

## China and the Darfur Crisis

Muhamad Olimat<sup>[a]\*</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>Associate Professor, Inst.of Int. & Civil Sec, Khalifa University of Science, Technology & Research, Abu Dhabi, UAE.

\*Corresponding author.

Received 12 May 2014; accepted 16 July 2014  
Published online 31 August 2014

### Abstract

Darfur is Sudan's western region, and the site of one of the major crises of the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century that dominated world affairs from 2003 to 2009. The Darfur Crisis competed for world attention with major contemporary issues such as the US invasion of Iraq, the War on Terror, the US presence in Afghanistan, the Arab-Israeli Conflict, the Kosovo crisis and the civil war in Democratic Republic of Congo. China was largely held responsible for the overwhelming level of force utilized by the Sudanese Government in quelling peaceful protests in the region began in spring and summer of 2003. Its oil interests in the Sudan were identified as the main catalyst for its siding with the Sudanese government and shielding it from punitive measures by the international community. Other catalysts include trade relations and arms sales to Sudan. The objective of this article is to examine China's policy and role in the management of the Darfur Crisis over the past ten years. It's based on the thesis that, China's lenient policy toward the Sudanese government, driven by its oil interests has encouraged the Sudanese government to utilize overwhelming force against Darfur's legitimate protest with impunity.

**Key words:** Genocide; Sudan; Darfur; China; Oil; Refugees; Humanitarian assistance; Violence

Olimat, M. (2014). China and the Darfur Crisis. *Canadian Social Science*, 10(6), 122-132. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/5399>  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/5399>

### INTRODUCTION

The Darfur Genocide erupted in 2003 when the government of General Omar Hasan Al-Bashir in Sudan utilized an overwhelming level of violence against peaceful protesters in its western region of Darfur demanding employment opportunities, education, healthcare and housing. Their demands came in conjunction with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA, 2003-2005) reached between the government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in south Sudan ending the civil war in the country and providing for the right of self-determination. The government of the Sudan's use of overwhelming force against Darfurians was motivated by its reliance on Chinese political, economic and military support. China shielded the Sudanese government from international military intervention, watered down UN's resolutions and sanctions and shielded Sudan's government from world criticism because of its oil interests in the country. However, an international campaign initiated by human rights organizations called for the boycotting of the Summer Olympic Games to be hosted by China in 2008, gathered momentum and threatened Beijing's efforts to host the Games. China was aiming to utilize the games to move beyond the Tiananmen events and highlight its miraculous economic development.

Darfur represented a major challenge to China's foreign policy, and at the same time provided valuable opportunities to exercise influence on a large scale in international crises. While Darfur compelled Beijing to modify its perspective on the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other nations, it also made China to assume a major international role in UN peacekeeping missions and boosted its image as a peacemaker. Therefore, Beijing appointed the Darfur's Special Envoy, sent peacekeepers and provided humanitarian assistance to Darfur's refugees. Its main aim was halting world

criticism and mobilization against the so called “Genocide Olympics”. China also supported the peace process in Darfur, though no substantial progress occurred over the past decade in terms of refuge-return, peace or stability in the region.

### **A. Sino-Sudanese Relations: An Overview**

The first modern encounter between China and the Sudan dates back to the Afro-Asian Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia in April 1955. The conference was a major venue for Chinese diplomacy. The Chinese Premier, Chou En-Lai maximized China engagement with fellow Third World countries in hope for diplomatic recognition and normalization of ties with China, at a time the People’s Republic of China (PRC) was not a member of the United Nations. China’s seat was granted to the Republic of China (ROC-Taipei) and the PRC needed a forum to engage in international affairs and secure its interests. That forum was Bandung and the resulted Non-Aligned Movement, and other forums and international conferences associated with it. During the Conference, Chou En-Lai met nearly with all delegations and tirelessly worked to secure cultural, trade, diplomatic and political ties with attendees. (Behbehani, 1981) China’s greatest triumphs occurred a year later when Egypt, a leading Arab, African and a leading Third World country recognized the PRC in 1956, followed by Yemen and Syria in the same year, Morocco, Algeria and Iraq in 1958, while the Republic of Sudan recognized the PRC on February 4, 1959. The Sino-Arab and Sino-Africa relations were centered on anti-imperialism, support to the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962), support to the Palestinian cause, anti-Soviet presence in the Middle East, and China’s support to national liberation movements in North Africa, in Africa and the Middle East at large. These policies were revised in the post-Mao era (1978-present), and China’s concentration was primarily confined to economic cooperation aimed at accelerating economic reforms in China and boosting its growth rates, a policy succeeded far beyond the expectations of its original engineers. However, China’s relations with the Arab countries, with the Middle East and Africa grew in a multifaceted manner since then to include energy security, trade relations, arms sales, culture and political coordination.

For the period from 1955-1972, the Sino-Sudanese relations were dealt with in the shadow of the Chinese-Egyptian relations. China, however, was satisfied with its bilateral relations with the Sudan, and accelerated the pace of their bilateral cooperation since the 1970s. The core of their bilateral relations was supporting Sudan’s independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity, anti-imperialism, suppressing pro-Soviet forces in the Sudan, arms sales, economic assistance, and then cooperation in the energy sector since 1995, which promoted Chinese involvement in Sudan’s politics as never before. China’s role in the Darfur Crisis is part of its overall deep

involvement in the Sudanese affairs. In fact, the military coup occurred in the Sudan in 1989, led by the Islamists in alliance with the military was not well-received on the international scene. The regime was accused of association with international terrorism and accused of harboring major terrorist figures such as Osama Ben Laden and providing material support to terrorist organizations. Therefore, its friends were limited.

In 1995, General Al-Bashir, the military ruler of Sudan visited China, and signed arms sales deals, and offered major concessions in the area of oil exploration to China. The latter accepted the invitation and managed to discover and produce from Sudan’s oil fields in three years. By the end of the decade, the Sudan became an oil producing and exporting country and by 2007, it became the third largest oil exporting country in Africa with production capacity of 460,000 bpd, 60% of it was exported to China. Henceforth, when the Darfur Crisis erupted in 2003, China has had well-established interests in the Sudan, and sought to protect them by all means. For its defense of the Sudanese government and its fierce defense of its interests in Sudan amidst the Darfur Crisis, China earned the world resentment. It was held responsible for the perpetuation of the suffering of the people of Darfur, prolonging the crisis, and providing the regime in Khartoum with a life line, and shielding it from being held responsible for the atrocities in Darfur, and elsewhere in the Sudan. Currently, China is playing the same role in the Syrian crisis in close coordination with Russia, its close ally and managing it with the same team managed its policy toward Darfur. China and Russia invented the “double veto” mechanism to block any serious action against the Syrian regime, carrying out crimes-against humanity, ethnic cleanings genocide-like attacks on its people. It has been the standard that genocide is usually carried out by the majority against the minority. In the Syrian case, it’s the minority (Alawires, 2% of the population), aided by foreign powers (Iran, China, Russia, Venezuela) is carrying out the genocide against the majority, 98% of Syria’s population are Sunni Muslims.

### **B. China and the Darfur Crisis**

In reference to the systematic violence in Darfur where over 200,000 innocent civilians were exterminated, China preferred to call it a “humanitarian crisis” rather than using the term “genocide.” Chinese media referred to it as the “alleged” Darfur Genocide (Xinhua Press Agency, 2012, June 8). Xinhua Press Agency, the main source of news for Chinese media described it as, “the ensuing conflict has been allegedly called the Darfur Genocide.”<sup>1</sup> At other times, it used terms such as “issue, crisis, case, dilemma, impasse, problem, question, etc..” Astoundingly, the United Nations agreed with China’s

<sup>1</sup>[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2012-06/08/c\\_131639847.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2012-06/08/c_131639847.htm)

conceptualization of the conflict, while the US was the first country to call it genocide, defined as systematic violence used to annihilate a certain group or ethnicity. In fact, the UN's International Commission for the Inquiry on Darfur established by United Nations Secretary-General Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1564 of 18 September 2004, concluded after three months of examining the conflict:

that the Government of the Sudan has not pursued a policy of genocide, though genocide might be deduced from acts carried out by both sides -the government and the militia- consisting of killing, or causing serious bodily or mental harm, or deliberately inflicting conditions of life likely to bring about physical destruction; and, second, on the basis of a subjective standard, the existence of a protected group being targeted by the authors of criminal conduct. However, the crucial element of genocidal intent appears to be missing.<sup>2</sup>

Darfur represented a major predicament for China as it found itself in the midst of an international crisis and was compelled to act. Darfur was unlike previous crises that China encountered in its international relations. While the US and the European Union (EU) were blamed for the inaction in the Bosnian and Rwandan genocides, China was solely blamed for the genocide in Darfur due to its partnership with the Sudanese regime, fairly or unfairly. China's claims of strict commitment and adherence to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence -highlighting among them a firm commitment to sovereignty and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other nations- did not exempt it from its responsibilities toward Darfur. Additionally, its repeated claims, emphasizing that such principles guided its foreign policy since the 1950s, only escalated the anti-Chinese campaign. Mawdsley put it, "China maintains that business is business, and that it has no right or wishes to interfere in the sovereignty of other nations. However, while this may be true in terms of imposing governance and trade conditionalities, China is without a doubt a political player in Africa," (Mawdsley, 2007) and as such, it was incumbent upon China to play the role of responsible stakeholder in international affairs. Truth be told, the Five Principles were violated in different degrees during the Mao era, but they have become more relevant to post-Mao era where China pursued a business-like foreign policy focusing on mutual benefits and trade, in particular. Chinese leaders coined the "win-win" terminology in describing bilateral and multilateral trade relations with fellow developing countries.

While China resisted playing a proactive role in the crisis, the 2008-Beijing Summer Olympic Games provided no alternative. Taylor explains that "a full-scale foreign policy that played up China's contribution

to conflict resolution and encouraged much more proactive explanations of Sino-African diplomacy came into effect" (Taylor, 2009). Global criticism over Darfur accelerated China's reevaluation of its foreign policy toward the United Nations and international law in preserving international peace, vis-à-vis its commitment to the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other nations (Holslag, 2008). Since the Darfur Crisis, China has become an active participant in UN peacekeeping missions in Africa, the Middle East, and elsewhere. In fact, it has 1600 peacekeepers, and "three-fourths of current Chinese peacekeeping forces are supporting U.N. missions in Africa." (Bates, Huang, & Morrison, 2007). Aside from France, Chinese peacekeepers are more in number than any other permanent member of the Security Council.

### C. The Crisis and China's Response

The Darfur crisis erupted when the international community and the Sudanese government were engaged in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between North and South Sudan in Abuja, Nigeria, between 2003 and 2005. The US played a significant role in the negotiations in the summer of 2003, and President Bush wanted to host John Garang and Omar Al Bashir at the White House to sign the document. This move, along with ending the Libyan program of WMD and the rehabilitation of the Gaddafi regime, would highlight American diplomatic success in North Africa and the Middle East and play down the US catastrophic invasion of Iraq. These plans were disrupted by reports on the Darfur violence.

A former adviser to the Sudanese Presidential Court shared with me that when the delegations were meeting in Abuja, General Al-Bashir received a phone call from Khartoum informing him of an "insurgency-like" protest carried out by some indigenous Darfurians. His reply was "crush the rebellion." While peace negotiations were successfully being carried out in Abuja, the Sudan's Armed Forces went on a rampage of violence and destruction aided by the Janjaweed militia. The resulting level of violence is characterized by the United States as genocide, while the United Nations termed it a "crisis." The EU and the African Union (AU) described the violence as "crimes against humanity", but not genocide, though over 200,000 Darfurians were murdered, and 1.7 million people were displaced.

The international community was surprised by the unfolding events in Darfur; the Sudanese Government was in a successful process of reconciliation with the South, but imprudently opened up a new front in the West while another rebellion was simmering in Eastern Sudan. In essence, the government wanted to annihilate the rebellion in Darfur before the international community became aware of the atrocities committed by its armed forces. Sudan's government and military generals reasoned that, even if the international community became

<sup>2</sup> The United Nations. (2005, January 25). Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur to the United Nations Secretary General Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1564 of 18 September 2004, Geneva: Switzerland (P.4). Retrieved from [http://www.un.org/news/dh/sudan/com\\_inq\\_darfur.pdf](http://www.un.org/news/dh/sudan/com_inq_darfur.pdf)

aware of the violence in Darfur, they would hardly be concerned. Their rationale was that Darfurians are Muslim and that the US and Western countries, as well as human rights organizations, couldn't care less about violence committed against Muslims around the world, seeing the attention the West gave to Southern Sudan and East Timor, predominantly Christian territories. But the world did notice, did care, and the first reports brought to the attention of the UN Security Council were made by the UN representative in the Sudan. The world showed as much concern about the Muslims of Darfur as the Christians in the South; it rallied behind the people of Darfur, trying to avoid a reprehensible repeat of Rwanda a decade earlier.

Given its leverage with the government in Khartoum, China was criticized for not doing enough to pressure its ally to halt the violence. The international community was also divided over the Darfur Crisis; the US was entangled in its War on Terror worldwide and the invasion of Iraq in 2003, while Russia was embroiled with its conflict with Georgia over Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the EU's involvement in Kosovo and the series of crises related to former Yugoslavia. Between 2003 and 2007, the United Nations, the African Union (AU) and the Arab League were heavily involved in dealing with the crisis. Several resolutions were introduced, most of which were watered down by China and Russia to soften the impact on the Sudanese government. During the first phase of the conflict (2003-2007), China insisted on its commitment to non-intervention, militarily or otherwise, and maintained that economic sanctions should not be imposed on the Sudan, and that UN-AU peacekeeping forces should not be deployed without the consent of the Sudanese Government. Such opposition widened differences between members Security Council, China and Russia on one side, and the rest of the international community on the other side. While the crisis has brought China and Russia closer as in the current case of Syria, it has widened the gap between the US and China in particular. In fact, "this contention reflects long-running Sino-American differences over the use of economic sanctions as a diplomatic instrument." (Zha, 2006) The violence in Darfur continued for four years before the United Nations and the African Union convinced the Sudan of the legitimacy of deploying peacekeeping forces.

China attempted to ignore the conflict for the first three years, but it was evident that hiding behind the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other nations and relevant UN principles, alone were insufficient to deal with mounting international pressure directed at China's inaction, its engagement with the Sudan, and its obstructionist tactics at the United Nations. A coalition of 150 human rights organizations worldwide launched the Save Darfur Campaign, and the UN, the US, the EU, and the African Union mounted a massive crusade against China charging it with immorality, self-centeredness and

shepherd of genocide in Darfur. In the early months of 2007, the campaign intensified calling on the international community to boycott the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008, stigmatizing them as "Genocide Olympics." Horrified by the momentum the campaign was gathering, China initiated a counter-campaign to clarify its perspective on the Darfur conflict, highlighting its contributions, its role in resolving the conflict, the pressure it was exercising on the Sudanese government, and the humanitarian assistance it provided to the country. Above all, China highlighted what it called the "unfairness" of linking the Olympic Games to politics, surprisingly, a view shared by President Bush and Gordon Brown, the British Prime Minister and many other Western and non-Western leaders. The support and the goodwill China received towards a successful Olympics season, especially from African and Arab countries, did not deter the global movement of Save Darfur from exerting sustained pressure on China, eventually forcing Beijing to shift its policy from non-intervention to exercising direct pressure on General Al-Bashir. In essence, in a record six months China altered its foreign policy from the extreme position of non-intervention to active participation in UN-AU mission in Darfur. It issued ultimatums and sometimes threats to convince General Al-Bashir to allow UN-AU peacekeepers into Darfur. Since then, China has become a major contributing country to UN peacekeeping missions around the world, and in Africa in particular. In fact, it was the first non-African country to deploy engineers and logistical military personnel to set up the infrastructure necessary for UN-AU forces in Darfur. Accordingly, China became the go-to for solutions to the crisis.

Zhai Jun, Assistant Foreign Affairs Minister, former ambassador to Egypt, and Envoy to Africa, were China's liaison in charge of the Darfur Crisis. His mission, as he understood it, was "to accomplish peace, stability and development of the Darfur region through negotiations" (Xinhua Press Agency, 2007, April 11). In 2007, four years into the conflict, Jun reiterated China's opposition to imposing sanctions on the Sudan. He stated that "it is not necessary to resort to sanctions or other pressures" (Xinhua Press Agency, 2007, April 11), and highlighted several accomplishments of his office, among which was persuading the Sudan to accept the peace plan drafted by the United Nations, and providing humanitarian assistance estimated at \$10.4 million in 2007. Simultaneously, Jun expressed his empathy with Sudan's concerns "about its sovereignty and territorial integrity" (Xinhua Press Agency, 2007, April 11).

On May 10, 2007, China appointed Ambassador Liu Guijin as Special Envoy to Darfur. He was a longtime veteran of African affairs and former ambassador to South Africa and Zimbabwe. Guijin traveled between the Sudan and the United Nation's Headquarters, Washington DC, London, Addis Ababa, Cairo and several other capitals to build an international consensus on Darfur. He continued

to highlight China's belief that pressure and sanctions would not be helpful for the resolution of the Darfur issue. He stated that solving Darfur's issue required a "holistic approach" and the efforts of five parties: Sudanese efforts, the efforts of the resistance movement and of neighboring countries, the African Union, the international community and the United Nations. Commenting on the role of the resistance movement in Darfur, Guijin stressed that "without the progress of the political process and the consensus between the Sudanese government and the resistance movement, it is very difficult to make progress in the deployment of the hybrid operation, to end the turmoil and improve the security in Darfur" (Xinhua Press Agency, 2008, February 22). In defending China's policy goals toward Darfur, Guijin maintained that China's position was no different from the US or other Western powers. On China's arms sales to the Sudan, he continued, China had no control over the destination or the use of its weapons. He pointed out that China was one, among several countries that sold weapons to Sudan, like Iran, Russia, and Belarus. He also stressed that, the US was the biggest arms supplier and some of its weapons used in Iraq landed in the hands of insurgents. He also downplayed the delay in deployment of the joint UN-AU peace force in Darfur due to "technical difficulties," and most of them were resolved with China's technical expertise (Yardley, 2008, March 8). Guijin highlighted what he called the "distinguished" Chinese approach to international affairs, clearly in contrast with that of the West, stating that "you can describe China's role in resolving the Darfur issue as unique, since we speak and act in a manner our African friends understand and accept" (Xinhua Press Agency, 2007, October 2). Although Guijin remained apologetic and defensive at times, he was successful in convincing the government of the Sudan to accept the UN-AU peacekeeping force. He was aided by the direct involvement of Chinese President Hu Jintao, Premier Wen Jiabao and Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi. During his visit to the Sudan in February 2007, Hu Jintao delivered a direct, clear and concise message to Al-Bashir: deal with the Darfur "problem." The visit came as part of an Africa tour during which he also visited Cameroon, Liberia, Zambia, Namibia, South Africa, Mozambique and Seychelles. In addition to bilateral and multilateral relations between China and Africa, the trip involved highlighting Beijing's seriousness in dealing with the crisis in Darfur, highlighting that the highest level of the Chinese leadership was involved in resolving the conflict (Xinhua Press Agency, 2010, May 26).

From 2009 to 2011, the Darfur Crisis was placed on the back burner of international relations, although Qatar in particular kept it alive through its Good Offices and shepherding of the peace process. It was not completely successful, although violence in Darfur was significantly reduced. Several major factors contributed to Darfur taking a backseat. First, the US invasion of Iraq in 2003

and the ensuing civil war kept the United States fully occupied from 2002 to the end of 2010. The invasion consumed seven years of Bush's eight-year term, and the first two years of Obama's. The US was also preoccupied with the War on Terror and its heavy presence in Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, North and Western Africa, and Yemen. The second major factor was the outbreak of Arab Spring toward the end of 2010, and the conflicts and wars associated with it that continues today. The Sudanese protest movement failed to challenge and change General Al-Bashir's regime, unlike the movements in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. The third factor is the violence occurring in Syria. China did not learn its lesson from Darfur, but is playing an identical role characterized by obstructionism, delayed tactics and manipulation at the United Nations. Iran's nuclear program is yet another factor that overshadows the Darfur Crisis, just like the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Gaza.

In January of 2011, South Sudan organized a referendum for self-determination according to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in 2005. The result was overwhelming support for independence: 98% of voters supported the separation, which occurred in July, same year. This caused a major shift and drove millions of citizens from the north to the south and vice versa, not to mention that this territorial migration and border skirmishes again overshadowed the Darfur conflict. The situation in Darfur remains static: several national liberation movements operating in the region have been unable to reach a consensus on the peace process or pursue an all-out war against the Sudanese government.

#### **D. The Current Situation in Darfur**

Over the past four years, one of the main developments is the clear goal of toppling the Al-Bashir regime by the Darfur Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) in coordination with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-North) which operates south of the Kurdufan region. SPLM-North and JEM established the Sudanese Liberation Front (SRF) which carries out major attacks on government forces. Several times it inched closer to Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, which only perpetuates the conflict in the foreseeable future. As stated above, Qatar continues to host peace talks and organizes development and reconstruction conferences in Doha. The generous pledges made at the International Donor Conference for the Reconstruction and Development in Darfur, held in Doha the 7-8 April, 2013 reached its goal of \$7.0 billion, though the debate continues among donors on the best manner of dispensing the funds: toward reconstruction or peacekeeping (Aljazeera. (2013, April 8).

Ibrahim Gambari, head of the UN-AU peacekeeping force, stated that "the level of violence in Darfur arising from direct confrontation between the government and the armed movements has decreased significantly, compared

to 2010; some will even say up to 70 percent. Similarly, the number of fatalities arising from the conflict over resources between the nomads and the farmers has gone down almost the same, about 70 percent” (The United Nations News Center, 2011, July 22). However, by no means has the conflict completely ended. Hundreds of thousands of refugees are still scattered between Chad, Central African Republic (CAR) and other neighboring countries, and the government of the Sudan has not taken the necessary steps to repatriate them or establish the necessary conditions for their return.

### E. Sino-Sudanese Relations and the Darfur Crisis

China’s ties with the Sudan are multifaceted, but oil, trade and arms sales tangled China into the violence in Darfur.

## 1. OIL AND ITS IMPACT ON DARFUR

The bulk of the blame China shoulders over the Darfur Crisis has to deal with its oil investments in the Sudan. Between 1996 and 2001, China invested \$8 billion in Sudan’s oil sector. This explains the fact that, “China initially refused to take a strong stand against the behavior of the Sudanese government in the matter of Darfur, raised strong protest in the Western countries against Chinese investment policies” (Kemp, 2010). As Kemp put it, “China’s reliance on its economic clout and its hands-off approach in international matters of other countries has served its interest, and made China avoid major confrontations with the United States, doubts remains about the sustainability of that approach in areas such as the Grater Middle east and Africa, which are so ridden with unresolved and emotional conflict.”<sup>3</sup> Chinese oil investments in the Sudan were used as a mobilizing force. In fact, human rights organizations and China’s rivals produced slogans such as ‘China’s Safari,’ and ‘Oil for Blood’ to pressure Beijing in taking drastic positions on the crisis.

Sino-Sudanese oil cooperation predates the Darfur Crisis. It also represents a trend in China’s energy policy, a quest for “entering the Western-dominated oil market by finding unexploited opportunities.”<sup>4</sup> In 1995, since American and Canadian oil companies left, the Sudan invited Chinese oil corporations to explore its territory. Subsequently, China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) began oil exploration attracting Indian and Malaysian companies, as well. CNPC managed to produce oil in a record time, and the Sudan became oil producing country by 1999, and a major oil exporting country by 2001, and the third largest sub-Saharan African-oil exporting country by 2009, after Nigeria (2.2 mbpd),

and Angola (1.4 mbpd). It is estimated that Sudan’s daily production stood at 465,000 bpd, and its proven oil reserves by the end of 2010 at 6.7 billion barrels of crude oil.<sup>5</sup> The bulk of it was exported to China at a rate of 60% of total Sudanese oil production. However, with the division of Sudan into two countries in 2011, 75% of Sudan’s oil facilities are currently under the territorial jurisdiction of the Republic of South Sudan (RSS). Strategic adjustments to establish China’s role in both north and south have become a turbulent process. China made Sudan an oil producing and exporting country, and most likely it will also sustain the oil facilities in the RSS, expand its oil exploration, and set up its infrastructure. The table below illustrates Sudan’s oil production from 2001 to 2014.

**Table 1**  
**Sudan’s Oil Production in Thousands of Barrels, 2001-2014**

Year	Production	Year	Production
1993	2	2004	301
1994	2	2005	305
1995	2	2006	331
1996	5	2007	468
1997	9	2008	480
1998	12	2009	475
1999	63	2010	465
2000	179	2011	291
2001	217	2012	103
2002	241	2013	122
2003	265	2014	120*

*Note.* Sources: For the years 2001 and 2002, Source: British Petroleum Statistical Review of World Energy, June 2012 at bp.com/statisticalreview. For the years 2003-2013: British Petroleum Review of World Energy, June 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.bp.com/content/dam/bp/pdf/Energy-economics/statistical-review-2014/BP-statistical-review-of-world-energy-2014-full-report.pdf>. For 2014, Sudan Tribune at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?mot37>

China’s involvement in the oil sector is not confined to the Sudan or the Republic of South Sudan, contrary; it spreads to the entire continent and represents the bulk of China’s imports from Africa. Yu states that “oil made up the bulk of African exports to China, comprising some 80 percent of total exports, followed by logs, diamonds, cotton and iron. The largest African exporter to China was Angola (37 percent), followed by South Africa (14 percent), Congo (10 percent), Equatorial Guinea (9 percent), and the Sudan (7 percent).” (Lowell & Yu, 2010) Sutter finds that “as the Darfur crisis worsened in 2004, China used its position on the UN security Council to weaken resolutions on the crisis and to avoid the threat of sanctions against the Sudanese government that would have affected Chinese investments in the country.” (Sutter, 2010) Clearly, China’s dominance in the Sudanese oil

<sup>3</sup> Kemp, Ibid, p.67.

<sup>4</sup> Sudan Issue Brief, Arms, Oil and Darfur: the Evolution of Relations between China and Sudan. (2007, July 7, p.2). Retrieved from <http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/pdfs/HSBA-SIB-7-Arms.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> British Petroleum Statistical Review of World Energy. (2012, June). Retrieved from bp.com/statisticalreview

sector was the primary catalyst for its fierce defense of the government of Sudan, in spite of threats of military intervention, sanctions and regime change over Darfur.

## 2. TRADE RELATIONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON DARFUR

The remarkable success China had in the oil sector spilled over to other bilateral relations with the Sudan, especially in the trade, becoming Sudan's major trading partner. It's estimated that 68.3% of Sudan's total external exports head to China, estimated at \$7.705 billion, followed by Japan with 12.6%, and India with 5.8%. 21.7% of Sudan's total imports are from China, valued at \$8.839 billion in 2011, followed by Egypt 8%, Saudi Arabia 7.7%, India 6.1% and the UAE 5.7%. While the Sudan exports oil, cotton, sesame oil, livestock, seeds, and sugar, it imports foodstuff, manufactured goods, medicine, chemicals, refinery equipment, textiles, wheat, machinery, etc..<sup>6</sup> The

**Table 3**  
Sudan's Top 20 Import Destinations in 2013, in \$ Millions

Rank	Country	Value/\$ millions	Percent %	Rank	Country	Value/\$ millions	Percent %
1	China	1,977,596,848.82	21	11	Italy	238,874,570.35	2.6
2	India	777,763,735.18	8.3	12	Malaysia	208,506,932.54	2.2
3	Egypt	518,404,105.77	6.2	13	S. Korea	187,519,668.53	2.0
4	S. Arabia	518,404,105.77	5.6	14	Bangladesh	177,172,366.51	1.9
5	Uganda	390,057,838.56	4.2	15	Ethiopia	162,334,774.09	1.7
6	UAE	349,319,242.34	3.7	16	Japan	155,481,591.02	1.7
7	Turkey	286,929,261.53	3.1	17	Russia	151,187,281.47	1.6
8	Australia	277,727,623.68	3.0	18	Netherlands	123,588,604.68	1.3
9	Germany	253,620,172.47	2.7	19	Brazil	120,685,285.00	1.3
10	UK	252,089,331.07	2.7	20	Canada	116,320,635.92	1.2

*Note.* Source: This table is compiled from data provided by the Observatory of Economic Complexity, Sudan Country Profile. (2013). Retrieved from <http://atlas.media.mit.edu/profile/country/sdn/>

In 2010, China's five top trading partners in Africa were Sudan, Angola, South Africa, Nigeria, and Egypt. Most of its African imports were related to oil. In fact, Sino-African trade volume reached \$126.9 billion in 2010, increased to \$166,632.289 billion in 2011 and jumped to \$198,561.25 billion in 2012, heading steadily toward the \$ 400.00 billion aim by 2010<sup>7</sup>. As Sautman, Barry and Yan (2007) assert, "Africa is the most resource-laden continent, with every primary product required for industry." (Sautman & Yan, 2007) It's essential to state here that, although Sudan's oil fortune transferred to South Sudan, the Sudan remains a rich country with minerals and agriculture, two important sectors to China's manufacturing industry. The current Sino-Sudanese trade relations expanded to minerals, agriculture, free zones, etc. therefore, on the long run, the Sudan is expected to recover from its losses of major oilfields to the RSS.

<sup>6</sup> World Facts Book, Country Profile, the Sudan, Central Intelligence Agency: United States of America. Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/su.html>

<sup>7</sup> China Statistical Yearbook. (2013, p.232). China Statistics Press, Beijing: PRC.

table below illustrates Sino-Sudanese trade volume for the period from 2001-2012, in \$ millions.

**Table 2**  
Volume of Trade Between Sudan and China in \$millions From 2001 to 2013

Year	Volume of trade in \$ millions	Year	Volume of trade in \$ millions
2013	4,500.00	2006	3,353.81
2012	3,732.89	2005	3,908.05
2011	11,536.15	2004	2,521.76
2010	8,626.7	2003	1,920.24
2009	6,338.82	2002	1,549.98
2008	8,200.22	2001	109.37
2007	5,708.03		

*Note.* Sources: for the period from 2001-2010: China Statistical Yearbook, 2010, China Statistics Press, Beijing: PRC, p.238, also retrieved from [www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2008/indexee.htm](http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2008/indexee.htm). For the years of 2011 and 2012: China Statistical Yearbook, 2013, China Statistics Press, Beijing: PRC, p.233. For the year of 2013: Sudan Vision at: <http://news.sudanvisiondaily.com/details.html?rsnpid=234422>

Currently, gold accounts for 49.09%, followed by crude oil at 37%. While the UAE is China top exporting destination (35%), China is Sudan's second exporting destination (28%),<sup>8</sup> however, China is Sudan's top import destination. The table below illustrates Sudan's top 20 import destination, at the end of 2013.

Finally, both China and the Sudan used existing trade forums and established new entities to boost and promote their bilateral trade estimated at the end of 2010 at \$8626.7 billion; it reached its peak in 2011 at \$11,536.15 billion, and dropped to \$3,732.89 after the separation of the south.<sup>9</sup> Sudan and China conduct their trade relations through several bilateral and multilateral frameworks, organizations, entities, and institutions. The Chinese general umbrella for cooperation with Africa is the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), which was established in 2000. Other venues are The China-Sudan

<sup>8</sup> Observatory of Economic Complexity, Sudan Country Profile. (2013). Retrieved from <http://atlas.media.mit.edu/profile/country/sdn/>

<sup>9</sup> China Statistical Yearbook. (2013, p.233). China Statistics Press, Beijing: PRC.

Mixed Committee on Trade and Economy, the China-Africa Development Fund, the Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum, and the China-Arab States Financial Cooperation Forum. However, FOCAC remains the most important Sino-African forum. Sudan is also a member of the China-Arab Trade Forum and the China-Arab States Financial Cooperation Forum.

### 3. ARMS SALES AND DARFUR CRISIS

A third dimension to Sino-Sudanese relations that has antagonized the international community has to deal with China's arms sales to the regime of General Al-Bashir. Human rights organizations, world media, the United Nations, the United States, the EU and the African Union documented the presence and use of Chinese weapons in Darfur, such as jet fighters, tanks, bombs, ammunition, and light arms. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), an authority on armament announced that, China has become the fifth largest arms supplier in March 2013, overtaking the UK.<sup>10</sup> While SIPRI has repeatedly complained of lack of transparency on the side of China in reference to its arms sales, the table below indicates China's value of arms exports to a selected number of countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

**Table 4**  
**China's Arms Sales in 2011, 2012 and 2013 in \$ Millions**

Country	2011	2012	2013	Total in \$ millions
Bangladesh	160	219	552	931
Bolivia	21	NA	NA	21
Cambodia	NA	15	42	57
Egypt	NA	1	1	2
Ethiopia	NA	9	46	55
Ghana	56	9	NA	65
Indonesia	13	66	66	145
Iran	62	44	NA	107
Laos	NA	15	15	30
Morocco	34	34		68
Myanmar	323	372	213	907
Namibia	NA	52	NA	52
Pakistan	578	592	760	1,930
Seychelles	5	NA	NA	5
Sierra Leone	2	NA	NA	2
Sudan	2	2	1	5
Tanzania	73	151	25	249
Thailand	5	25	25	54
Venezuela	8	46	92	146
Zambia	NA	53	NA	53
Total	1342	1704	1837	4883

Note. Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (2014, July 28). Trend Indicators Value (TIVs) expressed in \$million. Retrieved from <http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers/background>

China contributed to the Sudanese arms buildup in at least four ways, reinforcing the Sudanese Government's ability to wage a war in Darfur.

<sup>10</sup>Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (2013, p.241). Yearbook. Oxford University Press: London.

First, oil revenues generated tremendous financial resources used by the government to enhance its security, purchase weapons and generously spend on its armed forces. Facing strong competition in the arms markets, China was more than willing to sell the Sudanese government weapons in exchange for hard currency, trade, minerals and oil concessions. Other countries such as Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, North Korea and Iran transferred arms to the Sudanese government, as well. SIPRI reports that Sudanese military expenditures increased drastically since 1997. It was estimated that Sudan spent \$15.4 million on armament in 1997, \$882 million in 2001, \$1,021.00 billion in 2002, \$900 million in 2003, jumped to \$2,561.00 billion in 2004 and reached \$2,292.00 billion in 2006, the peak of the Darfur crisis.<sup>11</sup> SIPRI reports no figures for Sudan's arms expenditures from 2007 to 2014. The table below illustrates Sudan's arms imports from China in \$millions for the period from 1987-2013.

**Table 5**  
**Sudan's Arms Imports From China From 1987-2013 in \$ Millions**

Years	Value in \$ millions	Years	Value in \$ millions
1987-1990	115	2002-2005	133
1991-1994	52	2005-2008	46
1995-1998	54	2009-2011	NA
1999-2001	NA	2011-2013	10

Note. Sources: For the period from 1987-2011, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, July 28, 2014. Trend Indicators Value (TIVs) expressed in \$million. Retrieved from <http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers/background>

For the period from 2011-2013: The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2013 Yearbook, Oxford University Press: London. (p.181, 182).

Second, China supplied arms to the Sudan, defying a UN embargo on weapons to Darfur. On March 13, 2008 Human Rights First (HRF) published a report entitled "Made in China, Stop Arms Sales to Sudan" stating that:

China supplied 89.95% of Sudan's small arms in 2004; 94.16% in 2005; and 87.66% in 2006. Sudan's purchases of small arms, small arms parts, and ammunition have risen dramatically since 1999. By 2005, Sudan's small arms imports had risen to more than 680 times their 1999 levels. From 2003 to 2006, the period covering the worst abuses by Sudanese government forces in Darfur, China sold over \$55 million worth of small arms to Khartoum. Since 2004, the year in which the United Nations Security Council imposed an embargo on arms transfers to Darfur, China has been the near-exclusive provider of small arms to Khartoum, supplying approximately 90 percent of Sudan's small arms purchases each year. Observers on the ground in Darfur have reported seeing Chinese weaponry, including grenade launchers and ammunition for assault rifles and heavy machine guns. (Human Rights First, 2011, August 3)

In addition to light and medium arms, China sold aircraft, tanks, and infantry fighting vehicles. HRF

<sup>11</sup>Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (2011). Yearbook. (p.187). Oxford University Press: London,

reports that China sold Sudan 20 A-5C Fantom fighter-bombers, six K-8 advanced trainer aircraft and 12 Chinese FC1 Fighter aircraft, between 2003 and 2007, the worst years of the conflict. The A-5C Fantom jet fighter is capable of delivering 4,000 pounds of bombs in a single strike (Human Rights First, 2011, August 3). Ian Taylor adds that by 2006 the Sudanese air force was “equipped with \$100 million worth of Shenyang fighter planes, including a dozen supersonic F-7 jets.” (Taylor, 2006) Amnesty International (AI) reports that:

China and Russia are selling arms to the Government of Sudan in the full knowledge that many of them are likely to end up being used to commit human rights violations in Darfur... the Darfur conflict is sustained by the constant flow of weapons from abroad. To help prevent further serious violations of human rights, all international arms transfers to Sudan should be immediately suspended and the UN arms embargo extended to the whole country. (Amnesty International, 2012, February 8)

AI and several other organizations called for an effective Arms Trade Treaty (Amnesty International, 2012, February 8). In 2010, China’s mission to the United Nations attempted to suppress a UN report drafted by a panel of arms exports that showed evidence of China’s continued arms sales to the Sudan, seven years into the Darfur conflict (The Guardian, 2010, October, Thursday). In fact, while the Sudanese government continued to receive Chinese, Russian, Iranian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian weapons, the supply of weapons to Darfur’s resistance movements was severely restricted.

Third, China helped the Sudan to develop arms manufacturing capabilities since 1995, much like it helped to build an Iranian arms manufacturing base. Observers report that Chinese engineers are supervising the production of arms at several Sudanese factories, among which are the Giad industrial Complex in Khartoum, and Kalakla, Chojeri and Bageer outside the capital.

Fourth, since 1999 China provided training for and supervised the modernization of the Sudanese Armed Forces. This aspect of Sino-Sudanese cooperation is critical as senior Chinese military officials have been exchanging visits and coordinating closely with Sudan leading a partnership between China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA), and Sudanese Armed Forces, especially with Sudan’s Air Force (SAF) since 2002. (Patey, 2011) PLA trained Sudanese pilots to fly A-5C, K-8, Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian MIGs and Sukhoi jet fighters, and other types of military equipment.

Chinese arms shipments to the Sudan were not influenced by UN resolutions that imposed the arms embargo on Darfur since 2004. In fact, in late 2010, a UN panel of arms experts compiled a report on arms sales to the Sudan that eventually found their way to Darfur, confirming the presence of Chinese arms in the territory, as well as arms made in Russia and Belarus.

For instance, Russia has sold some 36 Mi-24 and Mi-17 helicopters to Khartoum since 2009, while Belarus has sold

15 Sukhoi 25 jets to the Sudanese government since 2008, according to the panel. Sudan signed end-user agreements with both governments guaranteeing that the aircrafts would not be used in Darfur. (Colum, 2010, October 16, Saturday)

The Sudanese government continues to receive military assistance and to purchase arms from several sources; China is one of them.

#### 4. ENDING THE CONFLICT IN DARFUR AND THE PROSPECTS FOR PEACE

The entanglement of international interests in the Sudan has made resolving the conflict nearly impossible. However, the diminishing importance of Sudan to China’s energy security in favor of South Sudan might be a catalyst leading to resolution to the Darfur Crisis. The United Nations and African Union have also reduced the size of their joint mission from 7000 to 2000 in Darfur, in favor of supporting missions in South Sudan. Additionally, it’s estimated that 75% to 80% of Sudan’s oil fields are currently under the jurisdiction of the Republic of South Sudan, and if it proceeds with its current plans of an alternative pipeline through Ethiopia to Djibouti’s ports, Sudan’s strategic importance to China will be reduced significantly. China has increasingly been viewing Al-Bashir’s regime as a liability more than an asset; therefore, it would be more than willing to compromise on its survival in a similar manner to the Gaddafi regime in Libya. The situation in Darfur and the prolonging of the crisis threatens the stability of the entire region, not only the fragile peace in the Sudan.

There are several frameworks are being considered for resolving/managing the conflict in Darfur:

##### 4.1 Self-Determination and the Republic of Darfur

Although African and Arab countries are not in need of any more fragmentation, if unity is inconceivable, then cessation might be considered. A Republic of Darfur is an option and an alternative to the current situation. Historically, Darfur had been an independent, affluent, and prosperous Sultanate (monarchy), and its very independent spirit collided with British colonialism in 1916 when it supported the Ottoman Empire in World War I. This collision annexed Darfur by force to the British domain. A counterview is that an independent Darfur would only lead to the creation of another corrupted and failed African state such as South Sudan, Somalia, Chad, Libya, and Eritrea. While this reasoning might be accurate, but the continuing violence and the displacement of Darfurians is unsustainable. The alternative is the right of self-determination. The cessation of Darfur has support among some Western countries and Western grassroots organizations that significantly helped the split of East Timor in 1996, and South Sudan in 2011.

## 4.2 The Darfur Autonomous Region

Using Chinese administrative terminology, the Sudan might consider granting Darfur an autonomous status, thus uniting the region as it was historically, one entity. The current division of Darfur into three or five administrative regions is a security solution that seeks to fragment the unity of Darfur and facilitate the central government's control over the territory. China and Russia and elsewhere provides an insight on how autonomous governments function, and the role they play in establishing social peace and economic prosperity.

## 4.3 Darfur Regional Government

Following the model of the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq, Darfur's Regional Government (DRG) could become one entity again, then be organized administratively with provinces and sub-units. Its regional government would have its own elected governor, a national assembly, a cabinet, and a judiciary, as well.

## 4.4 The Sudan Federation

Another administrative option is a federal system similar to many countries around the world, such as the US, India, Pakistan, and Brazil, in which a federal government exercises foreign and defense policies, national legislative and judicial policies, and has state governments with their own elected governors, national assemblies, and administrative structures. Perhaps, this framework suits the Sudan best, given its multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nature.

## CONCLUSION

China's role in the Darfur Crisis ranged from obstructionism to cautious involvement, and then to a proactive role in which China supported the deployment of the UN-African Union peace keepers and contributed to it. China played an essential role in convincing Sudan's authoritarian regime to allow force, risking international military intervention. From 2007 to the end of the summer of 2008, China's active role successfully undermined the international campaign initiated by human rights organizations to boycott the Olympic Games in Beijing. Although the campaign did not generate sufficient momentum to boycott the games, it succeeded in pressuring China to intervene in the Darfur Crisis. Accordingly, China appointed a Special Envoy to deal with the crisis, and its leadership was involved in resolving the conflict at the highest levels. China provided some humanitarian assistance to Darfur and supported the UN's peace mission as well as the peace process efforts shepherd in Qatar. However, China continues its arms sales to the Sudan, undeterred by UN resolutions that restrict sales and use of arms in the Darfur region. In post-2008 Summer Olympic Games, China's role in managing the conflict declined, albeit it continues to support the Qatari efforts to resolve it.

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