

April 23, 2006

OP-ED COLUMNIST

China and Sudan, Blood and Oil

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Americans make a habit of bashing China for all the wrong reasons.

It's hypocritical of us to scream at President Hu Jintao, as we did during his visit last week, about China's undervalued currency. Sure, that's a problem for the world economy — but not nearly as much as our own budget deficits, caused by tax cuts we couldn't afford.

We're now addicted to capital from China and other foreign countries, and that should be a concern. But our deficits aren't China's fault, and junkies like us don't have any basis to complain about the moral turpitude of those who supply cheap capital or other narcotics.

But there are two good reasons to complain to President Hu. First, he has presided over a broad clampdown on freedom of expression in China, including the imprisonment for 19 months of my colleague Zhao Yan, an employee of The New York Times.

Second, China is now underwriting its second genocide in three decades. The first was in Pol Pot's Cambodia, and the second is in Darfur, Sudan. Chinese oil purchases have financed Sudan's pillage of Darfur, Chinese-made AK-47's have been the main weapons used to slaughter several hundred thousand people in Darfur so far, and China has protected Sudan in the U.N. Security Council.

Indeed, it's because of China's support that Sudan felt it could get away this month with sending a proxy army to invade neighboring Chad.

For more than two years now, I've been holding President Bush's feet to the fire over his refusal to make the Darfur genocide a priority for his administration. But Mr. Bush has taken half-steps in the right direction — including pushing President Hu to cooperate on Darfur — and that's more than can be said of the leaders of most other countries. Europe has snored through this genocide. Then there's the Arab League, which met last month in Sudan, in effect legitimizing the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Muslims (almost all the victims in Darfur are Muslim).

[As Fatema Abdul Rasul wrote in The Daily Star of Lebanon](#) this month: "For the entire Muslim and Arab world to remain silent when thousands of people in Darfur continue to be killed is shameful and hypocritical." Do you hear that, Hosni?

And where's the Arab press? Isn't the murder of 300,000 or more Muslims almost as offensive as a Danish cartoon?

The biggest obstacle to forceful action is China. The latest outrage came a few days ago when the U.S. and

Britain tried to impose the most feeble possible sanctions — targeting just four people, including a midlevel Sudanese official. China and Russia blocked even that pathetic action.

Why is China soft on genocide?

The essential reason is oil. China traditionally was self-sufficient in oil, but since 1993 it has been a net oil importer and it is increasingly worried about this vulnerability.

So China has been bustling around the globe trying to ensure oil supplies from as many sources as possible. And partly because most of the major oil fields are already taken, China has ended up with the world's thugs: Sudan, Iran and Myanmar. China has been particularly active in Africa.

About 60 percent of Sudan's oil flows to China, and Beijing has a close economic and even military relationship with Khartoum. A recent Council on Foreign Relations report on Africa notes that China has supplied Sudan with small arms, anti-personnel mines, howitzers, tanks, helicopters and ammunition. China has even established three arms factories in Sudan, and you see Chinese-made AK-47's, rocket-propelled grenades and machine guns all over Darfur.

Last month in a village on the Chad-Sudan border, I interviewed a man who told how a Sudanese militia had grabbed his baby boy, Ahmed Haroun, thrown Ahmed to the ground and shot him in the chest. The odds are overwhelming that that gun and those bullets came from China.

Likewise, the women and children I've seen torn apart by bullets in Darfur and Chad — that lead and steel was molded in Chinese factories. When women are raped and mutilated in Darfur, the gun barrels pointed at their heads are Made in China.

Let's hope China's 13 million bloggers take up this issue, for this has received very little attention in China but it is not so sensitive that discussion of it will get anyone arrested.

One of the central questions for the 21st century will be whether China's rise will be accompanied by increasingly responsible behavior in its international relations. Darfur is a test, and for now China is failing.

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