman Sachs WATCH

After revenue for the first half of 2012 fell to the lowest level since 2005, Goldman Sachs Group Inc. laid off 1,000 employees, Bloomberg News reports. The firm is planning to cut another \$500 million in expenses in its annual budget. Compensation fell 14 percent to \$7.29 billion, and revenue decreased 14 percent to \$16.6 billion in the first two quarters of this year. Goldman CEO Lloyd C. Blankfein said he believes the business slowdown is temporary.