China's Influence in Sudan and its Effects on UN Peacekeeping Operations in the Darfur Conflict

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Abstract
The Darfur conflict which started in 2003 has caused violent atrocities towards civilians in Sudan, creating a humanitarian crisis to which the UN responded with mandated peacekeeping operations to help the state. Of the UN Permanent Five, China has exhibited a complex role in the crisis as both an involved, troop-contributing state and a close economic partner of Khartoum. This article tackles China’s involvement in the Darfur conflict in the form of economic, strategic, and humanitarian influence in Sudan between 2004-2007. The author finds that China’s influence on Sudan in the form of economic support to Khartoum, backed by its wider economic interests in the region, undermined the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping efforts towards the Darfur crisis during this foundational period.

Introduction
Darfur is the largest region in Sudan, and its population is comprised of a majority of African farmers, namely the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa tribes, and a smaller population of African Arabs like the Rezeigat (Reyna 2010). Deep-rooted tensions between these racially and culturally intertwined groups “involving political and economic marginalization, failing institutions (especially security and judicial institutions), environmental degradation, population pressure, and ubiquity of small arms as a result of regional conflicts, uncontrollable borders, and past arms distributions by the government to militias such as the murahaliin” fueled an insurgency in 2003 from two rebel groups based in Darfur (Flint 2009, p. 124; Straus 2005). The Sudan Liberation Army (SLA/M) pursued a cause principally on behalf of Sudan’s non-Arab, but also to a certain degree some Arab, ethnic groups (De Waal 2007). Forming an alliance with the SLM, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)
are likewise predominantly non-Arab rebels, but with roots in 1993 in Sudan’s Islamist movement, namely the National Islamic Front (De Waal 2007). As a response to the insurgency, the Government of Sudan (GoS) in Khartoum organised paramilitary proxies comprised of Darfur’s Arab tribes and Arab immigrants from Chad called the ‘Janjaweed’ to fight the rebels (Flint 2009). This ‘massive campaign of ethnic violence’ has been come to be known as the Darfur conflict or crisis (Straus 2005, p. 123; Williams 2012). By February 2005, the UN commission concluded that this conflict in Darfur was no less than genocide, and in the following years it established and mandated peacekeeping operations in Sudan in order to help the latter achieve a lasting peace resolution and decrease atrocities in Darfur (United Nations 2020a). However, despite such efforts, the Darfur conflict has continued well past its origination, with scholars like Grono (2006) stating that the international community has failed in a considerable degree to alleviate Sudan of the Darfur crisis.

Scholars have attributed international failures to help alleviate the Darfur crisis to the resistance created by the national interests of powerful states (Stojek & Tir 2015; Olsen 2015). Decisions on peacekeeping missions in the UN are centralised in the decision-making of major stakeholder states in the form of the Permanent Five (P5) members (Stojek & Tir 2015). Of the P5, China especially has exhibited a complex role in the Darfur crisis. Previously known as a non-intervening state in third-party conflicts, China became a major troop-contributing state for UN peacekeeping operations during the height of the Darfur conflict (Fung 2015; Carmody & Taylor 2009; Shinn 2009). The argued reasons behind this shift are divided into humanitarian or ideational, economic, and strategic motivations (Patey 2017; Fung 2016; Lai 2007). Despite China gaining humanitarian rapport in the international community for its increased involvement in UN peacekeeping, it simultaneously maintained close economic ties with Sudan. Some of its economic endeavors in Sudan, such as continuing to supply arms and military vehicles to Khartoum, have thus been criticised as perpetuating violence in Darfur (Fung 2016; Taylor 2006).

This article examines a causal relationship between China’s influence in Sudan and the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations for the Darfur conflict, asking “To what extent did Chinese influence in Sudan undermine the effectiveness of the UN Peacekeeping mission in Darfur between 2004-2007?” It argues that the economic influence of China in Sudan serves as the main contributing factor to ineffective UN peacekeeping operations for the Darfur conflict during the foundational period of the crisis—where effective means being able to limit violence
in the conflict-ridden state and promote conflict resolution. It looks at the Darfur conflict and what happened on the ground apropos China and the UN’s involvement. Likewise, it considers the arguments behind China’s shift in disposition towards peacekeeping and the crisis. This article analyses data relating to China’s economic relationship with Sudan and its contributions to UN peacekeeping operations to explain why such an amalgamation of factors may have prevented peacekeeping goals from diminishing the crisis within the mentioned period, and it relates the findings briefly to China’s role in Sudan and South Sudan in the following years.

**Darfur and International Involvement**

From the breakout of the Darfur conflict in 2003, the African Union Mission (AMIS) was the principal peacekeeping operation in charge of alleviating atrocities in the region (Luqman 2012). In March 2005, the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) peacekeeping operation was established as a response to continued violence and the growing number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Darfur amidst the efforts of AMIS and international calls for the Sudanese government to resolve the crisis (United Nations 2020a; Luqman 2012). As accounted for by the United Nations (2009b), there was a continual upward trend of IDPs in Darfur in relation to the perpetuating conflict between 2004-2007, signaling continuing negative effects of the conflict. Despite the opposing parties—the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLM/A)—arriving at a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) continued to extend the UNMIS mandate due to continued humanitarian violations related to the Darfur conflict (United Nations 2020a). Despite the CPA process providing a platform for peace and change, Sudan was nonetheless divided at this stage. It was argued that “division of the country will solve, at least temporarily, the North–South conflict, but will not eliminate the possibility of future war between the resulting two countries; nor does it ensure security, development or political empowerment of the Sudanese” (Rolandsen 2011, p. 562). It is important to note that the formal founding of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) in 2011 involved long and arduous negotiation since 2005 (Anthony & Hengkun 2014; Rolandsen 2011). By 2007, the UNSC approved the hybrid operation United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) to likewise attend to the continually perpetuating crisis in Darfur (United Nations 2020a). In both operations, China, a member of the P5, made significant personnel contributions to UN peacekeeping, with 444 troops
deployed for UNMIS and 321 deployed for UNAMID (SIPRI 2009).

Theory

International relations theory, not particularly limited to a singular framework, is incorporated as a backdrop for the analysis of China’s influence in Sudan and its underlying objectives in applying certain modes of influence more than others. Starting with realism and its contentions, this article looks at China and its economic and strategic national interests in conjunction with its self-interests of power and security as a state. This corresponds to the hypothesis that China’s national economic interests serve as the main contributing factor with regards to the ineffectiveness of UN peacekeeping in Sudan. Realism interprets great power involvement in a third-party civil war as a self-serving tactic for that power, as more stabilised states may reap more benefits economically, politically, and strategically. At the same time, this is insufficient to understand a pattern in China’s behavior towards Sudan as a great power and member of the P5. In considering China’s shift in disposition from a strictly non-interventionist state to one of the major contributors of troops to UN peacekeeping missions for the Darfur conflict, constructivist assumptions provide a dimension of understanding towards what may have prompted China to make such a change (Armstrong et al. 2012).

Methodology

This article undertakes a qualitative research method through documentary and archival analysis. A within-case analysis of China and the Darfur conflict is undertaken to identify the differences in China’s involvement in UN peacekeeping objectives for Darfur. It explores the relationship between China’s national interests and influence in Sudan and the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations conducted for the Darfur conflict. The analysis is focused on the foundational period of 2004-2007 or from the shift of China’s disposition from a non-interventionist state in third-party civil wars into a troop-contributing state and activist for humanitarian aid and peace resolution in Sudan to the establishment of the UNAMID mission in Darfur (Olsen 2015; Ahmed 2010; Large 2008a). China’s behavior with respect to Sudan and South Sudan in the following years will also be considered briefly in order to contextualise a continuation of the article’s analysis for the period 2004-2007.

The main primary references considered are 1) data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Military Expenditure Database; 2) UN Security Council Resolutions on Sudan; 3) Chinese activity reports on Sudan from the Ministry of Foreign
Affairs of China; 4) country analysis briefs on China and Sudan from the US Energy Information Administration; 5) data from the Observatory of Economic Complexity; 6) data on trade flows between China and Sudan from the UN Comtrade Database; and 7) data from AidData on China’s Development Footprint in Sudan. The SIPRI, OEC, UN Comtrade, and AidData data are used to support a quantitative data analysis of China’s economic relations with Sudan that pose as barriers to achieving peacekeeping objectives towards the Darfur conflict. In analysing secondary references, the process tracing method or “the systematic examination of diagnostic evidence selected and analysed in light of research questions and hypotheses posed by the investigator” was undertaken in order to understand China’s geostrategic and humanitarian influence and objectives apropos to Sudan (Collier 2011, p. 823).

**China’s National Interests in Sudan**

China has a growing demand for oil as the resource has a consequential role in the state’s pursuit of its national economic security (Pannell 2008; Lai 2007; Jakobson & Daojiong 2006). As its oil dependence grows, China pursues economic relations with different states and regions in the world in order to source and secure oil supplies (Chunrong 2016; Jakobson & Daojiong 2006). In Africa, China especially established economic relations with African states Sudan and Angola in order to facilitate trade, investment, and its objectives on garnering and maintaining oil supply (Chunrong 2016; Lai 2007). China’s pursuit of its national economic security, however, does not stop at a reliance on world markets for oil supplies. Lee (2012) explains that the state also partakes in—and even prefers—direct investment in resource developments in order to further secure resources around the world. Houser (2008) furthers that this does not mean that the oil that China acquires from equity deals are only for Chinese consumers; instead, most of this oil is actually being sold by China on the open market. As Houser (2008, p. 162) puts it:

> Despite the criticism Beijing took at the UN Security Council and in the court of public opinion over the Chinese oil major’s involvement in Sudan, CNPC opted to sell more of its Sudanese crude to Japan in 2006 because Japan was willing to pay a higher price than the company would have been able to obtain at home.

This may suggest that the Chinese central government does not have complete control over Chinese National Oil Companies (NOCs) abroad. Liou (2009, p. 680) explains that “when NOCs have their own interest in expanding operations, which sometimes runs against national goals, the
central government as a regulator has difficulty monitoring key details of their performance”. This corresponds to Ahmed’s (2010) contention that the Chinese government’s actions apropos international peacekeeping in Darfur are affected by pressure from NOCs that maintain close ties to the Khartoum government, which wanted China to diverge from its newfound activist role in the issue. The NOCs may have thus provided assistance to President al Bashir’s regime in exploiting oil resources in the country all the while helping China sustain its economic growth (Moro 2012).

However, the literature is divided on whether Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) can be interpreted as operating autonomously or in conjunction with the goals and strategy of the Chinese government due to the fact that “not only is the ‘agent’ (SOE) part of the ‘principal’ (state) but, due to state transformation, there is no single ‘principal’ with a clear goal that could be imposed upon SOEs” (Jones & Zou 2017). For instance, Taylor (2007) makes the alternate contention that the NOCs act in accordance to China’s national strategy on acquiring resources and foreign policy as Beijing encourages these SOEs “to secure exploration and supply agreements with states that produce oil, gas, and other resources” (Zweig & Jianhai, cited in Taylor 2007, p. 8). Moro (2012) explains that China is thus constantly balancing its relations with Sudan and its leaders so that its oil companies could carry on with their operations, and this was emphasised in its attempts to forge relations with the new leaders of South Sudan upon the conclusion of the CPA in 2005. On top of this, China’s predominant economic interest in Sudan is neither solely in terms of the latter’s oil resources and industry, as it has likewise been a major arms supplier to Sudan since the 1990s (Kotecki 2008). Not only does China profit further from continued arms trading with Sudan, but its unbiased nature of trade with the rogue state also allows it to maintain good relations with the GoS and ultimately enables it to carry on with its exploitation of Sudanese oil reserves (Taylor 2007).

Sudan also serves as a strategic investment for China; the economic reasons behind China’s involvement in Sudan correspond to the state’s broader geostrategic energy security strategy as an importer of foreign supplies (Patey 2017; Lee 2012; Shinn 2009). For China, obtaining geostrategic dominance in Africa helps its quest for power as this would help usurp US hegemony in the region (Carmody & Taylor 2009). Instead of using “societal transformation” and coercion to achieve hegemony in the region like the US, China focuses on “natural resource access and the cultivation of support constituencies” to slowly become the dominant power in Africa (Carmody & Taylor 2009, p. 499). China-Sudan arms
trading corresponds to this larger geostrategic goal that ultimately intertwin with geopolitical and geo-economic benefits of establishing better political ties with African states and maintaining access to strategic resources in the region respectively (Conteh-Morgan & Weeks 2016). Conteh-Morgan and Weeks (2016) explain further that China takes advantage of the fact that other prospective arms suppliers to Africa like the US pose more conditions in terms of arms trading with African states due to their humanitarian concerns and goals to democratise other states; China, in comparison, interferes less with such issues and thus presents itself as a less burdensome trading partner. Taylor (2007) notes that Chinese companies prefer to take advantage of the resources in states where foreign competition is less present. He explains that “because China’s oil companies are state-owned, China is able to do this even if it means outbidding competitors in major contracts awarded by African governments and paying over the odds” (Taylor 2007, p. 9).

Other scholars however refer to China’s ideational motivations for its involvement in the Darfur conflict, particularly linking increased activism and involvement in UN peacekeeping missions to the state’s efforts to bolster its image and identity in the international arena as a rising power (Fung 2016; Huang 2011; Singh 2011; Shinn 2009; Large 2008a; Zhongying 2005). Its changed disposition on involvement in the Darfur conflict is seen as a direct response to the international criticism it received for non-intervention in a crisis involving massive violence (Fung 2016; Large 2008a). Furthermore, for China, its increased involvement with foreign armies, defense ministries, and peacekeeping operations is a means to defuse insecurity felt by other states regarding its increasing military capacity (Singh 2009). However, China’s efforts to become more involved in international humanitarian activities are contradicted by its economic relationship with Sudan (Carmody & Taylor 2009; Jakobson & Daojiang 2007; Taylor 2006; Zhongying 2005). As seen in Figure 5.1, the UN deployment of peacekeeping troops for the Darfur conflict in 2005 coincides with a peak in China and Sudan’s economic relationship. The extent to which factors like this have affected the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping in Darfur is therefore worth exploring.
Figure 1: China-Sudan Trade Flow and UNMIS Authorization

![Graph showing trade flow and UNMIS authorization](image_url)

**Figure 1: Trade flow between China and Sudan, 1980-2009.**
Source: Correlates of War Tarde Data version 3.0 (Barbieri et al., 2009)


**China’s Involvement in Sudan: 2004-2007**

In the early stages of the Darfur conflict, Ahmed (2010) explains that China maintained its longstanding stance of non-intervention and did not interfere with the Sudanese government’s efforts to resolve the crisis; instead, it showed a supportive stance towards Sudan in the UN and maintained close relations with the African state during this time. Ahmed (2010) explains that this had disposition shifted by the middle of the year 2004 due to international pressure. During this time, China was observed to increase diplomatic engagement with Sudan, encouraging it to improve its policies towards the conflict in order to reduce humanitarian violations whilst continuing to invest in Sudanese oil (Kotecki 2008). China also started promoting an economic solution for improving the situation in Sudan by supporting socio-economic development in the state (Ahmed 2010). Given the friendly ties between China and Sudan, the latter requested China to help denounce resolutions that would threaten its national sovereignty and control over the Darfur crisis (Ahmed 2010). However, by 2006, the UNMIS was already mandated to operate in Darfur to alleviate the crisis, and China contributed troops to it for deployment (United Nations 2020a). While China ultimately contributed to UN peacekeeping—particularly UNMIS—it simultaneously opposed and abstained from voting on
resolutions imposing sanctions against the Sudanese government being proposed by the UNSC (Vatikiotis, cited in Kotecki 2008). As Kotecki (2008) argues, China has been involved in the perpetuation of violence in Sudan due to its continued arms exporting to the latter despite the destination being conflict-ridden and susceptible to violent usage. Kotecki (2008, p. 211) expounds:

Despite global awareness of the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, China continues to provide military equipment to the government of Sudan. The weapons sent from China to Sudan do not appear to travel through illicit channels, because China reports these shipments to the UN Comtrade. If the Chinese government gave export licenses to these shipments, it effectively provided its stamp of approval.

Authors such as Klare (2014), Sanders (1990), and Schelling (2008) suggest that arms transfers to developing countries indeed “widen the scope of violence and even intensify or increase the duration of wars thereby making the maintenance of peace more difficult” (cited in Conteh-Morgan & Weeks 2016, p. 82). The following analysis draws out a connection between the violence in the Darfur conflict to Sudan’s arms trading with China.

**Chinese Economic Involvement in Sudan and Violence in Darfur**

The international criticism towards China as instrumental in the perpetuation of the Darfur conflict can be justified by the contradictions to conflict resolution posed by continued China-Sudan arms trade and Chinese economic oil interests in Sudan (Large 2008b). As established, the continuance of arms trade with a developing country prevents the discontinuation violence in internal conflicts—prolonging damage and preventing resolution (Conteh-Morgan & Weeks 2016). Based on the data from SIPRI Arms Transfers Database (2020) and the UN Comtrade Database (2020), China has served a predominant role as an arms supplier to the Government of Sudan between 2004-2007. The China-Sudan arms trade is likewise an important component of Chinese economic policy and the state’s goals to maintain ties with African states to further its larger geostrategic and geo-economic goals (Conteh-Morgan & Weeks 2016). According to the SIPRI Arms Transfers Database (2020), China ranks second to Russia as an arms exporter to Sudan. The database also recorded significant China-Sudan weapon systems trade registers from 2004-2007, such as tanks delivered between 2002-2006 directly designated to Al-Bashir (SIPRI 2020).

As Conteh-Morgan & Weeks (2016) and Kotecki (2008) have stated, the Sudanese government was found to be directly responsible for the
violence committed against civilians in Darfur, which include acts undertaken by non-governmental militia and rebels operating under the direction of Khartoum. Despite China’s troop contributions to UN peacekeeping for Darfur and encouraging of Sudan to accept international help to alleviate the crisis, it continued to export aircraft, ammunition, and armored vehicles used against civilians to Sudan (Conteh-Morgan & Weeks 2016). Data retrieved from the UN Comtrade Database (2020) likewise exhibits China’s continued exportation of such materials to Sudan between 2004-2007 simultaneous with the perpetuation of the conflict. According to the UN Comtrade (2020), the recorded total trade values (in US dollars) for China-Sudan arms and military vehicle trading between 2004-2007 were around $18M in 2004, $32M in 2005, $12M in 2006, and $28M in 2007. This contradicts the aims of the UNSC for the Darfur conflict, particularly in Resolution 1556 in 2004, which specifically called for states to prevent the selling and supplying of arms and similar commodities that would nonetheless contribute to the perpetuation of the Darfur conflict (United Nations 2020).

The US EIA country analysis briefs on China and Sudan project China’s dominant role as a trading partner of Sudan between 2004-2007. It notes that the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) acquired oil concessions in Sudan and purchased the Petrodar pipeline in 2005 and that China obtained the status of largest importer of Sudan’s Dar Blend in 2007 (US Energy Information Administration 2005). Data from the Observatory of Economic Complexity (2020) similarly show that a predominance of Sudanese exports to China are oil, with the top export from Sudan between 2004-2007 being crude oil petroleum and China as the consistent top destination during this period. Receiving little pressure from China during this time despite humanitarian concerns in Darfur, Chinese oil companies continued their operations in Sudan despite the continuing crisis (Patey 2007). As Patey (2007) found, corporations of extractive industries are instrumental to worsening conflicts all over the world, and Chinese NOCs have thus indeed been conducive to the continuance of violence in Darfur. In the case of Sudan, these corporations have provided Khartoum with “a source of revenue to strengthen its brutal military machine” against the SLM/A as oil revenues gave the GoS the financial capability to then buy arms from Russia and China, likewise corroborated by the SIPRI and UN Comtrade data covered in the previous sub-sections (Patey 2007, p. 998). Furthermore, in considering Taylor’s (2007) earlier mentioned contention on the behavior of NOCs, it could be argued that the lack of pressure exerted by the Chinese government on the companies is
because continued oil operations remained consistent with the bigger priority of pursuing China’s national strategy on acquiring resources. Conversely, in the case of the autonomy of the NOCs with regards to its operations abroad, the study by Norris (2016) on CNPC in Sudan found that the Chinese state and the CNPC both maintained the same goal of securing oil overseas in the 1990s.

After the signing of the CPA in 2005, the UNSC threatened Sudan’s oil industry with penalties if Sudan did not undertake further measures to relieve the crisis and maintain lasting peace in Darfur (US EIA 2005). Correspondingly, however, China prevented the UN from doing so as a member of the P5 given its developed political and economic relationship with the Government of Sudan, including its vested oil investments in the conflict-ridden state (Rogers 2007). It could then be deduced that the GoS did not have enough incentive to follow the directives of the UNSC to make better efforts to reduce violence and humanitarian atrocities. “China’s position as dominant economic partner and key international political patron renders its influence on ruling circles in Khartoum potentially significant” (Large 2008b, p. 38). Schnakenberg and Farris’ Our World in Data (2014) analysed Sudan’s human rights scores between 2000-2011, tracking the ability of governments to protect and respect human rights (values of -3.8 to 5.4, the higher the better). Between 2004-2006, there was no significant increase in Sudan’s human rights scores, indicating that the human rights conditions in Sudan indeed did not drastically improve within the time-frame considered (Schnakenberg & Farris 2014).

**Chinese Developmental Aid to Sudan**

Having decreased economic involvement from Western states, it could be argued that Sudan became beholden to China for maintaining its economic relations in spite of the crisis in Darfur. On top of the benefits brought about by continued trade and investment, China also provided developmental aid to Sudan between 2004-2007. AidData’s China Global Development Footprint points out that, geographically, Africa is the predominant recipient of Chinese aid; commercial interests, however, are more dispersed throughout the world. Of the top 10 recipients of Chinese official development assistance (ODA) and one-off intervention (OOF), Sudan in particular is not included. However, China’s total official commitments to Sudan amount to $10.2 billion, with an ODA of $1.5 billion and an OOF of $6.3 billion (amounts in USD). Data from AidData (2020) further show that China has provided aid to Sudan not only for the Darfur conflict, but also in terms of energy generation and supply, transport and storage, and non-food commodity
assistance during the time-frame. What this ultimately suggests is that the Al-Bashir regime was thus able to maintain financial incentives that enable it to continue supporting rebels like the Janjaweed fighting the SLM/A in Darfur despite becoming a pariah state. China’s aid to Darfur, as Large (2008b, pp. 38-39) describes, is thus “a hybrid combination of humanitarian assistance and assistance for recovery/development,” which holds ground given that apart from providing developmental assistance to Darfur in 2004-2007, it also contributed troops to the UN for peacekeeping missions UNMIS and UNAMID (SIPRI 2009).

**Chinese Influence in Sudan and Contributions to UN Peacekeeping for Darfur**

Apart from becoming more involved in international efforts to alleviate the Darfur crisis, China also increased diplomatic engagement with Sudan, especially covering the issue of conflict resolution in Darfur (Large 2008b). The Chinese Activity Reports on Sudan from the Chinese Foreign Ministry from 2004-2007 exhibit China’s consistent encouraging of Sudan to cooperate with the African Union and the UN in order to alleviate the Darfur conflict (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China 2014). At the same time, China pushed for the expansion of China-Sudan economic ties and expressed support for and proposed involvement in the development and reconstruction of South Sudan after the conclusion of the CPA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China 2014). Moro (2012) notes that the signing of the CPA was by virtue of pressure from the US, and the approval of the latter in 2005 prompted China to make the ad hoc decision of starting to build rapport with the possible new leaders of South Sudan as they were to then manage the area where Chinese oil companies were operating. As China decided that it wanted to promote a different image internationally, the goals and actions of the CNPC did not adapt accordingly (Norris 2016). In this regard, as Chinese NOCs continued operations autonomously in Sudan, in a contradiction of China’s role in the conflict. Norris (2016) notes that in the midst of saving face in the international arena, Chinese state behavior still showed an element of protection towards the interests of its NOCs as in the case of Darfur and Sudan entirely. Given China’s economic oil interests in Sudan discussed earlier, it seems that China needed to do this so that such resource security interests and its influence would not be compromised in both the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS).

The activity reports of 25 June 2007 and 19 July 2007 exhibit China’s framing of itself as having a ‘constructive’ role in helping
Sudan alleviate the Darfur crisis and attributes this influence especially to Khartoum’s acceptance of UNAMID in 2007 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China 2014; Large 2008b). This goes hand in hand with China’s larger objective of projecting itself as a great power concerned with humanitarian issues. However, as Large (2008b) argues, this involvement and influence is not undertaken by China purely for conflict resolution in Darfur, but in conjunction with overarching political and geostrategic goals. It could then be argued that China’s taking credit for Sudan’s acceptance of international intervention in addition to troop contribution helped it construct an image that opposed previous criticisms which suggested that it endorsed the humanitarian atrocities and violence in Darfur. Through enabling the involvement of UN peacekeeping operations UNMIS and UNAMID in Darfur, Large (2008b) explained that China was able to influence external powers to put pressure on Sudan so that it did not have to do so itself. Although China indeed contributed a considerable number of troops and financial support for UNAMID, (See Figure 1.2) as Amnesty International (2009) outlined, this was not enough to create effective peacekeeping in Darfur as China did not make any following pledges to contribute despite its ability to support the peacekeeping operation through, for example, provision of infantry battalions or air transport units. Thus China seems to have operated in a way that decreased its direct involvement in Sudanese internal affairs, especially concerning the humanitarian issues attributed to the Darfur crisis; at the same time, it assured the maintenance of its economic benefits from the whole of Sudan, encompassing both the GoS and GoSS (Sun 2020). In this regard, China’s influence on Sudan in the form of economic support undermined the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping efforts towards the Darfur crisis to a considerable degree.

**China’s Later Role in Sudan and South Sudan**

In the following years, China continued to project a contradictory role in the Darfur Crisis despite ongoing international criticism of its relationship with the Government of Sudan (Chun & Kemple-Hardy 2015). Chun and Kemple-Hardy particularly cite China’s support for the GoS upon Al-Bashir’s indictment by the International Criminal Court in 2009 and the China-Sudan trade volume peaking at $11.5 billion in 2011. Chun and Kemple-Hardy argue that China anticipated and made preparations for the independence of South Sudan right after the signing of the CPA in 2005. While continuing to project proactive support towards the GoS, China simultaneously started building rapport with South Sudan, even establishing a consulate in Juba in 2008. A rationalisation for from an economic standpoint is that “a majority of the oil lies within
South Sudanese territory and the GoSS receives 98% of its revenue from oil” (Francis et al. 2012, p. 2). In the face of an oil impasse between China, the GoS, and newly independent GoSS in 2011, China started to focus on development in South Sudan (Chun & Kemple-Hardy 2015; Anthony & Hengkun 2014; Francis et al. 2012). When civil war broke out in South Sudan in 2013, China again claimed a constructive role in the issue while maintaining its established strong bilateral economic relations with the new nation (Chun & Kemple-Hardy 2015).

**Conclusion**

In the following years, China continued to project a contradictory role in the Darfu China’s role in the Darfur conflict is definitely a complex one, especially when recognising the duality of its actions based on diverse interests and objectives as a member of the P5 or great power in the international arena, and as a state that maintains strong economic and political ties with Sudan. In the case of the Darfur conflict between 2004-2007, China exerted influence on Sudan that aimed to sustain a friendship with Khartoum while simultaneously building rapport with South Sudan and the international arena as an actor that respects humanitarianism. Encouraging Sudan to accept the help of UN peacekeeping missions and directly contributing troops to them did not, however, assist peace and decreased violence in Darfur within the specified timeframe, as observed by scholars in the following years of the crisis. Its economic ties and influence in Sudan undermined the UN peacekeeping mission in Darfur during the foundational period to a considerable degree, albeit without discounting the effects of other plausible factors. While the contribution of troops and maintaining a constructive role on the matter suggested influence to Khartoum that would effectively pressure the latter to stop aggressive policies and perhaps halt the atrocities being committed within the Darfur crisis, China’s continued arms trade with Sudan and the constrictions caused by its grander economic objectives—such as getting a hold of Sudanese and African oil reserves and dominating economic developmental projects in the state—rendered such efforts and contributions towards peacekeeping contradictory. This observation of China’s contradictory role in the Darfur Crisis between 2004-2007 therefore sets a precedent for its role in Sudan and South Sudan in the following years. China’s prioritisation of its economic objectives and its corresponding economic influence in Sudan thus arguably goes well beyond the foundational period of the crisis, covered above, as it continued to fine tune its actions and policies in accordance to its national economic interests while offsetting international criticism with proactive involvement in the UN as a member of the P5.
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