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## Engagement in Darfur?

By Frank Hagan | Related entries in [Foreign Policy](#)

Jake Tapper, the ABC News Senior White House Correspondent, reports that Secretary Clinton will announce the administration's new policy toward the government of Sudan. And that policy is [controversial](#):

U.S. officials acknowledge the reaction from human rights groups has been mixed. Officials from the groups largely agree with the Obama administration's goals to implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which ended the civil war and, among other provisions, provides for a Southern Sudanese referendum in 2011; and to negotiate a peace treaty that will end the crisis in Darfur and allow the Sudanese people to return to their homes.

Their concern is that history suggests that the government of Sudan responds only to pressure, and they worry President Obama's Special Envoy to the Sudan, Maj. Gen. Scott Gration (ret.) has been reluctant to apply that pressure.

The situation in Darfur is, by every measure, a human tragedy. But American efforts have been ineffectual. Christopher Preble, director of foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute, [noted in July 2004](#):

With Secretary of State Colin Powell's recent visit to Sudan and the Pentagon moving troops into neighboring Chad to assess the situation, some form of intervention appears likely.

Preble goes on to criticize the use of American forces unilaterally in such cases, and describes all the proposed solutions as inadequate. Now, five years later, we know that the American military did not intervene, but he still seems prescient on at least that last point.

There is sure to be hand wringing about Darfur, and those stricken with "Obama Derangement Syndrome" will cry "appeasement!" once again. But foreign policy is often messy, and finding solutions is tough. In this case, we have five years of failed attempts to stop the wholesale rape and murder of millions. We have failed. Perhaps a new approach is necessary.

I will express my doubts that "engaging" with a mass murderer wanted for war crimes is the proper thing to do. It may be immoral. But life often gives us choices between two bad things, and we must decide which is less bad than the other.

The Obama Administration has embarked on several initiatives to change the way American foreign policy is perceived around the world. World leaders have [praised the new approach](#). Conservatives view most of these initiatives skeptically, but there is a certain rationale behind many of the changes. For instance, liberals and libertarians have shared the view that calling attention to specific Al Qaeda leaders only enhances their reputation and serves as a [powerful recruiting tool](#). De-emphasis on the "war on terror" rhetoric seems intended to reduce that attention.

The thing that matters, of course, is whether these new approaches work. Conservatives would do well to avoid the temptation to criticize the new approach in Darfur prematurely. While it does remind us of the old claim that conservative

administrations were too quick to embrace right-wing dictators like Marcos in the Phillipines and the Shah of Iran, in the end it is pragmatism that must win out. If the strategy works in Darfur, Secretary Clinton and President Obama will deserve the credit.

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### **5 Responses to “Engagement in Darfur?”**

1. *the Word* Says:

[October 19th, 2009 at 11:30 am](#)

Is this all about Darfur?

2. *Frank Hagan* Says:

[October 19th, 2009 at 12:38 pm](#)

Spelling corrected.

3. *frankhagan.com » Engagement in Darfur?* Says:

[October 19th, 2009 at 12:43 pm](#)

[...] Cross-posted to Donklephant. [...]

4. *Jimmy the Dhimmi* Says:

[October 19th, 2009 at 7:15 pm](#)

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Consider the worlds most evil active war-criminal, Omar Bashir, to now be amongst those world leaders.

5. *Nick Benjamin* Says:

[October 19th, 2009 at 7:44 pm](#)

In theory this shouldn't matter.

There's supposed to be a Presidential election in Sudan in April. The southern Christian candidate will probably win because Bashir has pissed almost everyone off. And when that happens the official Sudanese government position on war crimes may very well change.