



[« \\$100 Million Gone in Iraq -- Now What? | Main | Daily Debacles »](#)

May 05, 2005

Sudan and What We Stand For

Posted by Suzanne Nossel

Holocaust remembrance day seems like as good a moment as any to reflect on why the Administration seems to have abandoned the effort to curb genocide in Darfur. Darfur has posed a difficult problem for a long time. Brad Plumer, writing for MotherJones.com has a [good description](#) of why every option for action is problematic.

So what is the Administration doing? Essentially, nothing. Nearly eight months after calling the mass killings in the Darfur region genocide and doing the heavy lifting on a resolution to get the UN involved, the Administration seems to have backed away from that term, and from any sustained effort to address the crisis. As Mark Goldberg has reported in [The American Prospect](#), Bush has also been blocking passage of the [Darfur Accountability Act](#), a measure sponsored by Brownback and Corzine that is aimed accelerating and expanding the intervention of African Union and UN troops and imposing sanctions and a no-fly zone in Sudan.

The consensus on why the turnabout has occurred is that the Sudanese government is providing useful support in the fight against terror, a story first reported in the [LA Times](#) last week. Sudan used to be al Qaeda's headquarters, and it seems a number of terrorist groups retain close ties there. The Sudanese government is apparently credited with preventing terrorist attacks against the U.S. by detaining suspects. The intelligence officials leading the cooperation are reportedly the very people who could but won't clamp down on the atrocities in Darfur. A letter sent by Condi Rice to the Sudanese last month urged an end to the conflict in Darfur but also said the administration hoped to establish a "fruitful relationship" with Sudan and looked forward to continued "close cooperation" on terrorism.

People like Phil Carter at [Intel Dump](#) have been [thinking about](#) whether the decision to allow the crackdown on terror to prevail over the imperative against genocide is the right one. He concludes as follows:

In the final analysis, I think that the U.S. government has made the right decision there to work with the Khartoum regime to get intelligence about Al Qaeda. But I'm *very* uncertain about that judgment. We know that genocide itself can breed instability and terrorism, just as failed states like Sudan can. And we also know that many, many more have perished in Darfur than from all of the terror attacks in the last 100 years combined. Should this effort bear no fruit, I will likely question my judgment that this policy is prudent, and lament the lost opportunity to save the victims of genocide in Darfur.

Here at Democracy Arsenal we tend to hold fairly hard-headed views on international affairs questions. We recognize that U.S. foreign policy must be guided by national interests and, above all, national security considerations. So I can't simply dismiss the tangible help we've evidently been receiving from the Sudanese. But I still think it's inexcusable for this to stand in the way of acting against genocide (I am going to leave aside for tonight what we ought to do, and instead address only whether the cooperation we are receiving is grounds to refrain from measures – like those in the Accountability Act – that we might otherwise undertake).

Part of this comes down to gut feeling and moral considerations that are hard to articulate, but here's a meandering stab at some of why:

Bush has always articulated the struggle against terror in moral terms, as good against evil. The slaughter in Darfur is, more than anything else at this moment in history, a emblem of evil recognized all over the world. To calculate that the benefit of Sudan's cooperate outweighs the harm of their continued abuses undercuts the moral force of the American quest against terror, hollowing out our claims of righteousness.

Does this matter? I think so. When it rallied to America's side after September 11 and when attacked Afghanistan the world was imbued with a sense of moral outrage. It's hard to know if that sense of outrage would reemerge if there was another terrorist attack, but I think we all have the sense that, given the events of the last four years, the world's reaction may well be different.

Foreign policy will never be pure. There will always be unseemly trade-offs. The U.S. will always be vulnerable to criticism for self-interestedness and for picking and choosing how to apply our principles. Political considerations, resource constraints, and conflicting interests combine to ensure this. Those who believe American policy can or should be 100% consistent probably belong on the outside commenting and criticizing, rather than in government trying to get things done.

But at the same time, if there are no thresholds, if nothing is considered beyond the bounds of acceptability, then it becomes impossible to say what America stands for. The whole emphasis on the term “genocide” in recent decades was intended to designate the category of abuse at the farthest edge of evil. If genocide isn’t beyond the pale, nothing is.

In the last couple of years, I fear that we have allowed the perception of the U.S. as hypocritical, narrowly self-interested, unyielding, and even dishonest to outweigh the world’s sense of us as principled, well-intended, caring and effective. These two competing views of the U.S. have long co-existed. One of the goal of our foreign policy should be to ensure that the latter vision wins out.

In contrast, perhaps the period in U.S. history when it was clearest what the U.S. stood for was when we led the fight against Hitler. That struggle was not clean (read David Wyman’s [Abandonment of the Jews](#) for one viewpoint on all that was wrong), but the U.S. took a clear stand for freedom and against tyranny for reasons that went beyond narrowly construed self-interest.

I have long felt that one of the most important failings of the Bush Administration is that it has squandered America’s status as the city on the hill – a country that others look up to and strive to emulate. I believe that individuals the world over still crave and embrace American mores, but I don’t think that as a society we are looked at as a beacon right now.

In losing that status, we have lost some of our influence – both direct in terms of others willingness to listen and be led by us, and indirect in terms of those who model themselves in our image and, as a result, grow closer to us over time.

Over time, I think it is this influence – our ability to maintain a loose, diverse circle of countries and people’s around the world who embrace or at least accept our way of life, and to isolate and shrink those elements that don’t – that is the path to victory over terror and other threats like proliferation.

In the eyes of the world, Darfur is a test – maybe the most closely watched test – of who we are. If we put the quest for intelligence on terror above the battle against what we ourselves have called genocide, the answer to who we are is one that will push other countries away, rather than drawing them toward us. This will hurt us in more than just the war on terror.

Yes, the fight against terror is important. More important than nearly any other U.S policy objective. But not more important than what we stand for.

May 05, 2005 at 11:06 PM in [Africa](#), [Human Rights](#) | [Permalink](#)

TrackBack

TrackBack URL for this entry:

<http://www.typepad.com/services/trackback/6a00d83451c04d69e200d834278ce453ef>

Listed below are links to weblogs that reference [Sudan and What We Stand For](#):

» [Countdown to International Justice \(Day 31\)](#) from Vagabondia

The government has the power to end the violence right now and should be made to do so or risk economic and political isolation, but that doesn't seem to be the direction the United Nations Security Council is heading. [\[Read More\]](#)

Tracked on May 6, 2005 10:09:52 AM

Comments

The Darfur Accountability Act is a much better start than Plumer admits. Passage of the Act does not mean an immediate intervention by American troops, but signals a beginning of effort that has been sorely lacking.

Posted by: Jeff Owen | [May 06, 2005 at 08:37 AM](#)

I'm skeptical that the world is clamoring for a US intervention in Darfur.

Posted by: praktike | [May 06, 2005 at 08:52 AM](#)

The Darfur Accountability Act is a non-starter. The reason the Administration is backing away from its use of the term "genocide" is because that word carries a legal obligation for the United Nations to get off its feckless duff and do something about it. That's why the UN Human Rights Commission recently declined to use the word or even explicitly blame any party for the violence. I explain part of this in my Countdown to International Justice (Day 21) blog entry:

<http://vagabondia.blogspot.com/2005/04/countdown-to-international-justice-day.html>

Sanctions against the government of Sudan are another non-starter. It's been pushed by the U.S. at the UN but has faced resistance from France and threat of a veto from China. Also, if the reports of a significant Chinese military presence in Sudan are true, then a no-fly zone over Sudan is also a non-starter. As I point out in my Countdown to International Justice (Day 31) entry, it looks like multilateralism has killed half a million people in Sudan and that number will only rise.

<http://vagabondia.blogspot.com/2005/05/countdown-to-international-justice-day.html>

Posted by: [The Indigent Blogger](#) | [May 06, 2005 at 10:07 AM](#)

Praktike is right (as often), but it still makes sense to take the lead in messing up the status quo in the Sudan. Especially if it's true that China is trying to make Sudan a surrogate for its interests. If that's the case, all the more reason to *clarify* a few things.

Posted by: JohnFH | [May 06, 2005 at 03:18 PM](#)

Why does a possible UN veto by France or China matter to opposition Democrats in Congress? Even if you disregard moral obligations, why should Dems let Bush get off so easy on genocide?

Jihadist lash-back is a genuine concern, but has other genocide been so easy to stop?

Posted by: Jeff Owen | [May 09, 2005 at 03:10 AM](#)

There is a lot of [aion online gold](#) in the game, if you want to have them you can come to play the game. I like to earn the [aion money](#), because if i have them i can go to buy equipment and i also can go to [buy aion gold](#). if you want to play it, please [cheap aion gold](#) and join us. Please do not hesitate to play the game, i believe you will like it too.

Posted by: [aion gold](#) | [December 24, 2008 at 11:59 PM](#)

I hope i can get [kamas](#) in low price.

Posted by: [dofus kamas](#) | [January 06, 2009 at 11:39 PM](#)

When I have [Archlord gold](#), I feel very pleased with life no one can understand you, but here you will find fun. When I have [Archlord money](#), I experienced that feeling, that very warm feeling.

Posted by: [Archlord gold](#) | [January 20, 2009 at 01:57 AM](#)

I hope i can get [runescape gold](#) in low price,
Yesterday i bought [cheap rs gold](#) for my friend.

Posted by: [runescape money](#) | [February 14, 2009 at 02:53 AM](#)

In fact, the
[buy wonderland Gold](#) is expensive. I usually find
[cheap wonderland online Gold](#) from the supplier.

Posted by: [buy wonderland Gold](#) | [March 03, 2009 at 11:46 PM](#)

hope i can get runescape gold in low price

Posted by: [Givenchy Handbags](#) | [April 22, 2009 at 03:19 AM](#)

Thank you for your sharing.! [seslichat seslisohbet](#)

Posted by: [yargıc](#) | [January 06, 2010 at 08:34 AM](#)

Thank you for your sharing! I like i very much!

Posted by: [cheap coach handbags](#) | [January 26, 2010 at 02:54 AM](#)

Dear friend ,we are a trading company deal with men's clothes for many years .we mianly export [NFL jersey](#),[NFL jerseys](#),you can visit our website for more information. Our jerseys were high quality replic.

Posted by: [NFLjerseys](#) | [March 16, 2010 at 10:20 PM](#)

en güzel [rokettube](#) videoları,
en muhteşem [porn izleme](#) sitesi
en kral [rokettube](#) yeri
kaliteli [pornolar](#)ın bulunduğu tek mekan
yabancı sitelerden özenle seçilmiş muhteşem ötesi [porno izleme](#) sitesi...

Posted by: [trpornizle](#) | [January 19, 2011 at 04:44 PM](#)

Nice! Thank you.

Posted by: [gclub](#) | [November 03, 2011 at 11:53 PM](#)

Post a comment

If you have a TypeKey or TypePad account, please [Sign In](#).

Name:

Email Address: (Not displayed with comment.)

URL:

Remember personal info?

Comments:

[Contributors](#)

- Michael Cohen
[About/E-mail/All Posts](#)
- Shadi Hamid
[About/E-mail/All Posts](#)
- Michael Hanna
[About/E-mail/All Posts](#)
- Kelsey Hartigan
[About/E-mail/All Posts](#)
- Heather Hurlburt
[About/E-mail/All Posts](#)
- James Lamond
[About/E-mail/All Posts](#)
- Eric Martin
[About/E-mail/All Posts](#)
- Joel Rubin
[About/E-mail/All Posts](#)
- David Shorr
[About/E-mail/All Posts](#)

- Jacob Stokes
[About/E-mail/All Posts](#)

Guest Contributors

- Gordon Adams
[About](#)
- Anita Sharma
[About](#)

Founder

- Suzanne Nossel
[About/All Posts](#)

Subscribe

Sign-up to receive a weekly digest of the latest posts from Democracy Arsenal.

Email:

[Partners](#)

- [Home Page of the United States Army](#)

[Archives](#)

[Categories](#)

[Recent Posts](#)

[Subscribe to this blog's feed](#)

[RSS 2.0](#)

Powered by [TypePad](#)

Disclaimer

The opinions voiced on Democracy Arsenal are those of the individual authors and do not represent the views of any other organization or institution with which any author may be affiliated.

[Read Terms of Use](#)