

## **China and Darfur: The Genocide Olympics?**

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NEWSPAPERS HAVE been running harrowing ads on the genocide in Darfur. They feature images of suffering coupled with appeals to President Bush to halt it. But the key to this tragedy lies not in the killing fields of western Sudan nor even in the White House. It is to be found instead in Khartoum, Sudan's booming capital. The sleek new office towers sprouting up in the commercial district explain why Sudan's government has resisted American and European pressure to end the genocide. But they also show why Arabs and Asians -- and especially the Chinese -- have the power to influence Sudan and the responsibility to use it.

Sudan has been subject to U.S. sanctions since the 1990s. It has been condemned in numerous United Nations resolutions, and Western firms that do business there risk alienating customers and investors. And yet a \$4 billion complex of offices, parks and hotels is rising at the confluence of the White and Blue Niles, complete with the new sail-shaped headquarters of Petrodar, a Chinese-Malaysian-United Arab Emirates oil partnership. Thanks to these investors, along with Kuwaitis, Saudis, Indians and Pakistanis, Sudan's petro-economy is flourishing. This year the economy is expected to grow 13 percent on the back of oil exports, most of which go to China.

So Sudan's government feels it can ignore Western revulsion at genocide because it has no need of Western money. But the bigger question is why China, along with Sudan's other Arab and Asian partners, feels free to trample on basic standards of decency. China's economic model rests on access to Western markets -- access that can't be assured given popular resentment of China's growing trade surplus. Equally, China seeks acceptance at the world's diplomatic top table -- and this cause is unlikely to be advanced if China is perceived to be complicit in genocide. Imagine the newspaper ads leading up to the Beijing Games in 2008: Human rights campaigners will call on the world to boycott the Genocide Olympics.

China recently demonstrated its leverage over Sudan, prevailing upon the regime to allow the embattled African Union force in Darfur to be supplied with better equipment. But China should join with the United States and others to broker a cease-fire in Darfur, without which even a beefed-up peace monitoring force cannot save civilians. In recent weeks, fighting has intensified in the region and spilled into neighboring Chad; refugees are fleeing to the Central African Republic, which is embroiled in its own internal conflict. A regional catastrophe is brewing that could be worse even than the past three years of killing.

This crisis isn't going to fix itself. Sudan's President Omar Hassan al-Bashir rivals Iran's leader in genocide denial: He recently accused aid workers of exaggerating Darfur's crisis to preserve their jobs. Doesn't China feel qualms about propping up this ogre? Perhaps Treasury Secretary Henry M. Paulson Jr., who is in China along with a team of Cabinet officials and the Fed chairman today and tomorrow, might trouble to ask that question.

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