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## THE AFRICAN UNION IN DARFUR: AN AFRICAN SOLUTION TO A GLOBAL PROBLEM?

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Since 2003, Sudan's central government has used proxy forces to slaughter thousands of civilians belonging to ethnic groups associated with the uprising taking place in the Darfur region. Serious outside pressure would likely be required to change the regime's "preferences for repression," as Sudan's central government has concluded that, if unchecked, the uprising would threaten the regime's survival. The African Union (AU) has been admirably engaged in the Darfur crisis but has ultimately proven ineffectual, hindered by poor resources and weak political will. At the same time, the Sudanese government's intransigence and the diplomatic protection it has received from China have blunted the more ambitious steps taken by the United Nations Security Council. Ending the human rights violations that have plagued Darfur will require greater pressure from China on its partners in Khartoum, and this article concludes that advocacy from activist groups and the African Union itself could produce such an outcome.

Since the Cold War's end, Africa has frequently been the site of severe human rights violations, including many that were perpetrated or directed by a national government against its own citizens. Governments that commit such atrocities do not do so lightly. Powerful motivations lie behind their "preferences for repression," which is a tool that they employ to retain

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political power, secure and distribute resources, and ultimately ensure their regime's survival (Hafner-Burton 2005, 600). When this is the case, changing an abusive regime's behavior will require significant pressure, whether through diplomatic criticism, economic sanctions, or humanitarian military intervention. The record suggests that this kind of action may not always be forthcoming from those with the greatest influence.

This article examines a particular case of human rights violations, the atrocities carried out beginning in 2003 by government-supported militias against non-Arab ethnic groups in the Darfur region of Sudan, and assesses the contributions of the African Union and the UN Security Council to the effort to halt those violations. The African Union suffers from a chronic dearth of resources and political will to effectively persuade or prevent the Sudanese government from continuing its campaign, while the UN Security Council too faces problems of will, aggravated by the Sudanese government's defiance and China's deep reluctance to act. Given these circumstances, this article concludes that the best hope of ending the violence in Darfur is to persuade China's government to use its extensive leverage over the Sudanese regime. Activist groups and the African Union should encourage China to take this action by challenging the image of China as a benign and responsible power, which Beijing has sought to project in Africa and, through the 2008 Olympic Games, around the world.

## HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN DARFUR: WHAT, WHO, AND WHY?

Sudan's national government, deeply concerned about the threat to its own survival posed by an uprising in the country's western region of Darfur, has mobilized and acted in concert with militias to crush the rebellion and exterminate its civilian base of support. Four years since the conflict began, the threat of this rebellion and other perceived existential dangers continue to drive Sudan's central government to block all effective efforts by outside actors to stop its deadly campaign.

The violence in Darfur is part of a complex history. The Arab-dominated central government in Khartoum fought a long civil war against rebels in Sudan's predominantly black South between 1983 and 2005. During this war, the government shored up its western flank, the underdeveloped and marginalized provinces of Darfur, by arming Arab militias known as the *Janjaweed* to supplement its regular army and launch raids on the non-Arab population base of potential rebel supporters (ICG 2004, 5). Khartoum further aggravated existing tensions by redrawing Darfur's administrative boundaries in a way that divided major non-Arab ethnic groups and further

reduced their influence in the regional government (ICG 2004, 6-7).

The present crisis emerged in early 2003 when non-Arab rebels from Darfur, frustrated with attacks on their land and convinced that their interests were not being represented in the ongoing peace talks between Khartoum and the southern rebels, launched a guerrilla war on government forces (de Waal 2007, 17; ICG 2004, i). The government responded by launching a brutal counterinsurgency “completely disproportionate to the targeted guerrilla warfare of the two Darfur insurgent groups” (Slim 2004, 814-815). Khartoum again supplemented its own forces with proxy *Janjaweed* militias, who have committed numerous crimes against humanity and war crimes in an effort to kill and displace the ethnic groups tied to the rebel forces (Udombana 2005, 1154; ICC 2007, 7).

The atrocities that characterize this counterinsurgency have been genocidal in scale. Estimates of the number of Darfurians to die as a result of the campaign vary widely: one U.S. government study concluded that an estimate of 170,000 dead by mid-2005 was the most credible, though other estimates have placed casualty figures as high as 400,000 (GAO 2006, 20-21). More than two million Darfurians have been internally displaced or driven into neighboring Chad, and many thousands have been raped (Udombana 2005, 1155; GAO 2006, 7). The violence has been carried out with such coordination, intensity, and focus on particular ethnic groups that the U.S. government, though reluctant to commit itself to action, declared in 2004 that “genocide has been committed in Darfur” and “may still be occurring” (Powell 2004). The level of violence has ebbed and surged again in the following years, but lawlessness continues to prevail as of early 2007, creating an especially dangerous environment for displaced civilians and the aid workers that provide their humanitarian lifeline (de Waal 2007, 18).

Khartoum has indisputably played a central role in these human rights violations. To some degree, the counterinsurgency may have gotten “out of control, running wild beyond the designs of its sponsors” (Slim 2004, 814-815). But extensive reports of coordinated joint attacks by the militias and government forces make it highly doubtful that the *Janjaweed* are truly independent as Khartoum officials have claimed, and even more doubtful that the government is actively seeking to disarm them as it has repeatedly committed to do (ICG 2004, 16-17; ICG 2006c, 1). The U.S. government concluded from refugee interviews that Khartoum and the *Janjaweed* bore joint responsibility for the initial wave of attacks (Powell 2004). Khartoum has become more discreet in its support for the *Janjaweed* since Darfur came to international attention, but it has continued arming

and supporting the militias and, in some cases, absorbing their members into the national army (ICG 2006b, 5).

Khartoum sees Darfur's rebellion as an existential threat. Its desire to crush the rebellion as thoroughly as possible explains many of its subsequent actions, including its efforts to delay the onset of serious pressure from outside actors. Regime officials feared early on that, if the uprising were to spread beyond Darfur and evolve into "a widespread northern movement for regime change," it could pose a greater threat than the civil war in the south (Slim 2004, 822). Fortunately for Khartoum, the Darfur crisis emerged as the international community was brokering what would become the Naivasha peace accord between Khartoum and the southern rebels. Correctly calculating that the international community would not criticize its behavior in Darfur with the southern peace process close to resolution, Khartoum first dragged its feet at the Naivasha negotiations to buy time for a major offensive in Darfur, then switched its stance and focused on concluding the Naivasha process "in part to divert international attention from the crisis in Darfur" (ICG 2004, i,14; ICG 2006a, 8).

Khartoum's performance with regard to the Darfur Peace Agreement, which it signed with one faction of a major Darfur rebel movement on May 5, 2006, similarly reflects the regime's unyielding commitment to protecting its position. Khartoum committed to disarm the *Janjaweed* but has done little to stop them from continuing to operate in Darfur well after the agreement was signed (ICG 2006b, 4). Khartoum refused to concede significant power-sharing measures as it did in the Naivasha accord, which gave the regime a narrow majority of executive and legislative positions (ICG 2006b, 8). It refused to sign any agreement that called for replacing the African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur with a more effective UN force, and Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir has taken such an extreme rhetorical position against a stronger UN force that "backing down would have domestic political repercussions" (ICG 2006b, 4; ICG 2006c, 2-6). Finally, the ICC's prosecutor has issued an indictment for a senior Sudanese official implicated in war crimes and crimes against humanity, giving the regime still another pretext not to allow into the country UN forces that it fears would seek to arrest its top personnel (ICG 2006c, 1).

## OUTSIDE EFFORTS TO STOP THE VIOLATIONS

A sustainable solution to the Darfur conflict will ultimately require a comprehensive political agreement that involves all of the major rebel factions and Sudan's neighbors and protects the central government's interests to a significant degree (de Waal 2007, 20). The possible content of such an

agreement and the appropriate process of arriving at it are beyond the scope of this article, which focuses more narrowly on the possibility of securing outside pressure to change Khartoum's calculations in the short to medium term.

Given the regime's strong interest in continuing the campaign of violence in Darfur, shifting its calculations to the point where further killing is no longer clearly in its interest will be difficult. Although pressure will not necessarily succeed in changing Khartoum's course of action, "three years of tragedy and broken promises strongly suggest that gentler methods do not work" (ICG 2006c, 6). The remainder of this article addresses the efforts of the African Union and the UN Security Council to apply pressure – whether through the coercive use of military force, the consensual presence of a protective force of peacekeepers, or the application of economic and political pressure – to end the human rights violations taking place in Darfur.

### **The African Union response**

The emergence of the African Union (AU) in 2002 was greeted with guarded optimism, and its activity in human rights and peacekeeping represents an improvement over the performance of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), its predecessor institution. The institution's failure to halt the human rights violations in Darfur has confirmed that its shortage of resources and political will are a real hindrance to its effectiveness in protecting human rights. It is true that the specific circumstances of the Darfur case – especially the government's active support for the violations being committed – magnify these shortcomings in ways that may not apply in other peacekeeping situations. But it is difficult not to conclude that the AU's members are less than fully committed to making the most of the limited tools at their disposal to change Khartoum's behavior.

The African Union is the direct successor to the Organization of African Unity, a continental institution founded in 1963 and rooted in the period of Africa's decolonization and independence. The OAU, disparaged abroad and in Africa as a "club of dictators," generally made no pretense of playing any role in protecting human rights, focusing instead on securing the sovereignty of Africa's states as they emerged from colonial rule (Gottschalk and Schmidt 2004, 140). The African Union was established in 2002 in response to a number of competing initiatives by the heads of state of South Africa, Nigeria, and Libya to reform the OAU. African states ultimately decided to replace the OAU outright with a new institution whose charter incorporates several principles that set it apart from its

predecessor's scrupulous deference to national sovereignty (Tieku 2004, 250-251).

The AU's Constitutive Act articulates a strong commitment to human rights. The charter also gives the AU the authority to back up that commitment with action, explicitly providing for "[t]he right of the Union to intervene in a Member State...in respect of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity" (Article 4h). Given the record of their predecessors, African leaders seemed to have "slaughtered a holy cow" by taking even a declaratory step in this direction (Gottschalk and Schmidt 2004, 157). But the resulting high hopes – Amnesty International proclaimed the AU "a new opportunity for the promotion and protection of human rights in Africa" – were laced with an understandable skepticism that these principles would translate well into practice (Amnesty International 2002).

The Darfur crisis has put these expectations to the test, and the results have been mixed. As the violence in Darfur continued into 2004, the African Union sent a small mission to Darfur with UN Security Council endorsement to monitor a cease-fire agreement between the rebels and Khartoum. This mission eventually evolved into the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), which remains the only external peacekeeping force providing security in Darfur. Though underfunded and understaffed, AMIS has received some praise for improving a grim security situation and received credit in UN Security Council Resolution 1706 for "reducing large-scale organized violence" (GAO 2006, 45). But AMIS's efforts have fallen far short of ending the human rights violations in Darfur, and its contributions have been generally recognized as inadequate. The force has been unable to play the protective function that the Darfur Peace Agreement assigns it largely because it is too small, often operating below an authorized capacity that, even if fulfilled, would still be inadequate to secure enough of Darfur's vast territory (GAO 2006, 62; ICG 2005, 3).

Beyond peacekeeping efforts, the AU's members have appeared highly reluctant to apply diplomatic pressure on Khartoum, even when President al-Bashir has sought to assume leadership positions within the AU while the Darfur conflict raged. The AU's member states sent an unfortunate signal when they allowed Khartoum to host the group's annual summit in early 2006, even though the AU's rules of procedure explicitly require that the summit take place in a "conducive political atmosphere" (Udombana 2005, 1188). Al-Bashir subsequently sought to win the institution's rotating chairmanship as well. Fearful of the damage that would be done to the AU's credibility if it were led by a government accused of genocide, the AU's

member states came to a private agreement to deny al-Bashir's bid – and repeated their stand in 2007, supporting John Kufuor of Ghana after the situation in Darfur had worsened. But AU members specifically declined to frame their action as a statement on Khartoum's behavior; South Africa's representative insisted that the 2007 decision was made “to commemorate the historic independence of Ghana in 1957” and “had absolutely nothing to do with humiliating or rejecting Sudan” (Gruzd 2007, ENS 2007).

The fact that the AU and its member states have spent financial, diplomatic, and military resources engaging with the Darfur conflict suggests that the principles of the AU's charter have been at least partly translated into action. But chronic obstacles to more effective action remain. Most obviously, the African Union's financial and military resources are severely limited: AMIS has lacked adequate soldiers from the beginning of its operation and has remained unable to fulfill even the authorized level of 7,000 (ICG 2005, 4). A handful of Africa's wealthier states are left to bear the burden of paying for the AU's regular and peacekeeping budgets, complemented by often generous but ultimately inadequate foreign funding that makes planning difficult (Gottschalk and Schmidt 2004, 142; ICG 2006c, 11). The European Union's African Peace Facility, for example, provided 250 million euros of support for African peacekeeping efforts between 2004 and 2007, but the funds were already largely committed by mid-2005 (ICG 2005, i) The many crises on the African continent inevitably compete for a limited number of domestic troops and funds, as the slow response to recent calls for AU peacekeepers in Somalia has demonstrated.

Domestic political factors pose a serious constraint on the AU's effectiveness as well. Even Africa's wealthy states can contribute to AU peacekeeping efforts only what their people will tolerate and what their other priorities will accommodate. South Africa's government has faced a public backlash over its high foreign peacekeeping expenditures during a major crime wave at home, while Rwanda's government recently warned that its growing peacekeeping budget was likely to make it miss spending targets it had arranged with the International Monetary Fund (Gottschalk and Schmidt 2004, 145; EastAfrican 2006). For similar reasons, the AU seems unlikely to follow Desmond Tutu's plea to apply sanctions on Sudan, given the high political costs that any African government, especially a major Sudanese trading partner, would face in forcing domestic businesses to cut off trade with Sudan.

The AU's habits of operating by consensus and shunning confrontation are similarly constraining. Although the AU and its Peace and Security

Council are empowered to make decisions by a two-thirds majority, their charters also encourage them to make decisions by consensus (AU Constitutive Act, Article 7(1); AU PSC Protocol, Article 8(13)). The careful way in which the decision to deny Sudan the AU chairmanship was phrased speaks to a deep reluctance to criticize fellow member states also evident in the AU's silence on the government-led repression in Zimbabwe (Gottschalk and Schmidt 2004, 146; Manby 2004, 1000).

Finally, protecting human rights is only one of many priorities within the African Union itself. To cite an example, the AU's members are instructed to consider a government's "respect for constitutional governance...as well as the rule of law and human rights" in voting for members of the Peace and Security Council. But no mechanism gives this principle any special place among the many other criteria identified, which include a state's contributions to the Union, its financial and military capacity, and an "equitable regional representation and rotation" (AU Constitutive Act, Article 5; AU PSC Protocol, Article 5(2)). The presence of Libya, Algeria, Cameroon, Togo, and Sudan itself – all five rated "not free" by the think-tank Freedom House – among the Council's first members in 2004 suggests that material and geopolitical factors are likely to trump the more humane criteria in determining PSC membership and other decisions (Freedom House 2006).

These constraints might be less severe in another situation where the host government did not actively oppose effective intervention. The active resistance of Khartoum magnifies the African Union's shortcomings, making its limited military resources less relevant and heightening its tendency to defer to the sovereignty of fellow states. But even if the African Union were a stronger institution and acted more forcefully, its performance in the Darfur case would still be sharply constrained, as the performance of institutions with far more extensive resources shows.

### **The UN Security Council and Its Members**

Unlike the African Union, which lacks the capacity to shift Khartoum's calculations, the UN Security Council potentially has much more significant military resources and political and economic leverage at its disposal. It has taken serious steps toward using these tools, but it too is restrained by a defiant Khartoum and a deeply reluctant China, potentially the Council's most influential member in this situation but also its least willing to exert pressure. The United States has also been somewhat slow to exert maximum pressure on Khartoum, though it lacks the same capacity to change Khartoum's behavior.



The Security Council has taken several steps since July 2004 toward inserting an effective peacekeeping force into Darfur and pressuring the parties to the conflict, especially Khartoum, to end the violence. Most significantly, it has given legally binding instructions to Khartoum to disarm the *Janjaweed* militias and apprehend their leaders, and it has imposed a travel ban and asset freeze on individuals identified by the Council's panel of experts as undermining peace in Darfur. The Council also took the unprecedented step of referring the Darfur situation to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), whose office is pursuing criminal cases against a senior Khartoum official and a *Janjaweed* leader. Most critically, the Council acknowledged in its Resolution 1706 that the African Union's peacekeeping force "needs urgent reinforcing" and authorized the deployment to Darfur of a UN force of more than 20,000 military and civilian peacekeepers, operating under a broad mandate and allowed to use force to protect civilians.

But the impact of many of these efforts has been diluted by the Council's own weak follow-through and Khartoum's intransigence. Only four individuals have been targeted under the Council's travel ban and asset freeze. While the Council has repeatedly threatened to impose sanctions against Sudan's petroleum sector and top government officials, it has never done so in spite of Khartoum's evident failure to comply with the Council's resolutions (ICG 2006c, 6-7). Similarly, Khartoum's intransigence has proven a major obstacle. Khartoum refuses to allow entry to a UN peacekeeping force, as the UN Security Council's Resolution 1706 "invited" it to do (ICG 2006c, 3). President al-Bashir has blustered that no international peacekeepers would ever enter Darfur, calling the proposed UN force "colonialist" and linking U.S. support for the force to "Jewish organizations" (Washington Post 2006). In the absence of al-Bashir's consent, UN officials and other Security Council members have struggled to negotiate a plan that would gradually phase in UN peacekeepers in three steps over a period of months. But Khartoum continues to temporize and repeatedly seeks to renegotiate details of the plan that had been previously resolved (Reuters SA 2007).

Many commentators have called for the U.S. and its NATO allies to stage a humanitarian military intervention in Darfur, but no state or institution appears ready to contemplate using force (New Republic 2006). There is some precedent in NATO's intervention in Kosovo for taking military action when the Security Council is unable to act to stop massive human rights violations. But the remoteness of Darfur from airbases and the sea means that any force would face a "daunting, if not impossible"

task of supplying itself across a vast terrain, and “no government on the planet appears willing to attempt it in the face of Khartoum’s threats” (ICG 2006c, 1-3, 17). Even if American forces were not largely tied down in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. government is deeply reluctant to further worsen its standing in the Muslim world by invading or even bombing another predominantly Muslim country (ICG 2006c, 17).

More broadly, though, China’s position of non-interference lies behind both constraints, enabling Khartoum’s intransigence and hobbling the Security Council’s effectiveness. Beijing has expressed support for the upgraded UN force, but it insists that “[a]ny solution would have to respect Sudan’s sovereignty,” which in practice appears to mean that Khartoum has the right of veto (AP 2007). Although Beijing has abstained from vetoing many Security Council resolutions on Sudan, it is reported to have used its veto threat to weaken the resolutions’ content, most notably preventing the Security Council from identifying consequences if Khartoum failed to consent to a stronger UN peacekeeping force (Reeves 2006). Under increasing international pressure to lean on its ally in Khartoum, Chinese Premier Hu Jintao met with Sudanese President Bashir during a February tour of Africa and is said to have encouraged him to resolve the Darfur crisis. But during the same visit, Hu forgave some \$70 million in Sudanese debt to China and offered an interest-free loan of \$12 million to construct a new presidential palace (McDoom 2007). These are not the actions of a government seriously seeking to steer Khartoum away from its violent path.

No other power holds such potential influence over Khartoum as China. China is Sudan’s biggest trading partner, it purchases 64 percent of Sudan’s oil exports, and its companies have invested billions of dollars in Sudan’s oil industry (Pan 2006; Reeves 2006). But Beijing does not want to pressure Khartoum. The Chinese government may have leverage in the form of Sudan’s economic dependence on Chinese investment and oil purchases, but the dependence is reciprocal: China’s growing economy needs energy and currently draws seven percent of its imported oil from Sudan (New York Times 2006). Much of the appeal that China has sought to cultivate among African heads of state comes from its willingness to provide aid with fewer of the governance-related strings that Western donors insist on attaching to their financial assistance (Kurlantzick 2006, 5). Putting real pressure on Khartoum to shape up on human rights, then, would blur the lines between China’s model of assistance and the traditional Western model.

Across the Pacific, the United States government has made more sub-

stantial efforts to apply economic pressure on Khartoum, though it could do far more. Facing pressure from an unusually active movement on the domestic political scene, the U.S. Congress passed in late 2006 the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act (Power 2006). Along with President Bush's companion executive order, the Act would freeze the property of Sudanese government officials and any other individual responsible for war crimes and bar any U.S. citizens or companies from conducting transactions with the Sudanese petroleum industry. The U.S. government has also hinted in early 2007 at its intention to take still tougher action ("Plan B") that includes "an aggressive crackdown on a much larger group of companies connected to Sudan," but it has not yet done so. The Bush administration is reported to be staying its hand "in hopes of still winning Khartoum's cooperation," though many critics have sharply accused the U.S. of dragging its feet without cause (Kessler 2007).

It remains unclear, though, whether a more assertive United States would ultimately have the leverage to move Khartoum. One Sudan scholar has concluded that the administration's "Plan B" package of punitive measures will prove only "a minor, short-term inconvenience," while Western sanctions on Sudan's petroleum sector could be made almost meaningless by the continuing patronage of China and a handful of Sudan's other customers (Kessler 2007; ICG 2006c, 7). The U.S. also has conflicting priorities with respect to Khartoum, whose cooperation on intelligence and counter-terrorism efforts since the September 11, 2001 attacks led the Central Intelligence Agency to see Sudan as on the path to being "a top-tier partner" in the war against Islamic terrorism (Jane's Intelligence Digest 2005).

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: GETTING CHINA TO WEIGH IN**

Enduring shortages of capacity and weak political will have plagued the international response to Darfur's tragedy, and they have been made worse by the circumstances of the case. But this article concludes that the most critical element in reversing the international community's failure is China, whose interest in protecting its reputation as a responsible power leaves it open to pressure. Domestic activists in Africa and abroad should apply pressure by broadly communicating the Chinese government's role in the Darfur killings, and the African Union should express its dissatisfaction with China's reluctance to play a more constructive role in the crisis.

The African Union may not have acquitted itself impressively in the Darfur crisis, but it is important to keep its role in perspective. One analyst

has asserted that, “[i]f the fifty-three African states had demonstrated the kind of zeal that Rwanda has shown [in providing peacekeepers to AMIS], Darfur would not have become an open sore for the continent” (Udombana 2005, 1191). This may be the case in other current African crises, such as in Somalia, where the national government genuinely supports the presence of an effective peacekeeping force and the primary obstacle is the shortage of African states willing to supply troops. But it is difficult to imagine that Sudan’s central government, given its concerns and calculations, would ever have given access to an AU force that it expected to be well armed, manned, and funded. Indeed, the African Union’s weak capacity and political will may have been integral to Khartoum’s decision to allow the mission entry in the first place and to its willingness to task AMIS with the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement (ICG 2006c, 10).

A more damning analysis of the AU’s role would conclude that it was not only ineffectual but actually counterproductive, providing Khartoum with a shield to block a more effective UN force (ICG 2006c, 4). President al-Bashir has insisted, contrary to any reasonable interpretation of the facts, that the AU mission, has been a successful “African solution to an African problem” (Arieff 2006). He has also rejected the entry of UN peacekeepers into Darfur, saying that they, apparently unlike the UN troops already in Sudan’s southern regions, would lead to the West’s re-colonizing Sudan (BBC 2006). But this strategy can only be effective so long as powerful states outside the AU fail to call Khartoum’s bluff. Since coercive military options appear largely unavailable, concerned outsiders must apply pressure strong enough to persuade the regime to make a change of course that it currently believes to be against its own interest.

China has the strongest leverage over the Khartoum regime, but it is reluctant to use it; pressuring Beijing to pressure Khartoum in turn is a difficult task. But it may be easier to change Beijing’s interests than those of the Sudanese regime. While Khartoum has been largely willing to sacrifice its own reputation in pursuit of its gruesome ends, China is more protective of its image. As China’s economy and its power on the world stage grow, its leaders have sought to portray China as making a “peaceful rise” to the status of a “responsible power” (Bijian 2006). Many analysts have pointed out that Beijing’s 2008 summer Olympic Games, seen as a chance for the reinvented China to “come out” to the world, provide an opening for concerned outsiders to apply pressure (Reeves 2006).

Washington may not have much clout on human rights issues with Beijing, given China’s brusque response to the U.S. Department of State’s

critical report on China's human rights situation. But other actors have more freedom to seek creative ways of pointing out the gap between a responsible China and one that enables genocide. Advocacy groups like the Save Darfur Coalition have raised awareness of the Darfur genocide in the United States; they need now to focus on articulating China's role in making the genocide possible. Advocacy groups should begin working to make an explicit link in the minds of citizens and governments worldwide between China's Olympics and Beijing's role in the conflict in Darfur. Ultimately, they should call for a boycott of the 2008 Olympic Games if Beijing fails to apply effective pressure on its ally (Reeves 2006).

Finally, for all of the chronic limitations that will continue to plague the African Union in the coming decades, it could still do more to press China to twist arms in Khartoum. China may be especially sensitive to challenges to its image as a responsible power that come from Africa. A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman, facing criticism for China's growing efforts to secure African energy resources, denied recently that China was "looting Africa," adding that, "if this was so, then African countries would express their dissatisfaction" (Yeh 2007). This statement reflects a defensiveness that represents another opening for pressure. African countries, acting through the AU if possible, should express their dissatisfaction with the harmful side effects of Beijing's support for Khartoum. They should request China's more active assistance in persuading Khartoum to comply with its obligations under repeated UN Security Council resolutions, all of which China has endorsed or at least abstained from opposing.

Mobilizing this kind of diplomatic action would be difficult. Many African governments would be reluctant to criticize or make demands of Beijing, whether for fear of offending it and being excluded from the benefits of Chinese largesse or simply because they see few political benefits in doing so. Dependence between Africa and China is mutual. China may rely on African exports for 30 percent of its oil, but it has given increasing amounts of aid to the continent in turn, giving \$2.7 billion in 2004 across areas ranging from professional training to infrastructure investment, which Western donors are loath to fund. Chinese oil companies also own stakes in the oil sectors of 20 African countries (Kurlantzick 2006, 2-3).

But some collective statement to China is not inconceivable. Discontent with China's presence and policies – and the incumbent domestic governments associated with them – has already begun to emerge in the domestic politics of several African states leading up to Hu Jintao's tour of the continent this year. Opposition politicians and labor unions have begun to coalesce against bad working conditions in Chinese-run factories

in Zambia, while protests have emerged in Mozambique around the over-exploitation of forest resources (Simons *et al.* 2007; Kurlantzick 2006, 5). Some African activist organizations have been calling for China to do more on Darfur since last year, though their efforts would be far more effective if taken up by governments (Darfur Consortium 2006). Demonstrating a willingness to speak out on Darfur as part of a broader stand against the darker side of relations with China could thus actually pay domestic dividends to African politicians.

Would China take action in response to pressure from a collective of African states? Beijing is reluctant to concede any ground on the inviolability of sovereignty, and it will want to reaffirm to other energy-rich potential partner states that it is not as meddlesome as its Western counterparts. But if the potential damage done to China's reputation by its own inaction can be sufficiently raised, Beijing might be willing to exert real influence on Khartoum – even if it does so privately to avoid setting a public precedent of intervention. It might be difficult for China to ignore the unified voice of the African Union, or even of the AU's Peace and Security Council or some other subset of African states. In this way, the African Union's members could restore some truth to the idea so cynically advanced by President al-Bashir: that an "African problem" like the crisis in Darfur might find a solution rooted in Africa as well.

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