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"How China's Support of Sudan Shields a
Regime Called 'Genocidal'"* by Danna Harman

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August Roundtable: Introduction

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August Roundtable: Introduction

Abstract

An annotation of:

"How China's Support of Sudan Shields a Regime Called 'Genocidal'" by Danna Harman. Christian Science Monitor. June 26, 2006.

Keywords

Human rights, China, Sudan, Genocide

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[“How China's Support of Sudan Shields a Regime Called 'Genocidal'” by Danna Harman. Christian Science Monitor. June 26, 2006.](#)

An Annotation:

Once the term “genocide” has been used to identify a conflict, responding in defense of civilians and working towards peaceful resolution requires identifying those obstacles to stability and respect for human rights. In the case of Darfur, there is no shortage of obstacles: the self-deluding administration in Khartoum; the complicit United States that depends on the Sudanese government for intelligence in combating the “war on terror;” the ineffective African Union; and the bureaucratically intractable United Nations—to name just a few of the most prominent players. Increasingly, activists are raising the issue of China’s role in supporting the genocide, as the rising superpower has crept-in under the radar as a business partner, political defender and weapons dealer for Sudan’s Omar al-Bashir regime.

“...[I]n its role as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, China has continuously blocked effective action against Sudan by arguing for the respect of Sudan’s sovereignty.”

The self-serving consequences of this diplomatic approach are clear: If sufficient precedent is set that domestic human rights violations are not the concern of the international community, then China has less to fear, in terms of future repercussions, for its own notorious domestic disregard for the human rights. In an attempt to defend human rights abuses, many nations appeal to sovereignty and self-determination. However, this is largely a smokescreen aimed at shifting focus away from human rights practices toward debates about the relevance of international norms and the relative nature of human rights. The longer these excuses are accepted as justification for human rights violations, the more difficult it will be for advocates to champion ideas about universal application of human rights standards.

“...China does not tie its aid or investment to conditions such as good governance, fighting corruption, or adopting reforms—the sort of conditions that have long been mainstays for the West and international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.”

The ability of China to outbid and under-restrict Western institutions for aid projects in the developing world threatens development and compromises attempts at democratization and advancing human rights. Despite the array of well-deserved criticism aimed at international financial organizations, at least moderate provisions for accountability and transparency, on the part of the recipient, accompany these investments. Termed by one commentator as “rogue aid,” this phenomenon skews the balance of power dramatically away from the West in favor of China, as well as any other nation that can afford to participate in this “auction” in which influence over the politics of developing countries can be bought and sold at the most competitive price.

“...[M]any critics say that China’s willingness to befriend, do business with, and diplomatically protect questionable regimes does not end with Sudan.”

The Cold War was replete with examples of superpowers propping up tyrannical regimes in the name of (questionable) security interests, as well as for ideological purposes (i.e., to prevent the spread of communism/liberal democracy). What we are witnessing with respect to the Chinese support of the genocidal regime in Sudan, as well as others in the region, is a strategy justified not even in the name of security or ideology, but merely by economics. At stake here is the future of the developing world, whose people are not well-served by the perpetuation of corrupt governance, political instability and dictatorial rule. Defenders of human rights must meet this challenge because failure to do so has dire consequences for the people of Africa, as well as those within China, who will only be further disenfranchised as its government increasingly operates outside of international normative frameworks.

These issues and many more are addressed in this month's installment of *Human Rights & Human Welfare's* Roundtable.

~ *The Editors*