

The London School of Economics and Political Science

*Chinese Foreign Policy in the 'Going Out' Era: Confronting
Challenges and 'Adaptive Learning' in the Case of China-
Sudan and South Sudan Relations*

Laura Barber

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Relations of the London School of Economics for the
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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to understand change within China's foreign policy under a 'Going Out' strategy in Sudan and South Sudan between 1993 and 2013. China has traditionally viewed the Sudanese and African context more generally as having a wholly positive impact on its interests. However, in the Sudan case, the insertion of China's leading National Oil Company into the Sudanese political economy from the mid-1990s has meant that Sudan's internal situation has negatively affected China's interests and, in turn, impacted on its foreign policy.

Drawing from 'learning' theory within International Relations' sub-field of Foreign Policy Analysis, this thesis develops a concept of negative experiential 'adaptive learning' to explain change within this case study. It firstly argues that from 2005 China tactically adapted its foreign policy approach in response to challenges that emerged along the trajectory of engagement. Secondly, China's foreign policy implementing institutions collectively learnt the specific lesson that local conflict dynamics in the Sudans could negatively affect Chinese interests, and also learnt the limitations within China's foreign policy approach.

This research finds that throughout the period of change between 2005 and 2011, China's diplomacy remained predominately reactive and defensive. However, since 2012 China began to develop a more assertive foreign policy approach vis-à-vis the long-term resolution of Sudanese conflicts. This has been underpinned by the gradual learning of broader lessons regarding China's traditional understanding of the nature of Sudanese conflicts and its peace and security role therein.

Overall, this thesis aims to provide an in-depth holistic analysis of the evolution of China's contemporary foreign policy towards Sudan and South Sudan. A specific contribution to the literature has been to develop the concept of 'adaptive learning', which can be utilised across other case studies to broaden our understanding of Chinese foreign policy towards Africa in the 'Going Out' era.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures, Tables and Diagrams	8
Selected Acronyms and Abbreviations	10
Chapter 1. Introduction	12
1.1. Rationale and Hypothesis.....	12
1.2. Situating the Research	17
1.2.1. The evolving debate on China’s rise	17
1.2.2. Energy (in)security and the ‘Going Out’ strategy in Africa	21
1.2.3. Literature review	27
1.3. Theoretical Framework: Foreign Policy Analysis and Learning.....	36
1.3.1. Theoretical perspectives on change in Chinese foreign policy.....	36
1.3.2. Conceptualising learning in foreign policy analysis.....	42
1.3.3. Governmental-institutional level collective learning	48
1.4. China’s Foreign Policy Belief System and Adaptive Learning	58
1.4.1. Continuity of China’s fundamental and strategic beliefs	58
1.4.2. Adaptation at the tactical level	62
1.4.3. Lesson Learning: The Sudanese context and its impact on China	73
1.5. Methodology	77
1.5.1. A single-case study and its justification	77
1.5.2. Methodological approach.....	79
1.5.3. Structure of the thesis	85
Chapter 2. From Ideology to Oil: The Evolution of China-Africa Relations and the Case of Sudan	87
2.1. Historical Background of China’s Foreign Policy towards Africa	88
2.1.1. Ideology and Principles: Mao and the Third World (1949-1977).....	89
2.1.2. Economic pragmatism: The reform period (1978-1999)	91
2.2. China-Sudan Relations ‘Before and After Oil’ (1956-2004)	98
2.2.1. After independence: principles and pragmatism.....	98
2.2.2. The entrance of CNPC in the context of civil war (1993-1999)	102
2.2.3. Early signs of a backlash (1999-2001).....	112
2.2.4. Challenges to the consolidation of Chinese interests (2002-2004)	118
2.3. Chapter conclusions	134
Chapter 3. Intervention and Conflict Mediation: From Darfur to the Independence of South Sudan	137
3.1. Darfur crisis: limited coordination to ‘constructive mediation’ (2005-2008).....	138
3.1.1. Support for the AU and ‘limited coordination’ with the international community (January-March 2005).....	138

3.1.2. Tentative support for the UN and ‘active co-ordination’ with the international community (September 2005-July 2006)	141
3.1.3. Direct involvement: persuading Khartoum to accept a UNPK force (August 2006-April 2007)	148
3.1.4. The ‘Genocide Olympics’ campaign: China’s public diplomacy (May-December 2007)	155
3.1.5. China’s ‘constructive mediation’ and mixed response to the ICC (January 2008-January 2009).....	160
3.2. An evolving mediation role in Sudan-South Sudan tensions (2005-2013)	166
3.2.1. Implementing the CPA and China’s pre-referendum diplomacy (2005-2011)	166
3.2.2. North-south border dispute on the eve of independence (June 2011).....	168
3.2.3. Crisis management after independence: utilising China’s economic leverage (2011-2013)	170
3.3. Intra-state mediation in South Sudan: A ‘new chapter’ in China’s foreign policy (December 2013).....	180
3.4. Chapter conclusions	183

Chapter 4. Navigating the Internal Politics of Southern Secession & the ‘Containment’ of CNPC in Sudan..... 186

4.1. The CPA: Adapting to ‘one country, two systems’ (2005-2007)	187
4.1.1. ‘Making unity attractive’ and adapting to new political realities.....	187
4.1.2. Adjusting to emerging cracks in the implementation of the CPA and regional insecurity.....	191
4.2. Containing CNPC in Sudan and adjusting to the failure to ‘make unity attractive’ (2007-2009).....	194
4.2.1. Challenging China’s national interests and heightened attacks on CNPC: regulating NOCs whilst protecting oil interests in Sudan.....	194
4.2.2. CNPC’s ‘corporate diplomacy’ and China establishes a consulate in Juba	201
4.3. Responding to challenges before and after independence (2011-2013)	208
4.3.1. Between the referendum and independence: CNPC takes the lead	208
4.3.2. After independence: a delicate balancing act and the protection of Chinese interests in South Sudan.....	211
4.4. Chapter conclusions	227

Chapter 5. Specific Lesson Learning in China’s Sudan and South Sudan Relations231

5.1. Direct lesson: The impact of domestic instability in Sudan on China’s interests	232
5.1.1. Wider political interests: improving China’s international image.....	232
5.1.2 Chinese interests on the ground: the primacy of investment protection.....	245
5.2. Towards an assertive foreign policy approach	262
5.3. Chapter conclusions	268

Chapter 6. Broader Lesson Learning and China’s Evolving Peace and Security Role in the Sudans	273
6.1. Broader lessons: learning about Sudanese conflicts.....	274
6.1.1. The role of the Sudanese state and the issue of governance.....	274
6.1.2. Viewing conflict holistically.....	278
6.1.3. The role of the US and mutual interests with China.....	280
6.2. New contours of the ‘Going Out’ strategy: China’s evolving peace and security role in the Sudans.....	283
6.2.1. Intervention with Chinese characteristics and China’s ‘constructive mediation’ role (2005-2011).....	284
6.2.2. Coercion with Chinese characteristics? (2012-2013)	288
6.3. Chapter conclusion	298
Chapter 7. Conclusion	303
7.1. Linking empirical findings with theoretical framework.....	305
7.2. Wider implications, future trends and space for further research	316
Bibliography.....	320

LIST OF FIGURES, TABLES AND DIAGRAMS

Figure 1.1. China's oil production and consumption 1993-2013 (mb/d)	22
Figure 1.2. Regional distribution of Chinese overseas oil investment, 1992-2009	25
Figure 1.3. World oil reserves by region, 2009	26
Table 1.1. China's top ten African trading partners by imports, 2007... ..	26
Figure 1.4. China's top imports from Africa, 1996	27
Figure 1.5. China's top imports from Africa, 2006	27
Diagram 1.1. Direct lesson learning process in China's Sudan engagement	46
Diagram 1.2. China's foreign policy towards Africa under the 'Going Out' strategy	51
Diagram 1.3. CNPC's overseas operations	53
Diagram 1.4. CNPC's relationship with the Chinese party-state	55
Diagram 1. 5. Chinese think tanks and research institutes	57
Table 1.2. China's foreign policy belief system in the 'Going Out' era	59
Figure 2.1. Regional shares of China's crude oil imports, 1994 and 2000 (%)	95
Table 2.1. Top African crude oil sources for China, 2000	95
Figure 2.2. Overseas liquid production of China's NOCs, 2007 (%)	96
Figure 2.3. China's crude oil imports by sources, 2011 (%)	97
Figure 2.4. Sudan's civil war and the location of oil concession blocks	112
Figure 2.5. Contribution of oil and non-oil sectors to Sudan's exports, 1997-2010 (%)	116
Figure 2.6. China's imports of Sudanese oil (thousand b/d)	116
Table 2.2. Sudan's oil blocks in which Chinese NOCs are stakeholders, 2002	117

Table 2.3. China's participation in the UN Security Council regarding Sudan, 2004	128
Table 3.1. China's participation in the UN Security Council regarding Sudan, 2005	139
Table 3.2. China's participation in the UN Security Council regarding Sudan, 2006-2007	146
Table 3.3. Meetings of high-level Chinese officials with Sudanese government representatives regarding Darfur, 2005-2008	157
Table 3.4. Visits by high-level Chinese officials to Sudan and South Sudan, 2011-2012.....	175
Figure 4.1. CNPC's oil exploration projects in Sudan, 2007.....	189
Figure 4.2. China's Imports of Sudanese oil (b/d), 2005-2011	196
Table 4.1. Sudan's exports to China by value (\$ million) and percentage of Sudan's total trade, 2005-2010	199
Figure 4.3. China's crude oil imports by source, 2008	199
Figure 4.4. Sudan's oil concession blocks and the north-south boundary, 2010.....	205
Table 4.2. Key events in the evolution of China-GoSS relations, 2005-2010	206
Figure 4.6. Insecurity in Sudan and South Sudan, 2012	221

SELECTED ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AMIS	African Union Mission in Sudan
AU	African Union
AUHIP	African Union High-Level Implementation Panel
AUPSC	African Union Peace and Security Council
b/d	Barrels per day
BP	British Petroleum
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
CFP	Chinese Foreign Policy
CICIR	Chinese Institutes for Contemporary International Relations
CIIS	China Institutes for International Studies
CNOOC	China National Offshore Oil Corporation
CNPC	China National Petroleum Corporation
CNPCI	China National Petroleum Corporation International
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPCID	Communist Party of China International Department
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
ECC	Economic and Commercial Counsellor
ECOS	European Coalition on Oil in Sudan
EIA	Energy Information Administration
EPSA	Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement
FOCAC	Forum on China-Africa Cooperation
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
GoNU	Government of National Unity
EXIM	China Export-Import Bank
GoS	Government of Sudan
GoSS	Government of South Sudan
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICG	International Crisis Group
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority for Development

INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IOC	International Oil Company
JEM	Justice and Inequality Movement
MEM	Ministry of Energy and Mining, South Sudan
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China
MND	Ministry of National Defence, China
MOD	Ministry of Defence, South Sudan
MOFCOM	Ministry of Commerce, China
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission
NCP	National Congress Party
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NOC	National Oil Company
ODI	Overseas Direct Investment
PRC	People's Republic of China
UN	United Nations
UNAMID	African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNMIS	United Nations Mission in Sudan
US	United States of America
RSS	Republic of South Sudan
SAF	Sudan Air Force
SDT	Sudan Divestment Taskforce
SOE	State-Owned Enterprise
SIIS	Shanghai Institute for International Studies
Sinopec	China Petrochemical Corporation (Sinopec Group)
Sinosure	China Export and Credit Insurance Corporation
SLA	Sudan Liberation Army
SPLA/M	Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement
TA	Transitional Agreement
WB	World Bank

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

*Fēng xiàng zhuàn biàn shí,
yǒu rén zhú qiáng, yǒu rén zào fēng chē.
(When the winds of change blow,
some build walls, others build windmills.)*
~ Chinese proverb

1.1. Rationale and Hypothesis

Since the start of the 21st century, the People's Republic of China (PRC)¹ has entered a new phase in the evolution of the country's role as a fast-rising world power. With the proclamation of an official 'Going Out' strategy under the 10th 5-year plan (2001-2005) the Chinese central government encouraged its reformed State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) to expand their resource seeking activities abroad to fuel China's continued economic growth; a move that has significantly deepened China's integration into the global political economy. Whilst China's SOEs have been actively seeking resources of every kind, the fact that China became a net importer of oil in 1993 meant that it was Chinese National Oil Companies (NOCs) that were the SOEs placed at the forefront of China's 'Going Out' strategy.

Due to their relative inexperience of operating within international markets and their inability to compete with the much more technically advanced corporations of the developed world, Chinese NOCs adopted high-risk strategies of going into 'troubled zones' of resource-rich countries across the developing world. Their successful entrance into a host of Africa's oil industries from Sudan and Angola, to Nigeria and Gabon, has been facilitated through a Chinese government-led cultivation of elite-based ties and 'win-win' 'strategic partnerships' within which to offer bold investment and aid packages and soft loans in exchange for energy concessions. Fundamentally, the successful entrance of Chinese NOCs into many African petro-states and 'pariah regimes' such as Sudan has been possible as a result of China's adherence to the

¹ Hereafter referred to as 'China' or 'Beijing'

principles of respecting state sovereignty and 'non-interference' in other states' internal affairs that have defined the core of China's foreign policy approach since the 1950s.

Along the trajectory of its 'Going Out' strategy, China's commercial interests have become increasingly embedded within the political economies of the African states that had been targeted sites for Chinese investment from the early stages of this strategy. China has begun to face considerable challenges to consolidating and protecting its political and economic investments in host environments mired by socio-political instability; problems that Western multinationals and governments have long had to grapple with in the uncertain terrain of Africa's resource-rich states. This emerging challenge has become all the more acute in the context of the so-called 'Arab Spring', a wave of revolutionary movements and civil wars that rippled across North Africa and the Middle East from late 2010. In addition, China's ties with African petro-states and 'pariah regimes' have increasingly become a source of international controversy within China's broader foreign policy.

Despite many broad-brush studies within the literature outlining the challenges that China now faces on the continent, as yet there has been a lack of in-depth research assessing how China is responding to such a myriad of challenges and the potential impact upon China's foreign policy. The candidate asserts that a historical and holistic analysis of the case study of China's relations with Sudan can contribute considerably to our understanding of these issues.

China's commercial oil-based relations with Sudan in fact predate the proclamation of an official 'Going Out' policy in 2001 and the widespread attention that China's 'foray' across the continent has more recently attracted within the international community. This was particularly following the third Forum of China and Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) held in Beijing in November 2006, which proclaimed the establishment of a "new type of strategic partnership" between China and Africa featuring political equality and mutual trust and economic win-win cooperation (FOCAC, 2006). Indeed, since formal Sino-Sudanese state ties developed from the mid-1990s with the initial establishment of oil cooperation between the Khartoum government and

China's leading NOC, the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), Chinese economic interests have become increasingly embedded in Sudan's political economy.

Sudan has become "the single most controversial relation in China's recent, most visible and potentially consequential rise in Africa" (Large, 2009, p.626). It has been widely documented that the key role played by the Chinese diplomats in influencing the Khartoum government to accept the deployment of a joint UN-AU peacekeeping force in Darfur in 2007 represents a sharp departure from China's traditionally strict adherence to a 'non-interference' approach. There has, however, been a lack of theoretically informed analyses of China's shifting position in this case or, moreover, holistic studies that place the Darfur crisis in the wider context of change in China's Sudan policy.

Less documented in the literature is an analysis of shifts in China's Sudan policy as Beijing began to establish 'quasi-diplomatic' ties with the semi-autonomous Government of South Sudan (GoSS), signalling a shift in China's engagement that had traditionally been conducted exclusively with Khartoum's ruling elites within a framework of a strict adherence to Sudanese state sovereignty. Moreover, following southern secession in July 2011 and the establishment of the independent Republic of South Sudan (RSS), where the majority of CNPC's Sudanese oil interests were now located, Beijing faced the challenge of implementing 'equal' relations with two increasingly antagonistic sovereign states whose disputes eventually led to the shutdown of South Sudanese oil production and exports in January 2012. In this fragile politico-economic context, Chinese diplomats and CNPC became increasingly involved in the dynamics of the Khartoum-Juba mediation efforts; a conflict resolution role that only deepened as the new South Sudanese nation descended towards civil war in late 2013.

This thesis is driven by the core research question: *how should we understand changes within China's foreign policy towards Sudan and South Sudan along the trajectory of engagement between 1993 and 2013?* It is argued that traditional International Relations (IR) theories are unable to sufficiently account for change within Chinese foreign policy. This thesis will instead adopt a 'middle

range' theory construct as developed within IR's subfield of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) and, in particular, it will utilise the tool of 'learning' theory within FPA.

A significant contribution to the literature here will be to uncover how China may be undergoing a process of 'negative learning' from its *own* experiences as a result of a 'Going Out' strategy that has rapidly intensified China's global integration, rather than 'positive' social learning, which is arguably over-emphasised in the constructivist socialisation literature on change in China's foreign policy. In addition, the research will contribute towards the literature on learning in FPA through developing the concept of 'adaptive learning' to explain change in Chinese foreign policy.

Within the framework of a hierarchical 'belief system' learning model, it is asserted that change and learning in this case study are unlikely to have occurred at the fundamental or strategic levels of China's foreign policy belief system. China's fundamental foreign policy beliefs, underpinned by an adherence to the principle of Westphalian state sovereignty, have been maintained under Hu Jintao's leadership and further strengthened since the transition of power to President Xi Jinping after 2012. Moreover, it has been argued China's convergence with something akin to the Western conditional approach towards sovereignty "would mark a sea change in Chinese policy that simply does not seem forthcoming" (Soares de Oliveria, 2008, p.106).

Additionally, in light of ongoing strategic beliefs pertaining to a preoccupation with energy self-reliance, China's goal of securing continued access to resources abroad under the 'Going Out' strategy is also unlikely to have changed. Given the salience of Chinese foreign policy beliefs at the fundamental and strategic levels, it is asserted here that learning within the Sudan case most likely to occur predominantly at the tactical level. Against this backdrop, the hypothesis that will be tested in this thesis is as follows:

It is argued that change in Chinese foreign policy towards Sudan and South Sudan can be explained within a conceptual framework of negative experiential 'adaptive learning'. Firstly, China's policy approach was adapted at the 'tactical'

level of its foreign policy 'belief system' in response to emerging challenges within the Sudanese context during the phase of foreign policy implementation. Secondly, these adaptations can be explained as a result of specific 'institutional-governmental' collective learning of negative lessons.

Along the trajectory of the adaptation process, a series of negative lessons were presented to Chinese foreign policy implementing institutions in the form of unexpected 'crisis points', which sparked internal debates regarding negative impacts of Sudan's local situation specifically on Chinese interests and, also the limitations within China's foreign policy approach as it sought to protect these interests. The learning of these lessons then fed back into the adaptation process in the form of changes to China's tactical policy approach in practice.

In addition, it is argued that a series of broader lessons have been gradually learnt along the trajectory of China's experience in Sudan and South Sudan, reflecting broader learning by Chinese foreign policy implementers about Sudanese conflicts and China's peace and security role therein.

The candidate asserts that it is possible to draw out 'negative learning' of both specific and broader lessons if a causal link between negative feedback in the external Sudanese environment, shifting debates within governmental institutions, and policy changes in practice can be detected.

In essence, China's tactical foreign policy approach and perceptions of the Sudanese context during the early stages of the 'Going Out' strategy were endogenously derived. It is argued here that the adaptations to this approach in practice represent how China's policies have increasingly been informed by the negative lessons that have been learnt from experience in the exogenous Sudanese environment.

This thesis will contribute to the literature on China-Sudan relations, and China's Africa relations more generally, through providing an in-depth holistic case study drawing out the processes of change and learning within China's Sudan relationship, which may then be compared across other case studies to

broaden our understanding of the evolution of Chinese foreign policy towards Africa.

It will also contribute more broadly towards the literature on contemporary Chinese foreign policy as this case study analysis illuminates the process whereby China's foreign policy is being reformulated as a result of its experiences abroad in the 'Going Out' era.

1.2. Situating the Research

1.2.1. The evolving debate on China's rise

China's rise as a key economic and trade power in the international arena has emerged as the most significant global shift since the end of the Cold War. Since opening up to foreign trade and investment and implementing free market reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, China has been among the world's fastest growing economies, with real annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth averaging nearly 10% over the past three decades. Over the past decade, the emergence of China's growing economic might has fuelled a significant, and evolving, debate in both China and the West regarding the impact of this global phenomena on the international system, and specifically on US global supremacy.

During the mid-1990s, a segment of the United States (US) foreign policy elite asserted that China represented an emerging challenge to American interests in Asia (Roy, 1994), while some Western academics downplayed China's military and political might in the global arena and questioned whether China's rapid economic growth would lead to its ascendancy to superpower status (Segal, 1999). In the early 21st century, many International Relations (IR) scholars in the West increasingly began to debate whether China could be characterized as a status quo or revisionist power within the international system (Mearsheimer, 2006; Johnston 2003).

Aware of such debates in the West, from the early 2000's China began attempting to allay Western fears regarding the implications of its economic rise. Chinese officials and scholars in the mainstream continued to view the US as the dominant power in Asian and world affairs, and following the conceptualisation of China as a 'strategic competitor' by the US administration of George W. Bush in 2003 there was growing concern that the US was attempting to 'contain' and undermine China's continued domestic development (Economy, 2003). In what has been referred to as Chinese 'slogan diplomacy' (Shambaugh, 2013, p.217), in 2002 Zheng Bijian, a leading Communist Party of China (CPC) theorist, coined a new term "peaceful rise" (*heping jueqi* 和平崛起) to reassure the outside world about China's growing power and global presence (Zheng, 2005).

By 2005, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) became uncomfortable with the term "rise" which was viewed as inconsistent with Deng Xiaoping's guiding principle to "bide time and keep a low profile" (*taoguang yanghui* 韬光养晦), and the official terminology of "peaceful development" (*heping fazhan* 和平发展) was authorised (Glaser and Medeiros, 2007). In addition, President Hu Jintao's concepts of the "harmonious society" (*hexie shehui* 和谐社会), and its foreign policy alter ego "harmonious world" (*hexie shijie* 和谐世界) became the defining discourse of the CPC during the early years under his leadership. According to Zheng and Tok, Beijing was attempting to synchronize its internal and external outlooks as it began to focus on addressing domestic social, economic and environmental issues resulting from China's rapid economic growth; a goal which required a stable international environment (Zheng and Tok, 2007).

Within this context, Goldsmith concluded in 2005 that while Beijing's rhetoric of condemning American hegemony and power politics suggested the possibility of a latent revisionist agenda, in practice China's foreign policy behavior continued to conform closely to that typical of a status quo state, "especially as Beijing works hard to be welcomed as a responsible member of the existing international community whose acceptance is crucial to China's continued modernisation" (Goldstein, 2005, p.213).

However, as became apparent following the global financial crisis of 2008, China's international behavior has become increasingly assertive (Wang, 2011, p.68). Indeed, this was displayed particularly within China's strong reactions to regional events since 2010, particularly enhanced US-South Korea military ties and Japanese sovereignty claims over a group of islands in the East China Sea. In this context, certain scholars in the West argued that China was in fact becoming a "revolutionary power" seeking to remake the rules of the game within the international system (Economy, 2010). Concerned that a newly assertive China was becoming a destabilising force, the Obama administration in the US initiated in 2010 a 'Asia pivot', a shift in strategy aimed at bolstering the US defence ties with countries throughout the region and expanding the US naval presence there.

However, some US and Chinese scholars assert that Beijing's recently counterproductive policies toward its neighbors and the US were better understood as "reactive and conservative rather than assertive and innovative" (Christensen, 2011, p. 54). Indeed, it is apparent that although Chinese scholars assert a strong degree of confidence in the inevitability of China's rise, many have questioned some of Beijing's more assertive foreign policy choices since 2010, and warned against unintentionally causing other countries to form a "united front" against China, whilst advocating a real but "restrained and rational" competition with the United States (Godemont, 2011, p.5).

Fundamentally, many scholars in both the West and China argue that Beijing's narrowly defined 'core interests' and lack of a broad 'grand strategy', continue to limit China's global role (Wang, 2011). Outlining China's core interests, Hu Jintao stated in 2009 that China's diplomacy must "safeguard the interests of sovereignty, security, and development" (cited in: Wang, 2011, p.71).

Fenby (2012) argues that this is "hardly a target befitting of a true superpower", nor does it suggest, "how China will modify a world shaped by US leadership" (p.263). Zhao (2013) has asserted that Beijing's assertiveness in defending its core interests "is not accompanied by a broad vision as a rising global power, making China often reluctant to shoulder greater international responsibilities" (p.101).

Within this context, Shambaugh (2013) has found that, “with the exception of sovereignty issues over which China is hyper-vigilant and diplomatically active”, Chinese diplomacy continues to be characterised as risk averse and passive and, as a “partial power”, China is “not seen to be actively influencing world affairs” (p.49). Moreover, China is said to be experiencing an “international identity crisis” as, although domestic discourse increasingly recognises that China is a major global, or at least regional, power, official government rhetoric continues to associate China’s capacities and identity with the developing world. Such competing global identities are reflected within China’s contradictory foreign policy actions, which can oscillate between that of a “responsible engaged power” and “belligerent” one, which are “indicative of conflicted internal debates and the different directions China is pulled internationally” (Shambaugh, 2013, p.14).

Whilst such debates regarding the evolution of China’s rise on the global stage are beyond the scope of this thesis, it nevertheless provides an important backdrop to this case study of China’s Africa relations. As it will be shown here, the negative response in the West to China’s Sudan engagement increasingly began to permeate the Sudanese context and ‘internationalise’ China’s role therein. It is argued that such external perceptions constituted a significant challenge for China within its Sudan relations particularly from 2005, as Beijing sought to display its credentials as a ‘responsible power’ in the Sudanese context.

Moreover, many of the challenges identified above regarding the tension between China’s principles, interests and identities certainly constitute the broad parameters of change within Chinese foreign policy that will be analysed within the case of China’s Sudan relations. This thesis will offer a significant contribution to this literature by providing a case study of how China’s experiences abroad in the ‘Going Out’ era are driving China to reformulate its foreign policy in response to challenges in the exogenous environment.

1.2.2. Energy (in)security and the ‘Going Out’ strategy in Africa

This thesis is situated within the context of China’s ‘Going Out’ strategy in Africa, under which Chinese NOCs have actively sought to acquire oil investments in African petro-states, with the broad aim of enhancing China’s energy security.

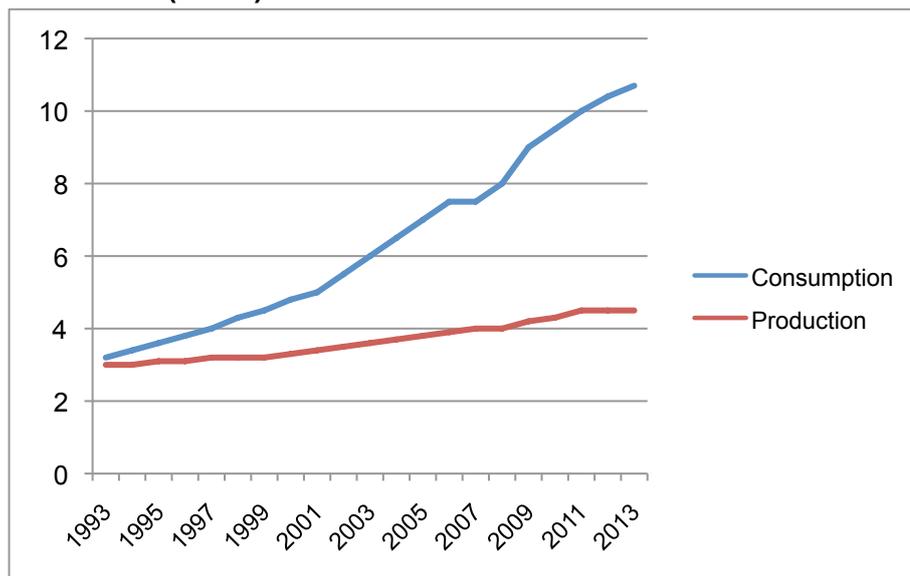
China’s rapid economic growth and urbanising population over the past two decades has led to rising domestic demand for energy. Between 2000-2009 China’s energy consumption more than doubled its expansion rate of 27% between 1990 and 1999, with fossil fuels, namely coal, natural gas, and oil, representing 93% of China’s primary energy consumption in 2009 (BP, 2010).

While China’s vast coal reserves will continue to provide a considerable bulk of its energy in the foreseeable future, the Chinese government plans to cap coal use to below 65% of total primary energy consumption by 2017 in an effort to reduce heavy air pollution (EIA, 2014). By 2011 oil was the second-largest source of total energy consumption, accounting for 18%, however China’s oil demand is predicted to more than double by 2030 to over 16 million barrels per day (mb/d) (Downs, 2000, p.5).

Although domestic oil output has been on the rise, China’s energy insecurity emanates from the reality that the nation’s oil and natural gas supply is increasingly unable to satisfy demand (Downs, 2000, p.7). In this context, China has become increasingly dependent on foreign oil, and went from being a net exporter to a net importer of oil in 1993.

The chart below (figure 1.1.) indicates that China’s oil consumption reached 10.7 mb/d in 2013, however, as it only produced 4.5 mb/d domestically the same year, China’s average net total oil imports reached 6.2 mb/d. In part due to China’s rising consumption, the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) projects that China will surpass the US as the world’s largest net oil importer by the end of 2014 (EIA, 2014).

Figure 1.1. China's oil production and consumption 1993-2013 (mb/d)



Source: Author, compiled from: US Energy Information Administration (EIA), 2014, p. 8.

Concerns within China's leadership regarding energy (in)security and access to oil supplies first surfaced during the era of President Jiang Zemin in the 1990s, when Chinese state energy companies were encouraged to expand investment in domestic oil production capacity. There were initial attempts to address the security of international oil supplies from the early 1990s, largely due to Chinese NOCs urging the government to support their initial overseas quest for oil and gas assets during this period (Meidan et al., 2009, p.603). The NOCs initial decision to search for oil abroad during their first phase of international expansion (1993-2000) resulted not only from rising consumption and declining production, but also domestic structural restraints within China's oil industry.

During the 1980s, the Chinese government created three large oil companies, each in charge of an industry sector: the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), controlled most of the offshore oil business; the China National Petrochemical Corporation (Sinopec), was responsible for refining and marketing; and the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), created from the Ministry of Petroleum Industry in 1988, was responsible for exploration and production onshore and in the shallow offshore areas (Lieberthal and Oksenberg, 1988). As a provider of more than 90% of the petroleum supply for the Chinese economy in the early 1990s, CNPC was hit hardest by a series of policy-induced problems confronting the country's petroleum economy. Indeed,

the downward pressure on domestic petroleum prices imposed by the central government resulted in heavy losses for CNPC, leaving the company with limited funds for investment in domestic exploration activities at a time when its petroleum reserves were depleting (Bo, 2010, p.33).

Within this context, the head of CNPC, Wang Tao, asserted in February 1991 a new strategy whereby the company would expand foreign economic and technical cooperation, open up to the international market, and grow China's petroleum industry through participating in international competition (Bo, 2010, pp.37-38). Largely because of their limited funds and lack of experience in overseas exploration and production, the company focused on purchasing small assets and signing production-sharing contracts in older oilfields, such as in Canada and Thailand in 1992 and Peru in 1993 (Downs, 2000, pp.14-15). CNPC's first purchases of pre-explored oil concessions in Sudan in 1996-7 were the first of its kind in Africa.

CNPC's strategy of obtaining such 'equity oil' stakes abroad, whereby the company gained ownership over the oil it produced at the source, was broadly supported by the government not only because it sought to address China's growing oil demand, but also because it was in line with its leaderships' strong historical preference for energy self-reliance since the Maoist period (Downs, 2000, p.5). Indeed, the Chinese government has long been suspicious of foreign powers' capacity to manipulate the international oil market, and it was thought a policy of self-reliance would shelter the Chinese economy from the impact of crises within in the international market (Raine, 2009, p.149).

Nevertheless, energy security and overseas oil supplies did not reach the Chinese governments' international agenda until the era of President Hu Jintao during the 2000s. Zweig and Bi asserted that Beijing's access to foreign resources became increasingly necessary not only for continued economic growth but also for the survival of the CPC regime because "growth is the cornerstone of China's social stability" and, as such, "an unprecedented need for resources is now driving China's foreign policy" (Zweig and Bi, 2005, p.25-26). With energy security being highlighted as essential for China to achieve its strategic goal of quadrupling its GDP from 2000 to 2020, an objective that was

reiterated in China's 2007 energy 'white paper', 'energy diplomacy' (*nengyuan waijiao* 能源外交) became a key component of Chinese foreign policy in the new century (Zhu, 2010, p.2).

As such, in addition to the objectives of promoting the 'one-China' policy to isolate Taiwan internationally and promoting China's 'peaceful development' to ensure a stable international environment as Beijing focused on domestic modernisation, China's 'new diplomacy' became increasingly motivated by the need to secure energy and commodity resources.

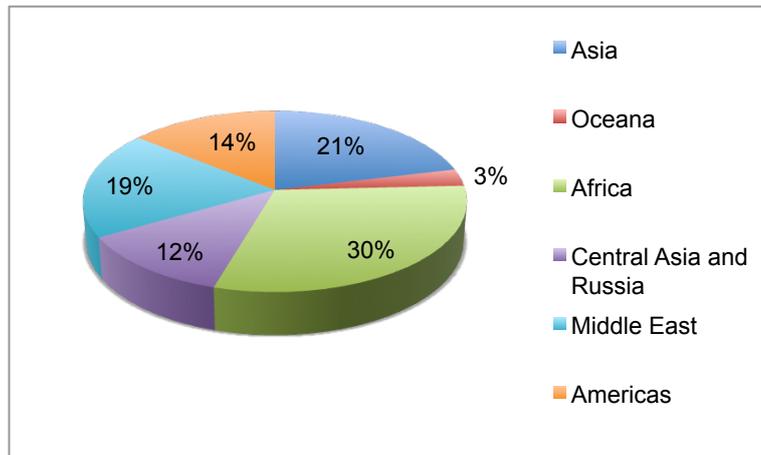
To achieve this new objective, China began to evolve its economic and diplomatic strategy beyond that of 'bringing in' (*yinjinlai* 引进来) that had prevailed during the early reform era after 1978, during which China enthusiastically attracted Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (Zhu, 2010, p.6). Under the Tenth Five-Year Plan in 2001, China moved to further deepen its integration into the international political economy at the start of the 21st century as the government laid down a 'Going Out' (*zou chuqu* 走出去) strategy for China's large SOEs (Zhu, 2001).

While a host of SOEs were encouraged to 'go out' in search of new markets for Chinese exports and investment, Chinese NOCs were at the forefront of the strategy and from the early 2000s they were encouraged to step up their efforts to seek energy deals across the world, and also to attain the experiences to become globally competitive corporations. This expansion was actively facilitated by the Chinese governments' emerging 'oil diplomacy' of offering foreign governments where NOCs sought to invest bold 'no-strings attached' aid, trade and investment packages (Taylor, 2006a). Chinese state-owned policy banks, namely China Export-Import (EXIM) Bank and the China Development Bank (CDB) have "actively helped build Chinese NOCs' war chest for global expansion" and, additionally, began aggressively pursuing 'loans-for-oil' deals in an attempt to secure long-term oil supplies (Bo, 2010, p.69).

In their expansion abroad, Chinese NOCs increasingly began to target countries across the developing world that were open to business with foreign companies, in contrast with the developed world where, particularly in the US,

'resource nationalism' and protectionism was viewed to be on the rise (Raine, 2009, p.38-39). Although Chinese NOCs have been actively seeking investment opportunities across the developing world (Eisenman et al., 2007), it is apparent that the African continent was at the forefront of their 'Going Out' strategy, constituting 30% of Chinese overseas oil investment between 1992 and 2009 (figure 1.2., below).

Figure 1. 2. Regional distribution of Chinese overseas oil investment, 1992-2009



Source: Author, compiled from: Bo, 2010, p. 65.

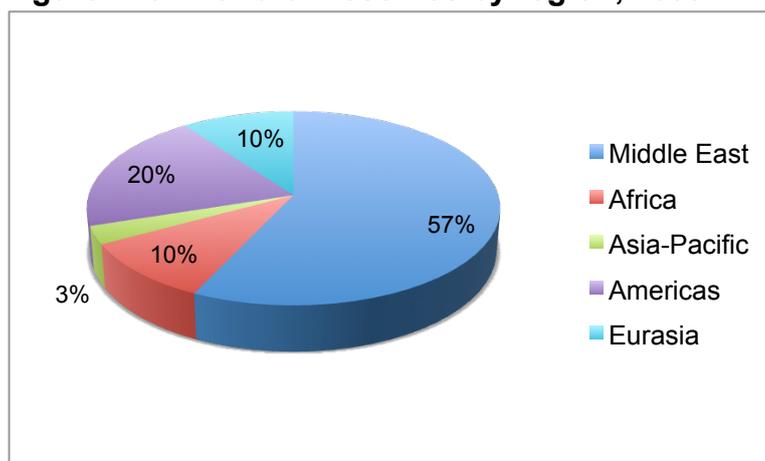
Jiang (2009) asserts that, given Africa's known reserves of energy resources, it was only natural that Chinese enterprises would view the continent as a "new frontier" (p.588). Although the Middle East contained 57% of the world's known oil reserves, compared with the lesser 10% in Africa (figure 1.3., below), US oil companies were already a major presence in the former during the early 2000s.

As Chinese NOCs lacked experience of operating abroad, African oil industries therefore represented an attractive environment where Chinese NOCs could win contracts and gain operating experience without competition or critical Western scrutiny (Raine, 2009, p.38).

While China-African trade more broadly increased dramatically over the next decade, increasing 681% between 2001 and 2007, the share of energy and raw materials in China's trade with individual African states has been the most significant (Jiang, 2009, p.590). Indeed, as revealed below in table 1.1., of China's top ten African trading partners in 2007 in terms of imports, six of those were Africa's major crude oil exporting nations. As detailed below (figure 1. 4.

and figure 1. 5.), China's imports of oil and petroleum products from Africa grew from 30% in 1996 to 80% in 2006.

Figure 1. 3. World oil reserves by region, 2009



Source: Author, compiled from: British Petroleum (BP), 2010, p. 6.

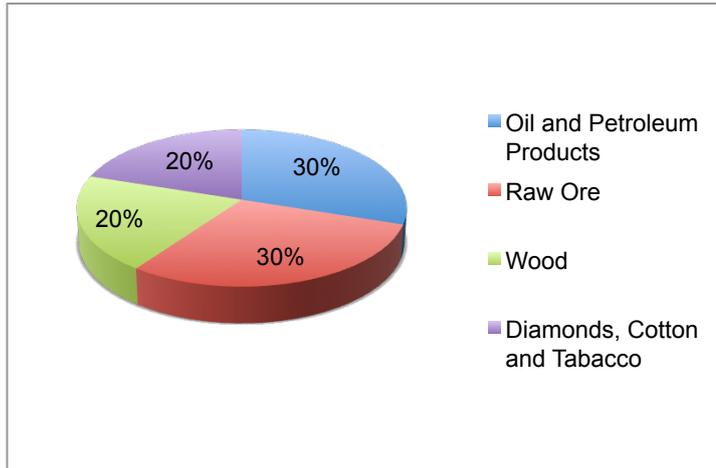
Table 1. 1. China's top ten African trading partners by imports, 2007

Country	Import trading volume	Crude oil exports to China	% of which is crude oil
Nigeria*	67,614,520	58,772,284	87
South Africa	64,026,608	1,840,120	3
Algeria*	54,352,312	33,622,776	62
Libya*	45,327,448	39,015,288	86
Angola*	39,450,972	37,410,180	95
Egypt*	21,702,180	2,043,906	9
Tunisia	15,165,396	0	0
Morocco	14,607,346	0	0
Equatorial Guinea*	9,343,970	8,029,102	86
Sudan*	8,336,882	7,729,674	93

Source: Jiang, 2009, p. 591.

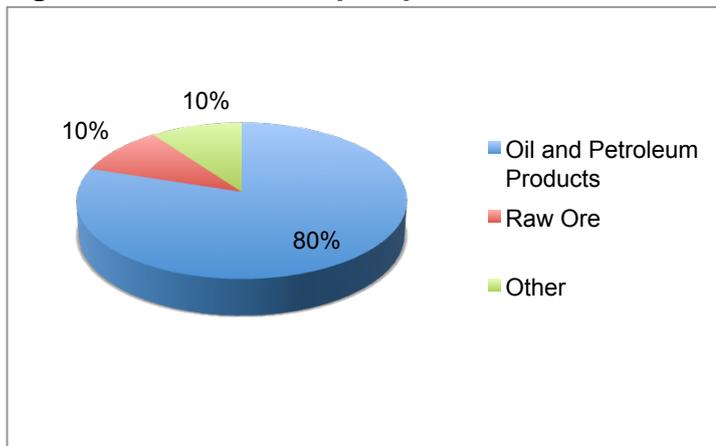
Notes: Unit is US\$ thousand. * denotes major crude oil exporting nations in Africa

Figure 1. 4. China's top imports from Africa, 1996



Source: Author, compiled from: World Trade Atlas data, 1996.

Figure 1. 5. China's top imports from Africa, 2006



Source: Author, compiled from: World Trade Atlas data, 2006

1. 2. 3. Literature review

a) *China-Africa relations*

During the 1990s there was relatively little attention paid in the West to China's re-emerging Africa relations more generally following a period of Chinese neglect of the continent during the 1980s (this re-emergence is further detailed in Chapter 2).² However, China's self-proclaimed 'Year of Africa' in 2006, culminating in the high-profile third Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, sparked widespread interest across Western media, academic and official circles. Indeed, a number of single and edited volume academic studies were published that sought to provide a condensed overview of China's contemporary

² One notable exception here is: Taylor (1998).

economic and political Africa relations (Alden, 2007; Manji and Marks, 2007; Alden et al., 2008; Broadman, 2007).

Within the African context, dedicated research programmes and institutes were established in South Africa to provide academic platforms exclusively for the study of the continents' growing relations with China.³ As it will be detailed later, the field of African studies more generally was only revitalised within China from the 1990s, however, emerging Africa-based research programmes within Chinese universities and think tanks have increasingly been focusing on the study of China-Africa relations.⁴

The emergence of a 'first wave' of literature on contemporary China-Africa relations within Western media, academic journals and government reports from 2006 have largely focused on China's potential impact on African development and Western efforts to promote good governance and human rights and American and European international oil companies' (IOCs) interests on the continent. One of the core debates has centered around the question of whether China was practicing 'neo-colonialism' in a 'new scramble' for African resources, or whether Chinese loans and investments have in fact opened new policy options and external partners for African leaders (Walsh, 2006; Frynas and Paulo 2007; Brautigam, 2009).

While such debates are beyond the scope of this thesis, they certainly provide a foundational background to some of the normative and strategic external criticisms it will be shown that China has faced in the context of its Sudan ties. However, this research can be placed within what can be termed the 'second wave' of literature on China-Africa relations that has emerged particularly after 2008. Academic research from this point has become increasingly more nuanced, drawing from a variety of disciplines and methodological approaches, and has stressed the need to disaggregate both 'China' and 'Africa' which should not be viewed as unitary entities (Taylor, 2009, pp.3-13).

³ Namely, the 'China Africa Project' at the South African Institute for International Affairs (SAIIA) in Johannesburg and the Centre for Chinese Studies at Stellenbosh University.

⁴ For example, at the Institute of West Asian and African Studies (IWAAS) at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), Center for West Asian and African Studies at the Shanghai Institute for International Studies (SIIS), and the Institute of African Studies at Zhejiang Normal University (IASZNU) is one of China's leading research institutes on China-Africa relations.

Scholars have highlighted how under the rubric of 'China' one can discern an emerging proliferation of state and private enterprises now implementing China's foreign economic policy in Africa (Alden and Hughes, 2009), and they have increasingly questioned the coherence of China's diplomatic strategy and the capacity of the central government to control the behaviour of actors pursuing their own commercial agendas overseas (Gill and Reilly, 2007). The Chinese central authorities have begun to experience a 'principal-agent' dilemma, particularly with regards to its NOC 'agents' operating in Africa, whereby Beijing cannot effectively monitor what the NOCs are asked to do abroad and hold them accountable.⁵

Indeed, although their 'going out' has been officially sanctioned and supported, it has become increasingly apparent that the growing commercial priorities of NOCs do not always accord with the Chinese government's broader strategic and political goals of ensuring energy security without damaging its key international strategic relationships; goals which the government is increasingly struggling to balance with ongoing support for the long-term development and global competitiveness of its NOCs (Raine, 2009, p.150).

While there has been a limited number of journal articles that have sought to look at the company and individual levels of analysis to assess the degree of central control and for different Chinese commercial actors operating on the African continent (Haglund, 2009), there has thus far been a lack of in-depth case studies charting and analysing the evolution of such complex relationships over time. This research will contribute to the literature through assessing the process whereby the Chinese government has sought to 'contain' CNPC's behaviour abroad, through both better regulating the company whilst increasingly seeking to protect CNPC's oil interests in the case of Sudan (which will be discussed in section 1.3.3., below).

In addition, in also asserting that analysis of 'Africa' itself must lend itself to diversity, China-Africa scholars are also revitalising 'African agency' within the

⁵For further discussion of the broad 'principal-agent' dilemma in China's Africa policy see: Alden and Large (2011), pp. 31-32. For further discussion of this dilemma in the specific context of the Chinese government's relationship with its NOCs abroad, see: Bo (2010), p. 6.

relationship and, most significantly for this thesis, the impact that different African resource-rich states are increasingly having upon China's foreign policy (Corkin, 2013). In 2008 Alden argued that too little attention in the literature had been spent on the effects that burgeoning ties with Africa were having on China, particularly African pariah and petro-states that have been prime recipients of China's economic largesse, and which "far from producing the expected greater sense of security" have come to "cause Beijing more trouble than any of its more conventional relations in Africa" (Alden, 2008).

Given the reality that one third of the world's civil wars take place in oil-producing states, Chinese NOCs have been increasingly exposed to the repercussions of internal resource-based conflicts within the African environment (Ross, 2008). Although Chinese companies are beginning to face threats that IOCs have long had to grapple with on the continent, China's energy security strategy whereby NOCs predominantly seek to buy equity oil from the source has heightened their exposure to such instability in recent years. Indeed, Chinese NOCs began to be targeted by rebels movements in a spate of attacks in Nigeria from April 2006, and Chinese oil workers were killed in Ethiopia in April 2007 and Sudan in February 2008 (Raine, 2009, p.144).

Throughout China's African engagement more broadly, Chinese commercial actors have begun to face resentment at the local level among African communities and civil society groups that threaten the development and consolidation of 'win-win' sustainable relations. Local African actors have been critical of Chinese companies' preference for Chinese labour and materials, poor employment practices and negative impact on the local environment (Alden, 2007, pp.72-92). Within the literature on the business dealings of Chinese companies in Africa, issues associated with their late entry into African markets and inexperience are consistent themes (Haglund, 2009; Jiang 2009).

Another emerging theme within the literature has been the argument that such issues arising within the African context are posing challenges to the content of Chinese foreign policy itself. Indeed, Sarah Raine (2009) argues that while China's strict Westphalian interpretation of sovereignty and its corresponding principle of non-interference in the internal political affairs of other states may

have successfully facilitated economic ties with and investments in Africa's pariah regimes and resource-rich states, the approach "undeniably has drawbacks once interests are established and need protecting in volatile environments" (p.154). Alden and Large (2011) assert that, while in theory non-interference as a policy principle opposed to holding an active, public position on internal politics of a given state may be maintained by Beijing as a "distinctive marker of difference" from European states or the US, in practice it "sits uncomfortably with the Chinese government's support for a variety of regimes" from Chad to Equatorial Guinea (pp.21-38).

Within this context, a small body of literature has emerged to capture the broad changes and adjustments to China's foreign policy in response to such challenges within the African context. It has been argued that China's deepening Africa engagement has caused China to "drift away from its once rock-solid principle of domestic non-intervention" to support for internationally-sanctioned intervention in conflicts such as Sudan or in post-conflict areas like Liberia (Alden, 2008). Regarding China's 'Going Out' strategy and pursuit of natural resources abroad more generally, Economy and Levi (2004) have argued that Chinese companies are increasingly needing to navigate various political regimes, participate in international markets, and adopt foreign standards and practices regarding Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). As such, they have asserted that in its resource quest abroad, China is "adjusting its strategy and tactics as it learns from experience, moderating its global impact in the process" (Economy and Levi, 2014, p.8).

It is argued here that such studies regarding adaptations to China's Africa policy and 'Going Out' strategy more broadly have been broad-brush in scope (Raine, 2009, p.9), limited to responses to specific challenges such as external expectations of China (Holslag, 2008), and have generally lacked Chinese language sources in their analysis. While such analyses have begun to illustrate incremental adaptations within China's Africa policy, there is a distinct absence of research that distinguishes between what may be termed 'tactical adaptations' and deeper forms of 'lesson learning' that might be drawn out during the process of change.

Strauss and Saavedra (2009) have asserted that there is a need for future research to assess “how Chinese knowledge of Africa and African knowledge of China is produced and assimilated” and “how this newer knowledge feeds into government policies, Western discourse and understanding, and attitudes and experiences on the ground” in Africa (p.561). This thesis will contribute to the literature by assessing, within a single in-depth case study of Sudan, the multitude of challenges faced by China in this context, the various adaptations in response and, significantly, draw out the internal debates within China that have led to a process of lesson learning as its foreign policy institutions and NOCs adapt to such challenges in the Sudanese context.

b) China-Sudan and South Sudan ties

China’s burgeoning contemporary political and economic ties with Sudan, particularly following the advent of CNPC’s investments in Sudan’s fledgling oil industry from the mid-1990s, has sparked a number of academic studies on China’s Sudan engagement, particularly in the disciplines of international political economy and development studies, that have focused on China’s impact on the dynamics of conflict, governance and development in Sudan (Large, 2007; Patey, 2006). This literature will certainly inform the descriptive background of the China-Sudan case study in this research (see Chapter 2), as it was CNPC’s key role in turning Sudan into an oil exporter and the company’s insertion into the political economy of Sudan’s second civil war (1983-2005) that provided the foundation for an increasingly ‘consequential’ Chinese role.⁶ However, the core analysis of this research is, as suggested previously, focused on assessing the impact that this deepening engagement has had upon China.

One exception within the political economy literature that has looked at the impact that the politics, civil wars, and foreign relations of Sudan, and later South Sudan, have had on China, has been Luke Patey’s recent book, *The New Kings of Crude: China, India and the Global Struggle for Oil in Sudan and South Sudan*. Patey comprehensively detailed how Chinese NOCs’ experiences in Sudan and South Sudan have increasingly affected their wider

⁶ Large (2008b) first argued that China’s role in Sudan was becoming increasingly ‘consequential’.

international expansion. It is argued that the cumulative impact of Sudanese politics and civil wars on CNPC empowered the company to seek better protection of its interests from political and security risks overseas without relying on the host government alone, whilst also seeking to diversify its international activities towards more politically stable countries (Patey, 2014, pp.264-265).

However, as the unit of analysis for studying change here is primarily Chinese NOCs, rather than situating NOCs within the broader array of China's foreign economic policy implementers in the Sudanese context, it excludes a wider assessment of the impact that China's experience in Sudan has had upon China's wider foreign policy.

Indeed, in addition to state company and government-level changes in attempt to better protect CNPC from political and security risks in Sudan and South Sudan, Chinese diplomats have increasingly begun to politically engage in wider international and regional multilateral conflict mediation efforts in Sudan (Large, 2008c). Within this context, it has been argued that Sudan is a defining case in China's changing relations with Africa, and a key illustration of transition and convergence in China's international politics (Large 2008b, p. 105). This thesis is located within the field of IR and, as detailed in the following section of this chapter, it shall employ the 'middle-range' theorising of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) in order to draw out these dynamics of change and adaptation within China's Sudan policy more broadly.

Much of the emergent body of academic literature to date that has sought to assess change in China's foreign policy towards to Sudan have been single-issue specific and predominantly focused on changes within the context of international pressure on China to influence the Government of Sudan (GoS) to accept an AU-UN Hybrid Peacekeeping force in Darfur. Many of these studies have primarily relied on official Chinese government statements to assess the extent to which China has been 'socialised' into the international community as a result of its exposure to global norms of 'great power responsibility' in this case (Stenvig, 2010). However, in assessing changes in Chinese foreign policy only in response to external *international* pressure, such studies have excluded

the *local* Sudanese environment from their analysis and the external 'pressures' in the form of challenges emanating from within the host state environment that Beijing may also be responding to.

Some have sought to broaden and deepen the scope of analysis of change in China's Darfur diplomacy from that of a passive posture to assuming a role of active persuasion and mediation vis-à-vis the GoS, and detailed additional causal factors for change. For example, these factors have been a growing awareness that instability was impacting on Chinese economic interests on the ground in the broader region, recognition of a broader regional African acceptance of UN support for the fledgling AU peacekeeping force in Darfur, and frustration with the GoS's attempts to delay a UN deployment (Holslag, 2007).

Large (2008b) has located such changes within the framework of how a key economic role has embedded China into the domestic politics of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) with Beijing's principle of non-interference becoming increasingly under strain as a result, presenting to China the challenge of "reconciling its formal established policy of non-interference with the more substantive Chinese economic involvement in Sudan" (p.93). Srinivasan (2008) concluded that in the case of Darfur, China has been required to manage its broader international agenda "whilst effectively protecting long-term energy and commercial interests secured through a South-South cooperation-inspired 'no conditions plus incentives' proposition to Khartoum" (p.56).

In this context, such scholars have asserted nuanced arguments regarding the scope and limitations to fundamental change in China's Sudan policy as a "dual track strategy" appeared to operate with "Beijing wanting to be seen to align with US and EU constituencies, while affirming and renewing practical support for the NCP" within a framework of respect for Sudanese sovereignty (Large 2008, pp.290-1). As such, it has been argued that the "case-specific tactical maneuvering" and "pragmatic adaptations" to China's non-interference policy in practice vis-à-vis Darfur belies the "prevailing centrality of the principle" in foreign policy (Alden and Large, 2011, p.30). However, as in the broader

literature in China-Africa relations, there is an ongoing lack of in-depth research assessing the qualitative differences between what might be viewed as mere 'tactical adaptation' versus evidence of lesson learning and its limitations which may only be discernable through drawing out the internal debates within China in response to challenges within the Sudanese case.

Moreover, there are as yet only a very small handful of single academic studies (Large, 2012; Large, 2011b) and NGO research reports (ICG, 2012) that have sought to chart the changes within China's foreign policy vis-à-vis its evolving ties with southern Sudan from informal contact with the GoSS after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 to a formal state-state engagement after South Sudan's independence in 2011. Although Large has comprehensively detailed how Beijing has been "adaptively responding" to political change after the CPA and the imperatives of investment protection with the majority of CNPC's oil operations shifting south after independence (Large, 2012, p.5), much of the "mutual learning" process that this has involved has predominantly focused on the side of South Sudan as it pragmatically sought to turn its former Chinese wartime "enemies into friends" (Large, 2011b, p.157).

This thesis will contribute to the literature on China-Sudan and South Sudan relations through providing a single holistic case study on the evolution of China's contemporary Sudanese engagement since the mid-1990s. It will seek to draw out the myriad of challenges that the Chinese government and its leading NOC have faced along the trajectory of this engagement that have resulted from the broader political international repercussions of an embedded economic role in Sudan, the dynamics of internal political change and conflict within Sudan and South Sudan and inter-state tensions between the two.

In presenting these challenges holistically and along a broader trajectory, this thesis seeks to detail not only the tactical adaptations in response to challenges, but also assess internal debates within China that may draw out lesson learning within the adaptive process and also the limitations to such deeper forms of learning and change.

1.3. Theoretical Framework: Foreign Policy Analysis and Learning

1.3.1. Theoretical perspectives on change in Chinese foreign policy

It is argued here that the changes that occurred within China's foreign policy along the trajectory of its relations with Sudan cannot be explained or understood *entirely* by the theoretical devices employed by the most prominent theories of International Relations (IR). As Bennett states, an inherent problem with traditional theories is that they "fail to address adequately how actors' identities, preferences, and conception about ends-means relationships change *over time* (emphasis added)" (Bennett, 1999, p.40). As the research undertaken here will be concerned with assessing such processes of change that have occurred within China's foreign policy over a stated period of time, there is a need to extrapolate why alternative explanations within mainstream IR theory offer limited scope for such an assessment, and consequently an explanation for why the theory of learning in Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) may be able to fill in the gaps.

The limited capacity for mainstream theories to explain such processes of change is particularly salient regarding those that explain international politics at the systemic level under the 'neo-neo' synthesis, referring to the schools of neo-realism and neo-liberalism, which Ruggie labels as neo-utilitarianism (Ruggie, 1986). A common critique of the neo-neo consensus is that it is unable to fully account for preference change as state interests are viewed as pre-determined and fixed to the pursuit of material power gains in the international context of structural anarchy. In viewing states as "billiard balls" and the study of individual states' foreign policies as "reductionist" (Waltz, 1979, p.105), changes in state behaviour here are a response to structural demands, whether that may be alterations in the global configurations of power in the case of neo-realism, or institutional constraints within neo-liberalism.

With the omission of unit-level variables and the role of ideas in international politics, such a mode of theorising is insufficient to provide a full account of preference formation or change in Chinese foreign policy, the dependent

variable in this research. Moreover, despite China's state-centric foreign policy rhetoric, the Chinese state cannot be viewed as a unitary rational actor in its foreign economic relations as, indeed, the 'Going Out' strategy has involved a plethora of state and privately owned actors venturing abroad, and 'China' is represented by a host of governmental and party institutions. Indeed, a key focus in this research is concerns the dynamics of the relationship between these state institutions and China's National Oil Companies as a result of their expanding foreign operations.

Moreover, it is argued that such parsimonious theorising as in the neo-neo synthesis that locates sources of change in state behaviour only at the systemic level can only provide a limited account of change in Chinese foreign policy in this case. Whilst the candidate does assert that the sources of change are located in the exogenous environment, they can also be identified at the national, sub-national, and transnational levels that permeate China's bilateral relations with Sudan. Indeed, the shifting of China's policy on state sovereignty and non-interference in formally engaging with the semi-autonomous GoSS cannot be understood in relation to constraints at the systemic structural level or direct international pressure.

Even if we were to argue that the sources of change in Beijing's behaviour were located only at the systemic level, it becomes apparent that it is not only material, but ideational factors that come into play with regards to power and interest. Indeed, the US Deputy Secretary for State Robert Zoellick's call in 2005 for China to behave like a "responsible stakeholder" (Zoellick, 2005) in addressing the Darfur crisis was an attempt to appeal to Beijing's emerging conception of power as the attainment of recognition and status in the international community through which growing material capabilities constitute one aspect of China's "comprehensive national power" (Wang, F.L., 2005). Fundamentally, what is of interest in this thesis cannot be explained without accounting for the role of agency, as it seeks to identify how ideas at the unit-level concerning the means through which to achieve both materialist and ideational goals change over time vis-à-vis exogenous constraints.

Neoclassical realism emerged in the 1990s in the attempt to correct many of neo-realism's oversights by arguing that the impact of systemic factors on a given country's foreign policy will be indirect and more complex than neo-realists have assumed, since such factors affect policy through intervening variables at the unit-level, such as decision-maker's *perceptions* of the state's material capabilities and the state-society structure that determines the capability of leaders to utilise state resources in foreign policy (Rose, 1998, p.146).

Whilst this theory has greatly contributed to the study of Chinese Foreign Policy (CFP) by enabling analysts to open up the 'black box' of the state (Christensen, 1996), it is argued here that, in continuing to view the state as the core actor in the international realm, neoclassical realism is also unable to account for the increasing impact that various non-state and sub-state actors are having upon China's foreign policy making within China's bilateral relations and the international level (Breslin, 2002). Indeed, the international non-government (INGO) 'Genocide Olympics' campaign against China certainly contributed towards China's shifting position over the Darfur crisis and Chinese NOCs have been forced to respond to the criticisms of local Sudanese civil society groups criticisms' of their environmental and labor practices in southern Sudan.

Evidently, 'middle range' theory construction as developed within IR's subfield of FPA is more applicable here. FPA shares certain key elements with the realist paradigm, most specifically an understanding of a state-centric international system. However, it diverges from realism that is only interested in the pursuit of power motivation by considering other motivations and instruments, as well as the importance of perception and misperception. Realists consider the state to be unitary, while FPA considers different politicised units operating within a state. Borrowing from the pluralist tradition in IR (Keohane and Nye, 1977), FPA reinforces the rejection of a coherent and unified state actor, recognises diverse facets of power and the importance of non-state/sub-state actors; factors which are pertinent to this thesis.

Additionally, explaining international relations from the perspective of the state predisposes the difference between states in their foreign policy behaviour, and

also takes account of the domestic environment. Thus, at a more abstract meta-ontological and epistemological level, FPA contends that causation importantly involves both structure and agency. Indeed, drawing from Giddens's theory of 'structuration' (Giddens, 1979), FPA purports that structure and agency constitute each other in a "perpetual process of interaction" and that foreign policy making is a "complex process of interaction between many actors, differently embedded in different structures", and that their interaction is a "dynamic process" which leads to the "constant evolution of both actors and structures" (Hill, 2003, pp.26-28). Thus, foreign policy analysis can here be seen as a bridging discipline, linking the micro-level of politics with the macro-level of the international system.

Such an approach is crucial for understanding the broad contours of Chinese policy-making that, increasingly in the post-reform era, has dismantled the divide between the domestic and foreign realms to serve China's various national interests (Zhao, 1996; Putnam, 1998). At the nexus of this lies the ruling CPC's objective of regime survival. Whilst the notion of regime security/survival certainly resonates with realism's stress on the importance of power politics of all kinds and appears to fall in line with rational choice models, drawing from the literature in FPA, rational choice models here are viewed as limited in their discounting of bounded rationality, cognitive dissonance and other social and environmental considerations (Mintz and de Rouen, 2010, pp.68-76).

Drawing from social constructivism as applied to foreign policy analysis, rationality is understood as socially constructed as state interests and behaviour are subject to socializing norms and, as such, are fundamentally mutable. Indeed, the contribution of constructivist theoretical discourse to our understanding of both preference formation and change is imperative to this thesis.⁷ Although the candidate appreciates the discourse on various 'constructivisms' within IR theory, from the perspective of FPA it is "middle ground" constructivism that is of most relevance, as it works at the nexus of domestic and international levels of analysis, and in accepting that there are

⁷ Constructivism emerged to form the 'third debate' within IR which raised a number of ontological and epistemological questions pertaining to the theoretical underpinnings and practical directions of the neo-neo consensus. For a comprehensive discussion of constructivism in IR, refer to: Fierke and Jorgensen (2001).

two mutually existing understandings of the world, it stands at two intersections: that between materialism (borrowing from positivism) and idealism (borrowing from post-positivism), and that between individual agency and social structure (Alder, 1997).

With regards to preference formation and identity in foreign policy, constructivism's assertion that a states' identity is domestically constructed as well as through its interactions with external Others at the international level, is useful for our understanding of Chinese foreign policy (Campbell, 1998). Many scholars of Chinese foreign policy have asserted that although its policy-makers view the international arena with a *realpolitik* state-centric outlook, this perception is coloured by the manner of China's entry into the international system in the 19th Century, when China was forced to relinquish territory under the 'unequal treaties' signed with the British that followed the Opium Wars. This "conditioned a view of sovereignty as an entitlement to be defended against the predatory ambitions of the great powers" (Paltiel, 2007, p.36).

Constructivism's 'socialisation' approach to preference change, which stresses the causal impact of the process of 'norms diffusion' on states interacting within international institutions (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998), has been the most commonly employed approach to assessing change in Chinese foreign policy in the post-reform era (Johnston, 2008). However, there is now an expanding body of literature in both China and the West critiquing the use of this approach.

Paltiel (2007) asserts that, in contrast to those in the West, Chinese international relations scholars "maintain a visceral nationalist resistance to the notion that China's rise depends ultimately on its 'socialisation' and conformity within existing international structures, notably those led by the US" (p.163). Wang Hongying (2005) claims that if global interdependence rather than socialisation proves to be more effective means for promoting cooperative behaviours on the part of China, rather than try to "teach" China what they see as cooperative behaviour, Western states "should seek to expand China's connections with the international community and thus increase China's stakes in the well being of other countries in the world" (p.491).

The candidate does not entirely discount the impact that China's membership in multilateral institutions has had upon what can be viewed as China's increasingly cooperative behaviour on a number of global issues in the post-reform era. However, it seeks to assess change in Chinese foreign policy within the context of China's 'Going Out' strategy that has deepened China's integration and interdependence in the global environment. A significant contribution to the literature here will be to uncover how China may be learning the limitations of a strict adherence to 'non-interference' through 'negative learning' from China's own experiences rather than 'positive' social learning, which is arguably over-emphasised in the constructivist literature on socialisation.

A more holistic account of change in this case study is needed: a theoretical framework which can incorporate the external constraints and sources of change China has been confronted with along the trajectory of its relations with Sudan, whilst accounting for China's changing perceptions of the Sudanese political environment and China's role within it vis-à-vis such constraints. Whilst this research can be broadly situated within the 'middle ground' constructivist approach, this approach has not yet provided a convincing causal mechanism that links changes in structures to those in agents and vice versa (Bennett, 1999, p.7). As such, Wendt (1992) has argued the need for constructivism to be "enriched with liberal insights about learning which it has neglected" (p.394).

Learning theory as applied to FPA focuses on examining the dynamics of the feedback loops between agents and structures and thus can provide theoretical insights through which to identify such mechanisms (Bennett 1999, p.25). It maintains the ontological and epistemological postulations of middle ground constructivism as material forces (the objective world) and ideational forces (the subjective world) are seen to work together to "drive social changes" (Tang, 2008, p.146). However, it is also able to capture causal mechanisms of such change in asserting that "the objective world serves as the ultimate testing ground for ideas", which are in turn changed through feedback from the objective environment (Tang, 2008, p.146).

Learning theorists are thus also able to fill in the gaps of neo-realism as, although a learning explanation of changes in foreign policy does not dismiss the role of material and political factors, it argues that “leaders’ changing perceptions of these factors have powerful mediating influences on the direction, magnitude, and timing of policy changes” (Bennett, 1999, p.43). Thus, learning by political actors cannot be confined to a passive reaction to structural constraints because, as Tetlock (1991) underlines, “policy makers react not to the international environment as such, but rather to their mental representations of that environment” (p.54).

This thesis can be situated broadly within the middle-ground constructivist approach, however it will specifically utilise the tool of ‘learning’ theory within FPA in order to understand change within Chinese foreign policy in the case of China’s Sudan and South Sudan ties.

1.3.2. Conceptualising learning in foreign policy analysis

Whilst the concept of learning has long been applied within the social sciences by cognitive psychologists, structural cognitive theorists, political scientists, and organisational theorists, it was first theorised within FPA during the 1970s with a series of studies that sought to highlight how various cognitive factors and lessons learned from the past can inform the foreign policy making process (May, 1973; Jervis, 1976). The failure of structural approaches to predict the end of the Cold War inspired a new wave of research on learning in the 1990s as a theoretical tool with which to explain Soviet foreign policy in general and the revolutionary changes under the regime of Gorbachev in particular (Stein, 1994). Learning theory has since been applied within contemporary FPA studies at a variety of levels and methodological approaches.⁸

1.3.2.1. Definition: beyond adaptation versus learning

In his broad overview of the ‘conceptual minefield’ that is learning in foreign policy, Levy asserts that the concept “is difficult to define, isolate, measure and apply systematically” (Levy, 1994, p.307). Whilst definitions of political learning

⁸ For an overview of the literature, see: Levy (1994)

certainly vary depending on the object of study (whether that may be the state, foreign policy, or international institutions, for example), the very definition of learning is a matter of dispute among those who apply the term to the study of FPA (Breslauer, 1991, p.825). The mainstream of theorists adopt the 'belief system' approach to defining learning as a "change of beliefs (or the degree of confidence in one's beliefs) or the development of new beliefs, skills, or procedures as a result of the observation and interpretation of experience" (Levy, 1994, p.283).

However, one inherent issue to emerge within the 'belief system' approach has been that such theorists narrow the focus to a very specific subset of change: to fundamental changes in individual cognition (beliefs and preferences) that do not necessarily translate into changes in behaviour. These theorists are correct to assert that learning should not be seen as synonymous with policy change as, indeed, changes in behaviour may result from other variables such as a change in leadership, structural adjustment, or political competition. However, within their view, behavioural change as a result of learning is an extremely rare phenomenon, because the concept of learning itself is restricted to that of *fundamental* belief system change at the level of individual cognition.

As such, Tetlock (1991) reformulates this approach by arguing that foreign policy belief systems are organised hierarchically, with fundamental policy objectives at the highest level, strategic and policy preferences at an intermediate level, and tactical beliefs at the bottom. Within this framework, he asserts that most learning takes place at the tactical level, that political decision-makers "reconsider their basic strategic goals only after repeated failures to generate a tactical solution to their foreign policy problems", and that policymakers "reconsider their basic goals and objectives only after repeated strategic failures" (Tetlock, 1991, pp.28-31).

The candidate rejects the claim made by 'belief system' theorists for the need for a conceptual distinction between 'true' learning in the sense of fundamental belief change and what is seen as a lesser type of learning which has been defined in various ways including 'tactical learning', or what Haas labels simply as 'adaptation' (Haas, 1991, p.73). In the Haasian conception, the mechanistic

and tactical adjustment of ones beliefs is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for learning. However, it is argued here that such accounts fail to recognise that all practices of adaptation or tactical adjustment involve policymakers learning *something* that may require a policy to be adapted in the first place. Consequentially, policy makers can still be perceived to be 'learning' even if fundamental belief systems or both means and ends of foreign policies do not change, as highlighted within Tetlock's hierarchical belief system model.

Moreover, the analytical separation between adaptation and learning commonly employed within FPA fails to account for the factor of time with which it may be possible to comprehend that long-term adaptation can lead to deeper forms of learning; an issue which is also dealt with through adopting the hierarchical belief system model. In their study of China's foreign policy 'learning' in the context of Economic Interdependence (EI) since the 'reform and opening' policy, Moore and Yang argue that China has neither fully embraced EI as a world view nor changed its strategic focus on national power, however, they also argue that there have been some changes in both China's understanding of international politics and in its actual behaviour that raise the possibility of a more fundamental transformation in the future (Moore and Yang, 2001, p.227).

Moreover, Zhao Shuisheng (2004b) even argues that 'maladaptation' can occur, whereby policymakers learn the mistakes of certain adaptations to foreign policy after the fact, therefore the process of adaptation itself has brought about a form of 'negative' learning from experience. Indeed, Zhao cites certain Chinese foreign policy thinkers learning that China's adaptations to embrace the Western model of competitive capitalism during the 1980s were too critical of Chinese values as an example of this (Zhao, 2004b, p.73).

As such, it is argued here that a concept of 'adaptive learning' is a more useful tool for assessing change in China's foreign policy. It is possible to define 'adaptive learning' as a "learning process in which old ways of coping with the outside world are [adapted] into new ones" (Zhao, 2004b, p. 73). Moreover, learning can be identified by adaptation or change in behaviour that has been the result of "a change in perception about how to solve a problem" (Haas, 1991, p.63). Within the framework of Tetlock's hierarchical 'belief system'

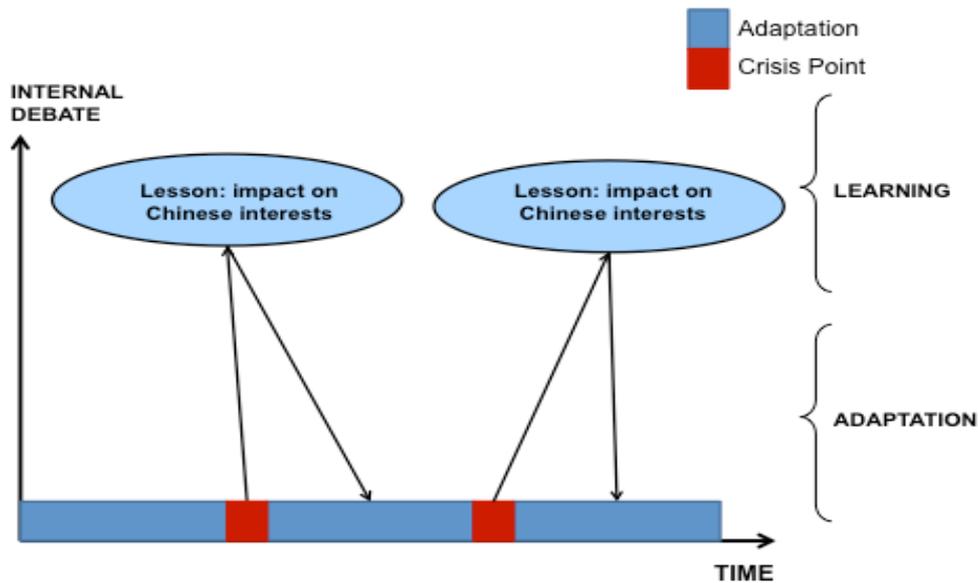
model, this research will not be conducted in terms of testing whether changes in Chinese foreign policy in the Sudan case reflect either adaptation or fundamental learning, rather, it seeks to uncover what lessons have been learnt in the process of tactically adapting.

Within a framework of 'adaptive learning', it is firstly argued that China's policy approach was tactically adapted in response to emerging challenges within the Sudanese context. Secondly, these adaptations can be explained as a result of specific lesson learning by China along the trajectory of this adaptation process.

A series of negative lessons were presented to Chinese foreign policy actors in the form of unexpected 'crisis points', which sparked internal debates specifically regarding the negative impact of Sudan's local situation on Chinese interests and, subsequently the limitations within China's own foreign policy approach as China sought to protect these interests.

The learning of these lessons then fed back into the adaptation process in the form of changes to China's tactical policy approach in practice (see Diagram 1.1., below). In addition, it is argued that a series of broader lessons have been gradually learnt along the trajectory of Chinese foreign policy institutions' experience in Sudan, reflecting wider learning about the nature of Sudanese conflicts and China's role therein.

Diagram 1. 1. Specific lesson learning process in China's Sudan engagement



Source: Elaborated by the author

1.3.2.2 Typology: negative experiential learning

It is now widely acknowledged that learning in foreign policy analysis should not be equated with 'lessons from history' as in its original formulation during the 1970s, and analysts have shown that policy-makers engage in various types of learning and learn different sorts of 'lessons' resulting from experience. These include: deuterio learning (learning to learn); social learning; 'first order learning' (changes in means); 'second order learning' (change in ends); negative learning (from failure); positive learning (from success); learning from one's own experiences; learning from other's experiences; incremental learning; discontinuous learning; and, 'unlearning' (Levy, 1994).

The particular focus of this thesis is to analyse 'negative' learning that China has been undergoing as a result of its own foreign policy implementer's experiences within the Sudan case. It is widely acknowledged within the learning literature that individuals and organisations are prone to learn more from failure than success (Levy, 1994, p.304). Whilst this is certainly the case, it is argued here that 'negative learning' does not necessarily result only in response to perceived 'failure'. As it will be argued in this thesis, the form of negative learning that China has undergone in the Sudan case emanates from lessons regarding the

limitations of China's tactical-level foreign policy approach and of China's traditional perceptions of the Sudanese context itself.

It has been argued that, as human beings tend to continue to do what has worked, it is highly likely that forms of negative learning result in changes in state behaviour (Tang, 2008, p.148). In the case of policy-making within the Chinese state, while domestic policies have changed considerably from their original socialist commitment, among China's leadership "there persists the compulsive self-characterisation of foreign policy as one of principled constancy and continuity" (Kim, 1989, p.4; Alden, 2008). As such, as all states including China tend to develop strong propensities towards the status-quo in their policy-making processes, learning is most likely to occur in response to perceived crisis, or "when a shocking or galvanising event highlights the urgency of the problem" and pose a specific challenge to the status quo (Bo, 2010, p.145).

Indeed, the candidate asserts that the specific negative lesson learnt in this case study occurred at points of perceived crisis along the trajectory of China's Sudanese engagement that induced internal recognition in China that its own interests were negatively affected by situations emanating from the local Sudanese environment. However, it is also asserted that, even in the absence of such 'crisis points', over the trajectory of its experience in Sudan China has also gradually learnt a series of broader lessons regarding the nature of Sudanese conflicts that have in turn led to an evolving Chinese peace and security role in the Sudans.

Within the study of Chinese domestic politics and foreign policy, many have shown that there has been a strong propensity within China towards learning from *other's* experience of crisis in the post-Cold War era. Indeed, Shambaugh (2008) has documented how, following the cataclysmic events of Tiananmen in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of communist ruling parties in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the CPC underwent more than a decade-long learning process regarding the causes of collapse of other communist parties, as the CPC sought to avoid a similar fate (p.2). Within foreign policy, during the early 2000s China's leadership and Chinese scholars sought to learn lessons from other 'rising powers' in history, particularly the destabilising effect on the

international order that Germany's rise had during the late 19th Century, which partly informed China's formulation of the 'peaceful development' slogan (Zhao and Liu, 2009, p. 10).

However, the core focus of this thesis is to assess what China is learning from its *own* experiences as a result of a 'Going Out' strategy that has rapidly intensified China's global integration; a development that is unprecedented in the country's modern history. It has been stated that during the Cold War period, China interest in internal 'Third World' issues was "primarily governed and motivated by international considerations", namely the withdrawal of foreign powers during the Cold War, rather than settlement of local problems and conflicts themselves (Shichor, 1979, p.2). While Chinese policies during this era did display China's capacity for adaptation in the face of challenges, these "changes reflected China's overall analysis of the world situation and its relations with the superpowers" rather than "adaptations to changing circumstances" within Third World countries themselves (Shichor, 1979, p.3).

It is argued here that China's foreign policy has entered a new terrain under the 'Going Out' strategy, which has led to the increased 'embeddedness' of Chinese interests within the political economies of the developing country states that have been the targets of Chinese investments. A new significant development has emerged in the post-Cold War context whereby it is increasingly the *internal* situations within these developing countries have become the sources of change within Chinese foreign policy.

1.3.3. Governmental-institutional level collective learning

There remains the important issue of determining the unit analysis at which learning is argued to be taking place. Within the FPA learning literature it is argued that learning can be approached by focusing on various levels, from the 'cognitive structural' approach which looks at the individual level, whereby learning involves changes in the cognitive structures of an individual's image of the international environment, to the governmental-institutional (also referred to as organisational) approach which assesses learning at the collective level (Tetlock, 1991, p.22; Haas, 1991).

Indeed, learning theory does not presume unified actors, and it is widely understood that individuals, organisations, and governments learn different lessons, which requires specifying learning by collective entities in ways that do not reify social entities as if they were individual minds. Learning theorists assert that it is possible to do so by allowing learning to include changes in such social constructs such as organisational routines or schools of thought within governments as a result of experience (Bennett, 1999, p.88).

The cognitive structural approach will not be of use here because, in focusing exclusively on learning as a form of increased differentiation and integration of mental structures, it pays little attention to the underlying external reality in which actors gain experience and receive the feedback that may stimulate learning (Breslauer and Tetlock, 1991, p.9). According to Levy (1994), the conditions under which organisational or governmental learning may be more important than individual learning by top governmental decision-makers and leaders depends on the degree of centralisation and bureaucratisation in the political system, the nature of the issue area, and other variables (p.289).

In the context of the increasing pluralisation of the internal decision-making process within Chinese foreign policy and, most significantly, the plethora of institutional actors that can now be seen to implement China's 'Going Out' strategy in Africa, it is argued here that governmental-institutional level is most appropriate unit of analysis for assessing learning during the implementation stage of China's foreign policy towards Sudan.

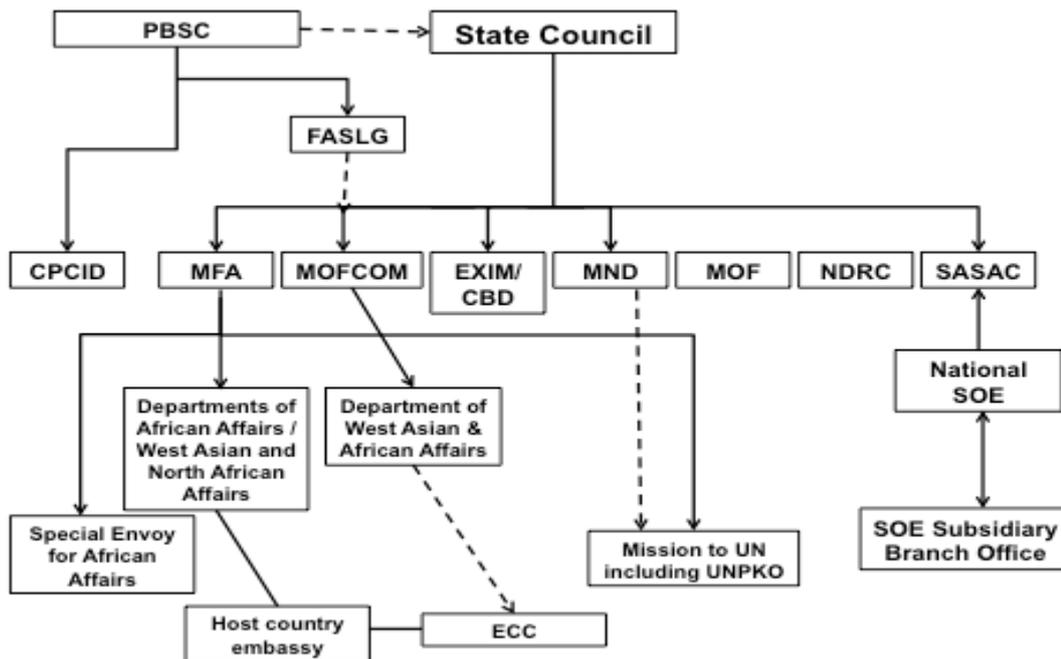
Indeed, the emphasis will be on foreign policy implementation, the phase where "actors confront their environment and in which the environment confronts them" (Brighi and Hill, 2008, p.118), rather than policy decision-making, since the object of study is how Chinese foreign policy implementers are adapting China's policy as a result of negative experiences in the Sudanese context, and it is asserted that the sources of change in Chinese foreign policy in this case are thus located in the exogenous environment.

The study of Chinese foreign policy making has experienced a significant transformation in recent decades. Since the founding of the PRC in 1949 the study of Chinese foreign policy mainly focused on a few leaders at the top of the political system, as a result of the highly centralised nature of policy-making in China under the 'Mao-in-command' model (Zhao, 2008, p.39). It is widely acknowledged that following the death of Mao, economic and political reform has emphasized the professionalisation and institutionalisation of decision-making authorities. In this context, there has been a marked increase in studies adopting a bureaucratic politics approach to the study of the Chinese decision-making process, with Lieberthal and Lampton (1992) depicting a 'fragmented authoritarianism' model in which "authority below the very peak of the Chinese political system is fragmented and disjointed" (p.10).

With regards to foreign policy, analysts of Chinese decision-making processes assert that the CPC, with its nine member Politburo Standing Committee at the apex of the system, remains the central decision-making body setting the broad direction of foreign policy strategies (Lu, 2000, p.16).

However, a host of state and party bureaucratic institutions and agencies have been delegated increasing authority not only in implementing policy but also in participating in the formulation and adjustment of foreign policies (Jakobson, 2009, p.413). Indeed, below the decision-making level at the apex of the system under the auspices of the 'Going Out' strategy in Africa, China's foreign economic policies are increasingly implemented by a host of governmental and party institutions.

Diagram 1. 2. China's foreign policy towards Africa under The 'Going Out' strategy



Source: Author, adapted from: Gill and Reilly, 2007, p. 45, and using the current foreign policy institutional framework outlined on the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs website: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/
 Notes: PBSC = Politburo Standing Committee, FASLG = Foreign Affairs Small Leading Group, CPCID = Communist Party of China's International Department, MFA = Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MOFCOM = Ministry of Commerce, EXIM = China Export-Import Bank, CDB = China Development Bank, MND = Ministry of National Defense, MOF = Ministry of Finance, NDRC = National Development and Reform Commission, SASAC = State-Owned Assets and Administration Commission, ECC = Economic and Commercial Counselor, UNPKO = United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.

As displayed above in diagram 1.2, China's State Council oversees a multitude of ministries, and departments within ministries, and SOEs involved in Sino-African relations, with MFA and MOFCOM assuming leading roles in the implementation of China's 'Going Out' strategy towards Africa (Raine, 2009, p.71).⁹ The MFA and its departments for African Affairs and West Asia and North Africa are a key focus in this research because, while the senior CPC leadership assumes responsibility for crucial decisions affecting China's relations with major powers or important countries in the region, it has delegated overall control of foreign policy implementation to the MFA and, with regards to developing country relations, the MFA continues to be a central agency in determining policies in accordance with China's overall foreign policy goals (Jakobson and Knox, 2010, p.8). Indeed, it is the MFA that is tasked with responding to events as they emerge within the African context.

⁹ There are a host of other governmental and military actors exploring their own interests in Africa, which although important to the overall relationship, are not under examination in this thesis. See Raine (2009), p. 71-2.

China is diplomatically represented in Africa through MFA's embassies, which were present in all but one of the 49 African countries recognising the PRC by 2009, whose ambassadors and diplomats play an important role in cultivating local political contacts, identifying commercial opportunities and preparing the ground for the arrival of Chinese companies (Raine, 2009, p.76). In addition, MFA's diplomatic mission and ambassador to the UN have increasingly played a key role in representing China's position on a host of African issues, including Sudan, within the international multilateral forum. Moreover, senior Africa diplomats within the MFA have assumed the role of China's Special Envoy for African Affairs to represent Beijing's position on 'hot spot' issues, particularly vis-à-vis the Darfur conflict, for which the position was created in 2007. In addition to government diplomatic representation, the Communist Party's influential International Department (CPCID) is additionally tasked with maintaining the party's contacts with political parties overseas, and which has its own bureau for Africa.

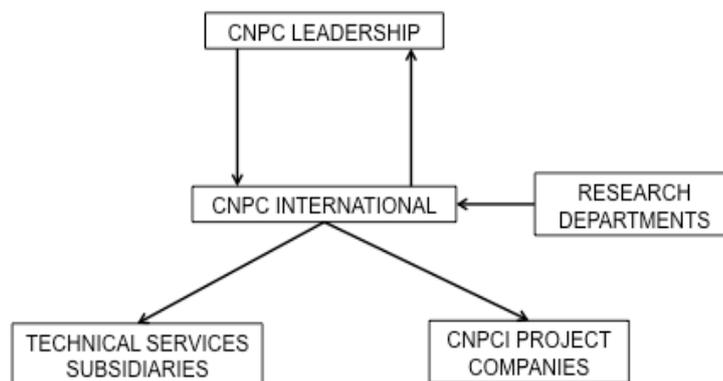
However, it is important to note that, under the auspices of the 'Going Out' strategy, the central importance of the MFA has declined, with the importance of commercial interests in Africa meaning that, while of the same rank as the MFA, MOFCOM has been playing an increasingly significant role in the interpretation and implementation of policy toward Africa (Corkin, 2011, p.66). Indeed, MOFCOM's department for West Asian and African Affairs is increasingly responsible for organising economic and trade cooperation (Corkin, 2011, p.66). Through its Economic and Commercial Counselor's (ECC) Office, which has been established within MFA's embassies abroad, MOFCOM guides investment and manages foreign aid projects (Holslag and Van Hoeymissen, 2010, p.5). MOFCOM has also allocated the majority of Chinese foreign aid, long been "a perennial source of contention between it and the MFA" (Jakobson and Knox, 2010, p.10).

In addition, with resource security at the core of China's goals under the 'going out' strategy, Chinese NOCs such as CNPC must be included within this analysis as one of the key implementing actors. As displayed in diagram 1.3., below, CNPC's overseas business ventures and plethora of subsidiary

companies involved in oil services and construction in Africa that come under the CNPC flag are run by CNPC International (CNPCI), an international arm of the CNPC Group (Xu, 2007, p. 5).

Moreover, there are a variety of government and party institutions, which are also tasked with facilitating the expansion of their foreign operations, in addition to MOFCOM. This includes their principal owner the State-Owned Assets and Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC), the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), which oversees issues such as energy procurement, and various state-owned policy-oriented lending agencies such as the China Export-Import (EXIM) Bank. Established in 1994 to promote the expansion of Chinese business overseas, EXIM Bank provides support to large SOEs engaged in major projects, and is China’s largest Africa-related lending institution and a major player in the extension of loans to Africa among single-country lenders; in 2007 pledging \$20bn in loans to Africa over the following three years.¹⁰

Diagram 1. 3. CNPC’s overseas operations



Source: Author, adapted from: Matisoff, 2012, p. 10; Bo, 2010, pp. 75-78.

However, the increasing operational autonomy of Chinese NOCs has also led them to interpret the implementation of ‘going out’ according to their own

¹⁰ There are indeed other state-owned policy banks increasingly involved in Africa investments, however they remain some way behind EXIM in terms of funding in Africa. See: Raine, (2009), pp. 73-75.

business and profit interests, and NOCs can often bypass the formal dual approval and supervisory systems for their going out under NDRC¹¹ and SASAC¹². As detailed previously, there is now a consensus within the literature that a 'principal-agent dilemma' has emerged between the central government and its NOCs whereby the former is not able to oversee or control the overseas activities of the latter (Downs, 2006). NOCs are state actors that prioritise the goal of securing national oil supplies for China: however, this goal is first based on its corporate performance and, as such, CNPC's international businesses are increasingly driven by the company's corporate strategy in the first instance (Xu, 2007, p.21).

Part of this dilemma is in fact rooted in conflicted interests within the government itself. On the one hand, Beijing wants its NOCs to strive to become market-driven globally competitive enterprises and broadly sees its investments abroad as contributing to China's energy self-sufficiency, whilst, on the other hand, expresses concern when they are not always willing to cooperate with the government on commercial ventures to ensure they are in China's broader strategic interests (Kennedy, 2010).

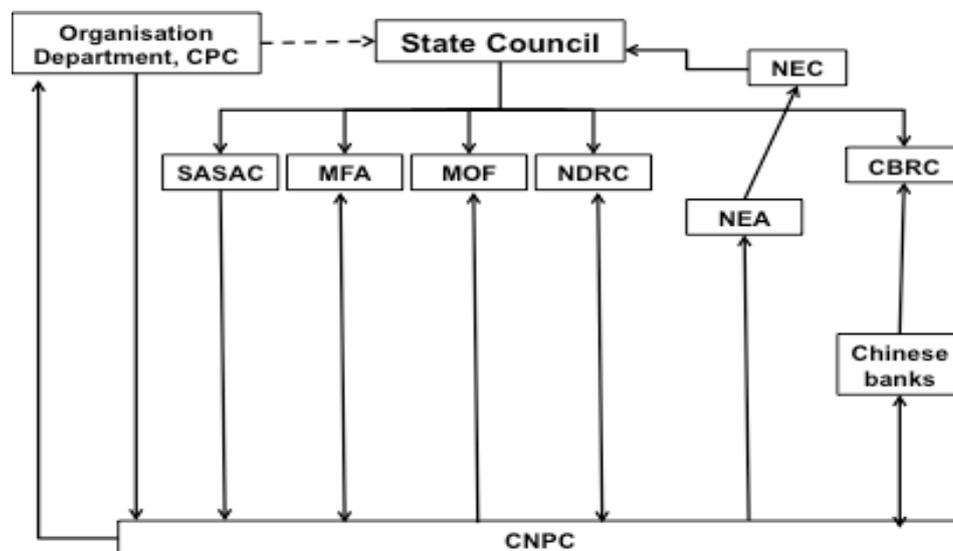
In the context of a 'principal-agent dilemma', in which its own interests are conflicted, Sarah Raine has argued that the Chinese government has begun to developed a precarious 'containment policy' vis-à-vis its NOCs, whereby the state both encourages and attempts to regulate their activities in Africa as, indeed, the Chinese party-state is "simultaneously desirous of African engagements and nervous of their consequences" (Raine, 2009, p.64). Indeed, NOC influence regarding the implementation of their 'going out' is far from limitless. While, the interests of NOCs are well protected by networks of *guanxi* 关系 ('relations') between oil companies and the upper reaches of the CPC (Bo, 2010, p.22), it is through this network too that the party-state wields control over the companies.

¹¹ NOCs, at least in some cases, have made deals abroad and then informed the NDRC and State Council after the fact. See: Downs (2006), p. 24.

¹² For example, from 1994 to 2008, other than paying ordinary corporate taxes, none of the SOEs/NOCs paid any of their revenues to SASAC. After a strong push by SASAC aiming to provide more oversight over state assets, NOCs pay 10% of their after-tax earnings to SASAC through the Ministry of Finance starting from 2008. However, this extra cost was offset by a 10% decrease in corporate income tax the same year. See: Jiang and Sinton (2011), p. 26.

Indeed, as displayed within diagram 1.4. below, in the case of CNPC, the CPC’s primary instrument of control over NOCs is through its Organisational Department, which wields the power to appoint all NOC Chairmen and CEOs (with SASAC also appointing managers) under a ‘nomenklatura’ system, a hierarchical system of appointing personnel. As such, NOC managers must “learn to balance corporate and party-state interests if they want to advance their political careers within the party” (Downs, 2008a, p.123). The government also exercises control of NOCs through an approval system whereby foreign energy projects in which the investment of a Chinese company exceeds \$200 million (a small amount of money in the energy business) are supposed to be reviewed by the NDRC and the National Energy Administration (NEA) and submitted to the State Council for approval, with company dividends being paid to the Ministry of Finance (MoF) (Downs, 2006, p.23). While, the MFA lacks regulatory powers over CNPC, it can choose to provide or withdraw direct diplomatic support for its overseas efforts, and Chinese banks may choose to form strategic alliances with CNPC with regards to funding certain investments (see diagram 1. 4., below).

Diagram 1. 4. CNPC’s relationship with the Chinese party-state



Source: Author, adapted from: Jiang and Stinton, 2011, p. 25.

Notes: CBRC = China Banking Regulatory Commission, NEC = National Energy Commission.

This thesis will adopt the ‘containment’ approach to conceptualise the relationship between the Chinese party-state and CNPC along the trajectory of its ‘going out’ in Sudan. However, it will also be argued that in addition to

encouraging and regulating the company, an additional approach within this 'containment' approach has increasingly also been the Chinese authorities' attempts to protect CNPC's oil interests in the Sudanese context.

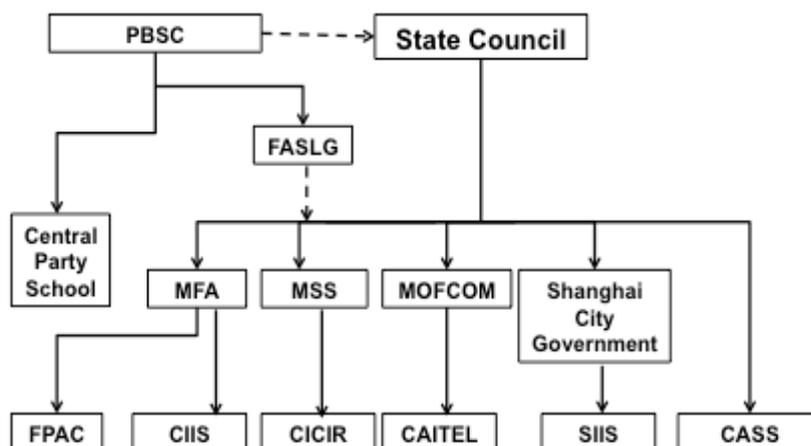
In addition to the key implementing ministries, bodies and companies of China's 'going out' policy, Chinese foreign policy research think tanks and university departments are becoming increasingly significant actors in the foreign policy implementation phase. China's key implementing agencies have increasingly found that increased Chinese interaction abroad has provided a greater need for improved information about and insights in international affairs from specialists (Zhao, 2008, p.39). Indeed, most of these think tanks are affiliated with government agencies and act as additional research arms (Yun, 2013, p.13) (see diagram 1.5., below).

As a result of the semi-governmental nature of these institutes, there is a significant degree of interaction between academics and implementing officials, with many think tank directors being former ambassadors. Most researchers at the Chinese Institute for International Studies (CIIS), the Chinese Academy of Social Science (CASS) and the Chinese Institute for Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) have occupied diplomatic positions in MFA embassies abroad (Bondiguel and Kellner, 2010, p.19-21). As the research arm of MFA, the CIIS writes reports for and provides briefings to MFA officials (Glaser and Saunders, 2002, p.599).

In addition, researchers from leading universities such as Peking University have conducted research on behalf of companies such as CNPC in Africa, including in Sudan.¹³ Another new institution that brings together officials and leading scholars is the MFA-funded group, the Foreign Policy Advisory Council (FPAC) established in 2004, which was originally made up of retired ambassadors, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi broadened this to include the heads of the six leading research institutes (Jakobson and Knox, 2010, p.36).

¹³ Interview, Peking University, School for International Studies (SIS), Beijing, China, 23 December 2010

Diagram 1. 5. Chinese think tanks and research institutes



Source: Elaborated by the author, based on interviews and information in: Bondiguel and Kellner, 2010; Jakobson and Knox, 2010.

While the focus of this research is to draw out collective learning among China’s key implementing institutions, rather than the level of China’s senior leadership, it is important to note that implementing actors are increasingly assuming advisory and information sharing roles vis-à-vis China’s decision-makers. As such, the candidate argues that evidence of changes in leadership statements or actions in line with those of implementing actors that have learnt from experiences serves to buttress the argument that collective learning has occurred. China’s senior decision-makers, like leading officials in all states, “struggle to fathom the complex nature of international affairs”, particularly in relation to the speed with which China has extended its reach into every corner of the globe, and, as such, China’s top leaders consult ministry officials, researchers, and leading intellectuals as policies continue to evolve in the implementation phase of the policy process (Jakobson and Knox, 2010, p.34).

It is widely recognised that the Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group (FALSOG) under the CPC Politburo Standing Committee, is the forum in which foreign policy issues are discussed and policy decisions made.¹⁴

Whilst such forums are highly opaque, it is apparent that, in addition to the State Councillor, the Chinese government’s leading foreign policy official, members of the FALSOG include all key ministers (Jakobson and Knox, 2010,

¹⁴ Africa issues are also often discussed in the Leading Small Group on Finance and Economy. See: Raine (2009), p. 69.

p.34), and even heads of leading think tanks CIIS, CASS and SIIS have been known to participate in discussions and produce reports that are directly channeled to China's senior leadership (Bondiguel and Kellner, 2010, p.19-21). In addition, The Central Party School has direct ties to the Party apparatus, and its reports are passed directly to the General Office of the Central Committee (Glaser and Saunders, 2002, p.600). CICIR, which is under the Ministry of State Security, is a "major source for foreign policy studies that go directly to China's top leaders".¹⁵

1.4. China's Foreign Policy Belief System and Adaptive Learning

1.4.1. Continuity of China's fundamental and strategic beliefs

Before detailing China's tactical level foreign policy approach that it is argued has been adapted, it is imperative to first detail the fundamental and strategic goals, which such tactical aims are designed to achieve. In line with Tetlock's 'hierarchical' foreign policy belief system model discussed previously, it is asserted here that deeper forms of learning at both the fundamental and strategic levels are unlikely to have occurred within China's foreign policy belief system in the case (see table 1.2, p.59).

At the fundamental level of China's foreign policy belief system, the lens through which policy-makers collectively perceive the external environment, Beijing's objectives are deeply embedded in culture and ideology, or informal and formal ideology as Levine (1994, p.39) asserts. Since the founding of the PRC in 1949, China's leaders have viewed the international realm, and China's role identity within it, through a set of prepositions, values, expectations, preferences and assumptions which derive from their cultural-historical inheritance (informal ideology) and their conscious choices as political actors (formal ideology) (Levine, 1994, p.39).

Many of the fundamental objectives that Chinese leaders have pursued and the ideas they have brought to the foreign policy arena have derived from the

¹⁵ Doak Barnett cited in: Yun, (2013), p. 39.

'formal ideology' of Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong Thought that, despite the inherent contradictions within today's China, has been upheld as the dominant ideology projected by the CPC through the theoretical contributions of Mao's successors, which have become enshrined in the Chinese Constitution (Levine, 1994, p.33).

Indeed, this has occurred following Deng Xiaoping's theory of 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics' (*Zhongguotese Shehui zhuyi* 中国特色社会主义), Jiang Zemin's theory of the 'Three Represents' (*Sange Daibiao* 三个代表), and Hu Jintao's contribution with the theory of 'Scientific Development' (*Kexue Fazhan* 科学发展).

Table 1. 2. China's foreign policy belief system in the 'Going Out' era

<i>Fundamental</i>	
❖	(Informal ideology): Principles of respect for state sovereignty and non-interference
❖	Policy outcomes: Third world revolution to 'South-South solidarity'.
<i>Strategic</i>	
❖	Energy security/self-reliance.
❖	Policy outcomes: 'Going Out' of NOCs seeking equity oil investments in Africa.
<i>Tactical</i>	
❖	Autonomy of NOCs to seek resources in high-risk zones where there is an absence of Western competition.
❖	An elite-level engagement (non-interference policy in practice): NOCs <i>guanxi</i> with ruling parties; Chinese government support for NOCs through elite-led resource diplomacy.
❖	Separation of business from politics (non-interference policy in practice): engagement with 'pariah-regimes', non-involvement in domestic conflict and political issues, 'no strings attached' approach to economic assistance.

Source: Elaborated by the author

Of key importance to this thesis is the 'informal ideology' underpinning the Chinese foreign policy belief system at the fundamental level, namely China's adherence to the principle of respect for state sovereignty. The basic tenets of Westphalian state sovereignty provided the basis of the 'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence' (mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in internal affairs, equality, and mutual benefit), which were formally enshrined as the basic tenets of China's

foreign policy at the Asian-African Conference in Bandung in 1955 (see Chapter 2).

China's 'informal ideology' is of relevance because it is argued that continuity in China's fundamental adherence to the principle of state sovereignty constitutes the limitations to change and learning within China's foreign policy belief system.

Since the 1950s, the CPC's strict adherence to the principles of Westphalian state sovereignty and non-interference in other states internal affairs have provided the means through which to pursue Beijing's core interests of sustaining a strong and unified China. These core interests and the promotion of the principle of respect for state sovereignty have often been expressed through Chinese nationalism, a term which for all states can be defined as "any behaviour designed to restore, maintain, or advance public images of the nation" (Gries, 2005, p.105). Under Jiang Zemin, Chinese nationalism was increasingly constructed as a 'victimisation narrative' of the Chinese suffering at the hands of Western and Japanese imperialism during the 'century of humiliation', that lasted from the first Opium War with the British in 1839 until the founding of the PRC (Scott, 2008).

It is argued here that change in China's 'informal ideology' at the fundamental level is unlikely to have emerged under China's 'Going Out' strategy' as, in the broader context of Chinese foreign policy, it is apparent that an adherence to the principles of Westphalian state sovereignty and expressions of Chinese nationalism have been further strengthened under Hu Jintao's leadership and particularly since the transition of power to Xi Jinping after 2012. Indeed, following the global downturn in 2008, as detailed previously, China has become increasingly assertive in defending its 'core' national interest – defined as the "bottom line of national survival" – and reacted "stridently to all perceived slights against its national pride and sovereignty" (Zhao, 2013, p.101).

Within the specific context of Africa and the broader developing world, it is also apparent that Beijing formally continues to uphold suspicion and resistance in the face of emerging trends regarding universal rights and humanitarian

intervention which are viewed to undermine the basic tenets of sovereignty (Carlson, 2005), and continues to express concern that the weakening of the principle of respect for state sovereignty may indirectly contribute to a new, destabilising wave of self-determination and separatist movements might undermine Beijing's interest in the resistance against Taiwan's bid for independence since 1949 (Gill, 2007).

As such, it has been argued that, fundamentally, China's convergence with something akin to the Western conditional approach towards sovereignty would mark a dramatic shift in Chinese policy that does not seem forthcoming (Soares de Oliveria, 2008, p.106). Certainly, renowned experts of Chinese foreign policy have affirmed the inherent spirit of pragmatism within Chinese foreign policy and propensity to take pride in adapting to the logic of a situation, as Chinese leaders "find it painless to change their positions as circumstances change", in contrast with American politicians who "go into contortions to prove that they have always been consistent in their views" (Pye, 1990, p.71). However, they also assert that, fundamentally, "in Chinese eyes adjustments in domestic and foreign policies are only natural as long as principles and goals remain unchanged" (Wang, 1994, p.489).

At the strategic level of China's foreign policy belief system, as pertinent to this thesis, lies China's strategic goal of attaining access to resources abroad to fuel Chinese economic growth and, ultimately, to ensure ongoing regime legitimacy and stability of CPC rule, with the securing of oil supplies abroad by its NOCs becoming a vital interest to Beijing's policy-makers. As highlighted previously, China's understanding of its energy (in)security is inherently linked to wider perceptions of the international political environment, and it views the solution to such energy insecurity issues through the prism of a historical emphasis on self-reliance (*zili gengsheng* 自立更生), or energy self-sufficiency (Downs, 2000). According to Kennedy (2010), Beijing remains uncomfortable with international energy markets and institutions, with its policies of support for energy investments in pariah states, its wariness of deeper cooperation with the International Energy Agency (IEA), and its interest in nationalistic naval development plans to ensure Chinese control over subsea resources in the

South China Sea all strengthened by Beijing's distrust of the international energy order (p.148).

In particular, Chinese leaders' tendency to view dependency on the global oil market as undesirable (partly because of their perception that the United States in particular can manipulate markets) continues to colour China's contemporary method of securing energy supplies in Africa and elsewhere (Jiang, 2009). Moreover, China's international energy policy strategy of maintaining self-sufficiency through its investments in African petro-states can be viewed as a policy of "hedging against a possible worsening US-China relationship" as it is perceived that China's "privileged access to oil and dense political relationships with oil producers will enhance national security" (Soares de Oliveria, 2008, p.92).

In this context, China has maintained a stance of approval vis-à-vis Chinese NOCs acquiring equity stakes in overseas oil fields even though in reality oil pumped from their overseas sites might not necessarily end up in China and may be sold on the global oil market by NOCs (House, 2008, p.162). It has been asserted that CNPC's acquisition of oil fields in Sudan, and its broad support from the Chinese party-state, is the most publicised manifestation of this stance (Jakobson, 2009, p.147).

As such, it is argued here that as with China's fundamental beliefs regarding the sanctity of state sovereignty, in light of China's preoccupation with energy self-reliance, change and learning at the strategic level under the 'Going Out' strategy is also unlikely to have occurred within the Sudan case.

1.4.2. Adaptation at the tactical level

Given the salience of Chinese foreign policy beliefs at the fundamental and strategic levels, it is asserted here that adaptation and learning within the Sudan case is most likely to occur predominantly at the tactical level. China's tactical level beliefs have defined the policy approach of Beijing's initial engagement with Africa that sought to achieve strategic goals from the early stages of the 'Going Out' strategy between 1993-2001. The first two tactical

beliefs of the separation of politics from economics and an exclusively elite-led approach can be understood as the logical extensions of China's fundamental beliefs of respect for state sovereignty and non-interference put *into practice* through these tactical policies. The third tactical belief relates to the autonomy of Chinese NOCs from the early stages of their 'going out' to develop their own corporate tactics of seeking investments in Africa's oil-rich 'trouble zones' where they would face little competition from Western IOCs.

It is asserted that it was these *endogenously* derived tactical beliefs that, when confronted with the Sudanese environment during the phase of implementation in the *exogenous* environment, were adapted in response to emerging challenges. Moreover, during this phase of adaptation China's foreign policy establishment was presented with a lesson regarding the limitations of these tactical policies in practice as China sought to protect its interests in the Sudanese context.

1.4.2.1. The separation of politics from economics

As will be detailed in Chapter 2, by the 1990s, commercial interests and 'win-win' economic partnerships were increasingly driving the content of China's bilateral relations with African states. Ian Taylor noted at the time that, "politics - except where it relates to the familiar themes of sovereignty, stability and non-interference - rarely comes into Beijing's foreign policy in Africa" (Taylor, 1998, p.456). The notion of separate business and political realms has long informed the collective perceptions within the PRC's policy-making establishment and, within foreign policy statements, Chinese diplomats have often purported that commercial enterprise and political affairs are considered quite separate (Large, 2006; Corkin, 2013).

Rooted in respect for fundamental principles of Westphalian state sovereignty, it is this very claim to shun political involvement in accordance with a policy of non-interference that enabled China to appeal to African states as "a countervailing force" both to Western conditionalities and to the continent's reliance on Western sources for foreign investment and development

assistance in the post-Cold War era (Alden, 2007, p.59). Since Jiang Zemin visited the African continent in 1996 to pursue China's new emphasis on resource acquisition, Beijing has sought to reassure skeptical African governments that it offers economic assistance in line with the principles of mutual benefit, common development, and, in contrast with Western donors, "without political conditions" (Cited in: Alden, 2007, p.15). In this context, political affairs within African states were only relevant within Beijing's foreign policy to the extent that they reaffirmed the PRC's view that 'political stability', or regime stability, "comes first in a country's development", and would only be possible without Western political interference and attempts to impose liberal democracy throughout Africa (Taylor, 2009, p.98).

The PRC's stated position on the separation of its business ties from political involvement was welcomed by African elites in the early 1990s, and this was particularly the case among Africa's 'pariah regimes' shunned by the international community, such as Sudan and Zimbabwe, to whom China was viewed as a "welcome source of stability, a new strategic partner and a provider of development assistance and foreign investment" (Alden, 2007, p.60).¹⁶ In the late 1990s Sudan's Energy and Mining Minister, Awad Ahmed Jaz, praised his Chinese partners for focusing on trade issues: "the Chinese don't have anything to do with any politics or problems...they are very hard workers looking for business, not politics" (Cited in: Goodman, 2004).

Central to Chinese interests in the early 1990s, the elites of 'pariah regimes' such as Sudan commonly preside over significant extractive resources, usually in the form of energy or mineral resources (Alden, 2007, p.61). In contrast with other multinationals that were constrained by domestic political pressure and their own governments' sanctions on such regimes, it was the Chinese governments' foreign policy discourse of non-interference and the separation of commercial engagement from political interference, which enabled Chinese state-owned companies such as CNPC to enter markets and pursue investments in resource-rich pariah states.

¹⁶ Alden (2007) defines 'pariah regimes' as those that have "alienated Western governments due to their failings in governance and human rights, and, subject to international condemnation and even sanctions in the aftermath of the Cold War". See: pp. 60-61.

However, in practice, such a conceptual distinction between the economic and political realms in the African context is impossible to maintain in practice, particularly for an external power with embedded commercial interests within the host states' political economy. According to Taylor (2009), when formulating its Africa policy, Chinese policymakers have "appeared to not understand the complexities of African politics" (pp.9-10). Indeed, since the 1980s, the concept of 'neo-patrimonialism' has often been used to explain the "hybrid mix of personalised and bureaucratic logics of governance" and patronage politics of post-cold war African states where, as the distinction between the public and private realms blur, so does that between politics and economics (van de Walle, 2001, p.16). This is particularly the case in Africa's oil zones where, as Shaxson (2007) asserts, "economics *is* politics" and vice-versa (p.215).

While it has been argued that successive Sudanese states since independence in 1956 have been extractive in nature (Johnson, 2011, p.2), one of the key reasons behind the longevity of the current National Islamic Front (NIF)/National Congress Party (NCP) regime in Khartoum has been the production and export of oil from 1999 that "guaranteed a reliable, lucrative revenue stream" for the central state (Large and Patey, 2011b, p.180). As Taylor (2009) states, that many African neo-patrimonial regimes view continued control over resources for the individual advantage of its ruler and his clientelistic networks as a priority over broad-based national economic development may increasingly prove a problem for Beijing "as it attempts to craft coherent long-term developmental relationships according to its stated foreign-policy goals in Africa" (pp.12-13).

Moreover, it has been Beijing's ties with 'pariah regimes' such as Sudan and Zimbabwe that began to attract considerable international public attention and criticism during the first five years of the new millennium. Indeed, Tull (2008) has argued that the divergences between China's policy of non-interference and the intrusive approaches of Western states have "nowhere been more evident than in African countries that have been denounced as so-called pariah states by the Western community" (p.122). This has particularly been the case with Sudan where, Beijing's "blind-eye support" for the NCP has attracted particularly strong criticism within Sudan and has been consequential for the

PRC's broader international image (Large and Patey, 2011b, p.180) (see Chapter 3).

Through the case study of China's Sudan engagement, this research will attempt to draw out the process whereby "the problem of tying economic fortunes to the fate of a particular illegitimate regime", which had not been identified as an issue from the mid-1990s to 2004, increasingly became apparent to China (Alden, 2007, p.66). After 2005 a strict adherence to a policy of non-interference *in practice* and the separation of business from political complexities within the Sudanese context would limit Beijing's capacity to both display its credentials as a 'responsible power' and to protect its long-term oil interests in Sudan, introducing the need for China's policy to be adapted in practice to enable a more involved political engagement.

1.4.2.2. An elite-level engagement

The second defining feature of Beijing's foreign policy towards the African continent from the mid-1990s was China's engagement with African countries exclusively at the ruling elite level. According to Wang Jisi (1994), China's perception of world politics is decidedly "state-centered" as states are viewed to be the only credible actors within the international system (p.3), and it is this perception that has resulted in a tendency to deal only with Africa's ruling elites.

Alden and Hughes (2009) state that, whilst a strong attachment to the inviolability of state sovereignty is a fundamental springboard of Beijing's general foreign policy position, it is also beneficial "insofar as it allows peace to be made with those in Africa who maintain control over sought-after resources" (p.569). The PRC's courting of political elites has been most visibly expressed through Chinese construction of presidential palaces and national stadiums across the continent, with such gestures "creating in [African leaders] an affinity for and sense of gratitude toward Beijing" (Taylor, 2009, p.11). Indeed, such overtures, accompanied with Beijing's non-conditional approach to economic partnerships accorded with African elites, which sought investment and assistance without scrutiny (Taylor, 2007, p.144). China's inter-state links with Sudan are "firmly anchored within the rubric of South-South relations"

articulated in a common political rhetoric of “anti-colonialism, shared developing country status and respect for state sovereignty” which remains constant (Large and Patey, 2011b, p.183). However, such rhetoric applies to an engagement only at the elite level, which has been augmented “through forms of practical solidarity with the NIF/NCP government and the establishment of notable economic interests in Sudan” (Large and Patey, 2011b, p.183).

China’s bilateral ties with Sudan were initially deepened during the 1990s after President Jiang Zemin with Khartoum’s ruling elites which continued to be cultivated through high-level official visits, and the Chinese party-states’ implementation of foreign and economic policies were carried out only through engagement with Khartoum’s party and government institutions. Indeed, governmental relations were structured into official co-operation channels with the establishment of the Joint Sudanese-Chinese Ministerial Committee with the West Asia and North Africa Department of the MFA and the Department of Foreign Economic Cooperation (DFEC) of MOFCOM playing leading roles. Moreover, party-based ties were established between the ruling NCP of Sudan and the CPCID (Large, 2009, p.616).

Officials within the CPCID assert that the party’s diplomatic functions were particularly extended from the early 1990s to allow engagement also with opposition parties across the political board within African states in response to the emergent ‘second wave’ democratisation process that was underway in Africa at this time.¹⁷ Nevertheless, in practice CPCID officials continued to appear “more comfortable in dialogue with their counterparts in government, and wary of risking upsetting these relations by seriously engaging with those in opposition” (Raine, 2009, p70).

It is also apparent that Chinese NOCs approached their engagements with African countries in accordance with China’s state-centric policy framework. NOCs adopted a one-size-fits all approach towards risk in Africa during the early stages of their ‘going out’, which was premised on primarily developing “good relations with well-connected individuals” among ruling elites (Moreia, 2013, p.142). Indeed, this approach was an extension of the domestic business

¹⁷ Interview, CPCID diplomat, London, 6 March 2013

culture and practices within China whereby the building of personal relationships (*guanxi* 关系) of mutual trust and obligation enable the development of business relationships (Moreia, 2013, p.142). The way in which Chinese business communities in Africa organise themselves in relation to host societies also suggests that there is limited integration with local economies and communities, resulting in “enclave types of corporate profiles with limited spillover effects” (Broadman, 2007, p.30).

In many respects, Beijing’s elite-level engagement is an extension abroad of domestic politics within the Chinese state, where, as stated, civil society and the media remains weak and lacks any input into or scrutiny over policy-making (Alden and Hughes, 2009). Moreover, Beijing’s state-centric foreign policy approach is at heart an extension of China’s own desired politics abroad, as it “insists on representing itself in strict post-Westphalian terms as sovereign, unitary and rational” (Strauss and Saavedra, 2009, p.552), and China has engaged with African polities with a belief that such notions are mirrored in ‘Africa’ (Taylor, 2009).

However, not only does ‘Africa’ encompass a diverse array of differing sovereign states, political systems and ethnic groups, the post-colonial African state is widely stated to be an incomplete form as understood by the classic Weberian definition of statehood, whereby a national government claimed a monopoly of legitimate force in the territory under its jurisdiction (Weber, 1964, pp.115-6). Many African states have been referred to as ‘quasi-states’ because although their formal recognition by the UN (juridical sovereignty) has ensured their continued existence, the governments of quasi-states lack internally-derived ‘empirical sovereignty’ and are often “deficient in the political will, institutional authority, and organised power to protect human rights or provide socio-economic welfare” (Jackson, 1990, p.21). It subsequently follows that this lack of internally derived legitimacy has led to, in many African states, a dependency upon externally derived legitimacy, or ‘extraversion’, whereby the monopoly of access to foreign influence and capital and externally derived economic rents is utilised as a tool for internal control (Bayart, 1993, p.74).

The post-colonial Sudanese state can be characterised according to the features of 'quasi-statehood' as detailed above, as its successive northern riverine elites have maintained a pattern of governance based on ethnic and cultural discrimination of those Sudanese living in peripheral areas such as Darfur and the south, with the territorial control and influence of the central state reaching out only a few hundred miles from Khartoum (Collins, 2008, p.8). Meanwhile, the ruling elites in Khartoum began to gain the monopoly of access to multinational oil companies exploring for oil in the Sudan from the 1970s, which was used as a tool for internal control in the context of civil war (Keen, 2001). Moreover, after the GoS's first exports of oil in 1999, the ruling NCP was buttressed by new oil rent flows which had been made possible by Khartoum's turn to the 'Asia oil bloc' of NOCs from China, Malaysia and India in the development of its oil industry (Patey, 2010, p.620).

Viewed in this context, China's own policy approach "effectively shuts the door on other segments of African society where a budding concern spills over into outright hostility" (Alden and Hughes, 2009, p.570). As such, these 'hazards of engagement', familiar to long-established Western multinationals operating in African oil sectors, have been exacerbated by the Chinese approach of rapidly securing its resource interests through forging ties only with elites in states mired by political instability (Alden and Hughes, 2009, p.571). As Raine (2009) argues, this excessive focus on those in power is a "particular weakness in the politically dynamic landscape of Africa, where governments can come and go, and not always on predictable electoral cycles" (p.70).

However, when such 'hazards' began to emerge in the late 1990s and early 2000s within China's Sudan engagement, Beijing maintained a state-centric approach that translated into an over-reliance on the ruling elites in Khartoum to provide protection for Chinese economic investments on the ground, underpinned by a corresponding assumption that the state enjoyed both the capacity and internal influence within its own territory to protect Chinese interests (see Chapter 2).

However, the intensifying set of challenges faced by Beijing after 2005 would present the need not only for a deeper political involvement to protect China's

interests, but one that enabled its diplomats and companies to engage beyond and below traditional ties with Sudan's ruling NCP elites (see Chapters 3-4).

1.4.2.3. The autonomy of Chinese NOCs in conflict-prone petro-states

As it has been previously detailed, the 'going out' of CNPC from the early 1990s in fact predated the official proclamation of a 'Going Out' strategy by the Chinese government after 2000, and, as such, the early stages of NOCs' international expansion was characterised by their relative autonomy from central government directives (Xu, 2007, p.20). That CNPC initially sought to invest in African oil markets where competition from IOCs was absent in its early expansion abroad (1993-1999) was in part due to the company's need to gain experience operating overseas without competition from Western companies and also, because easily accessible opportunities in stable regions had been "snapped up", Chinese NOCs had "little alternative but to invest in less stable areas" (Bo, 2010, p.113).

Indeed, CNPC's first stop in Africa was Sudan, "a disreputable state mostly marginalised by the West since the 1990s", in which CNPC's objective was to explore the unique opportunity of "putting down roots in the notoriously oil-rich Sudan while the country was still on the international blacklist" (Soares de Oliveria, 2008, p.95). The primary goal of gaining experience abroad overrode concerns regarding the fact that the Sudanese government was deeply entrenched in protracted civil war with the south (see Chapter 2). While CNPC received broad state approval for its initial entrance into Sudan, as it was in part driven by key CPC officials linked to China's oil industry (Patey, 2014, p.94), and began to benefit from Beijing's broader provision of aid, credit lines and infrastructure investment 'package deals' for Khartoum, the subsequent expansion of CNPC's operations from the early 2000's proceeded with increasing autonomy from central government decision-making input.

Stepping out from under Beijing's wing to pursue energy investments from the early 1990s in states where the Chinese government assumed a position of 'non-interference', NOCs did not receive protection or insurance, nor advice or support from Beijing with regards to the political or security risks that they may

face operating in different politico-economic environments than they were accustomed to in China (Moreira, 2013, p.143). Indeed, it was not until 2001 that the state began to offer a safety net to Chinese companies as they explored new markets through the establishment of the China Export and Credit Insurance Corporation (Sinosure), which from this point also began to provide NOCs with guarantees to support their activities abroad (Raine, 2009, p.79).¹⁸ Moreover, at the time of CNPC's entrance into Sudan in the mid-1990s, CNPC employees were not provided with security or 'hostile environment' training, nor did the overseas arm of the company, CNPC International, house a department for overseas security or early warning to protect the company and its workers from threats faced.¹⁹

In addition, as an NOC without public shareholders like those that drive Western IOCs, and in line with an elite level engagement and approach to mitigating risk as discussed previously, CNPC was yet to see the value in developing local community level ties in Africa. In contrast, IOCs that have long operated within African resource-rich states had by the 1990s developed wide strategies to mitigate risks in unstable environments in which civil unrest or pervasive corruption may result in significant economic loss and broader reputational problems. IOCs began to invest significant financial resources in order to "sustain their societal license to operate", through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs and investments, environmental impact assessments and various forms of stakeholder consultations (Skedsmo et al., 2013, p.12).

It has also been observed that Chinese economic engagement in Africa more broadly is conditioned "as much by its structural position of relative inexperience and late entry into the field as its own 'Chinese' presuppositions about the correct way to engage in business" and, as such, Chinese business practices in Africa are extensions abroad of domestic practices within China (Strauss, and Saavedra, 2009, p.555). In the pursuit of profit within China, companies regularly circumvent environmental and labour regulations frequently through corrupt dealings with local state officials (Yan, 2004). Moreover, Jiang argues

¹⁸ See Sinosure, "Company Profile" (website): <http://www.sinosure.com.cn/sinosure/english/English.html> (accessed 24 January 2014)

¹⁹ Interview, CNPC, Beijing, China, 13 December 2010.

that under the Chinese development model over the past thirty years, the demand for energy has grown so rapidly that little attention was paid to environmental concerns and, with CSR at this time being a relatively foreign concept and civil society under a one party state in China being weak, many Chinese firms were “completely unused to being confronted with issues of transparency, CSR, civil society and NGO involvement in resource development and environmental assessment related to large-scale projects” (Jiang, 2009, p.604).

Chinese NOC's have only very recently begun to face such security risks in their operations in unstable operating environments abroad. Bo (2010) asserts that, in addition to the quantity of operations abroad that were increasingly located in conflict-prone petro-states, unlike other IOCs, Chinese NOCs hire a large number of Chinese oil workers overseas, which has amplified their vulnerabilities and risks that insecurity would affect Chinese citizens (p.111). However, once initial hazards began to emerge on the ground during the period of consolidation (2000-2004) of Chinese NOCs' oil investments abroad, because these investments had already been made and due to growing domestic production shortfalls in China, Chinese NOCs remained undeterred by threats in these conflict-prone areas at this time, as will be detailed in the case of Sudan in Chapter 2.

However, in Sudan, the need for CNPC to develop CSR practices and local community engagement would become increasingly apparent, particularly during peacetime Sudan after the CPA was signed in 2005, as attacks against oil infrastructure and workers became more frequent in comparison to during the second civil war. Such insecurity would again be heightened following the independence of Southern Sudan in 2011 amid inter-state tensions along the oil-rich border regions between the two states and as a result of violent conflict within South Sudan itself.

Moreover, the autonomy of CNPC from the Chinese government itself would become an increasing issue for both the company and China's foreign policy establishment. Along the trajectory of CNPC's engagement in Sudan, it became apparent that not only were the NOC's operations increasingly dictated by

profit, rather than Beijing's energy security imperatives, but also that CNPC's central investment position in Sudan would have wider ramifications for China's wider foreign policy and political interests (see Chapter 4). With "resource security at the heart of China's approach to the African continent", with its NOCs becoming a "significant feature of the African investment landscape", it is their commercial engagement in Africa's petro-states that have proved both the most controversial and consequential for Beijing's central leadership (Alden, 2007, p.41). Since 2005 there has been growing pressure on Chinese actors abroad to better improve coherence among their strategies to ensure that the 'Going Out' policy more broadly serves China's national priorities (Glaser, 2007, pp.2-5).

As such, in the context of both the increasing threats to CNPC's investments in Sudan and the wider international ramifications of its NOCs role in a 'pariah state', the Chinese leadership would seek to develop a delicate 'containment policy', as detailed previously, vis-à-vis CNPC. In contrast with CNPC's relative autonomy in the 1990s, along the trajectory of CNPC's Sudan involvement, Beijing faced the twin challenges of both seeking to regulate the behaviour of the increasingly autonomous CNPC so that it better aligned with China's energy and broader image interests, and seeking to assist CNPC to protect its investments from security threats and as the company struggled to maintain its oil concessions within the new state of South Sudan after 2011.

1.4.3. Lesson Learning: The Sudanese context and its impact on China

It is asserted here that the specific and broader lessons learnt by China's foreign policy implementing institutions in the case of Sudan pertains to the initial Chinese perceptions and understandings of the Sudanese context and its impact on China and China's role therein. Chinese actors have traditionally viewed the African context in very general terms as having a wholly positive impact on China, and perceptions of the causes of internal instability and conflict within Africa have been either externalised, through blaming Western interference, or depoliticised, through removing the role of the Sudanese state within the frame of reference. It will be argued in this thesis that many of these assumptions have been challenged as a result of China's direct experiences

within the Sudanese context, and has resulted in a reassessment of China's role in the resolution of African conflicts.

The formulation of China's policies towards individual African states and its regional policy during the 1990s was notable for an apparent lack of input provided by the consideration of *internal* situations within individual African polities. As further detailed in Chapter 2, during the 1990s and the early 2000s, China's perception of Africa's impact on Chinese interests were deemed to be wholly positive, both on the global political stage through shared opposition to liberal Western 'values', and in terms of the positive contribution of resource-rich African states to the expansion of NOCs investments abroad and Chinese energy security at home. More generally, He Wenping has stated that, traditionally, "once official relations were formed with a particular [African] country, it seems that such bilateral relations were put in a 'safebox' and sealed with 'friendship' forever" (He, 2010).

That Chinese companies, officials and diplomats viewed Africa's impact on China to be inherently positive also emanated from an optimistic outlook regarding African development and China's positive contribution. Based on China's own successful development experience and rapid economic growth over the past two decades, in contrast to Africa's traditional Western aid donors the Chinese foreign policy establishment and state-owned media express a deep optimism regarding the potential for African development, regardless of internal challenges.²⁰ Within this framework, China perceives its position as a leading 'developing country' playing a positive role in Africa 'beyond resources' through pursuing the new approach of 'win-win' 'mutual development' (He, 2007).

An additional reason behind the absent appreciation of internal African situations is that there has been a tendency within China's foreign policy establishment to perceive Africa as a country rather than a continent, and He Wenping (2007) asserts that Chinese diplomats, officials, and academics alike tend to view Africa as 'one'. It is apparent that even international relations

²⁰ Interview, Institute for West Asian and African Studies (IWAAS), Chinese Academy for Social Sciences (CASS), 12 April 2011.

scholars within what Shambaugh (2013) terms the 'Global South' school, which argues that China's main international identity and responsibility lies with the developing world, only since the 1990s have begun to "realise that there are various kinds of developing countries and it is not appropriate to simply lump them together" (p.38). Within the MFA foreign policy think tank CIIS, the study of African affairs is incorporated within the more general Department of Developing Country Studies.²¹

According to Li Anshan (2005), one of the most extensive debates within African studies in China, and continues today, has been on the process of African democratisation.²² From a Marxist historical-materialist theoretical perspective, which purports a linear, deterministic worldview that progress is made from one mode of production to the next, Chinese Africa scholars have focused on how the imposition of Western democratic political institutions on an alien culture has been disruptive of progress towards African modernisation and development through creating instability.

Within this framework, Chinese scholars and policymakers alike have predominantly viewed external factors, from the legacy of arbitrarily drawn colonial borders, to US efforts to promote democracy in Africa during and after the Cold War, to be a prime cause of contemporary local-level ethnic tribal conflict and civil unrest in Africa and an obstacle to nation building across the continent. Such perceptions have been based upon China's own domestic experience, from Mao Zedong's view that Africa's de-colonisation was similar to China's situation between the Boxer Rebellion, an anti-imperialist uprising in China at the turn of the 19th Century, and the May Fourth Movement of 1919, to what China's current leadership views as continued interference in its domestic affairs (Kuo, 2011).

According to China's perspective, regarding the resolution of African conflicts China has traditionally argued that external interference cannot fundamentally solve Africa's security problem. Within this framework, the Chinese preference

²¹ See the Department of Developing Countries Studies, China Institute for International Studies (CISS) Website, available at: http://www.ciis.org.cn/english/2010-11/04/content_3813489.htm (accessed 12 February 2014)

²² The overview of Chinese perspectives on Africa throughout much of this section is drawn from the literature surveyed in: Li (2005), pp. 70-71.

has been for 'African solutions to African problems', and China has been prone to "support a regional local consensus in response to crisis in an African state" (Van Hoeymissen, 2011, p.94).

In articulating China's own role in the resolution of African conflicts from the late 1990s, the Chinese foreign policy establishment was committed to a stance of 'non-interference' and non-involvement in Africa's domestic affairs. At the same time, however, Pang Zhongying (2005) notes how China simultaneously became increasingly active in UN peacekeeping in Africa from the early 1990s due to concerns about US uni-polarity and the corresponding desire to bolster 'traditional' peacekeeping practices based on consent and respect for sovereignty, combined with China's growing enthusiasm for multilateral activity as a result of the country's political and economic growth (pp.88-9).

In addition to *externalising* the dynamics of conflict in Africa, in the post-cold war context Chinese scholars have increasingly looked at under-development and poverty in African states as a root cause of conflict, an internal factor that has been primarily caused by non-political factors such as environmental degradation and climate change (Li, 2007, p.77). However, in exclusively focusing on *non*-political factors of internal conflict in Africa, Chinese studies exclude several other 'permissive factors' that make organised violence more likely.²³

As exemplified in the case of Sudan, internal conflicts are in fact often driven by a confluence of international, trans-national and domestic forces and can take on a mixture of economic, political, ethnic and religious characteristics.²⁴ Within the Sudanese context, African and Western scholars alike have focused on a number of 'permissive factors' including: the oppressive nature between the central state and Sudan's marginalised peripheral zones; ethnic tensions between Darfur's 'Arab' and 'African' populations heightened by manipulations by Khartoums' military and theocratic elites; the longstanding system of regional conflicts developed since the 1960s between Sudan, Chad and Libya; resource struggles between Arab nomadic herders and African pastoralists and, the sale

²³ Williams (2011) distinguishes 'permissive factors' from the 'trigger factors', which 'generate actions or policies that represent the conscious choices of particular actors to engage in political violence', see: p. 6.

²⁴ One notable exception here is some of the works of Li Anshan. See, for example: Li (2001)

of oil by the elites for its own benefit to the exclusion of the Sudanese populace (Williams, 2011; Jok, 2007; Carmody, 2008).

Fundamentally, during the 1990s little attention was paid by CNPC executives and Beijing's diplomats to the inevitable impact that Chinese investment in the context of Sudan's civil war would have upon local conflict dynamics, nor the subsequent reverberations that such an involvement may have for the security of Chinese investments on the ground nor China's wider international political interests. As such, this thesis seeks to draw out what Chinese foreign policy actors are learning about the African context and China's role therein, through focusing specifically on how many of these key perceptions and assumptions have been challenged within the Sudanese context.

1. 5. Methodology

1. 5. 1. A single-case study and its justification

The methodological approach of this research will be based on the use of an empirical, holistic single-case study of China's relations with Sudan, which also includes analysis of China-South Sudan relations once it separated from Sudan in July 2011. The rationale for using the method of a single case study, will be to undertake the "essential task...not [to] codify abstract regularities but to make thick descriptions possible, not to generalise across cases but to generalise within them" (Geertz, 1973, p.26). According to Stake, the case study methodology overlaps between an intrinsic case study (a better understanding of this particular case) and an instrumental case study (examining this case will provide insights into an issue or to redraw generalisation) (Stake, 2000, p.437).

On the one hand, the aim of this thesis will be to understand the dynamics of change and 'adaptive learning' within China's Sudan policy along the trajectory of a deepening engagement (its thick description), but on the other hand, to also make generalisations on (and open up new research space for) understandings about the challenges China is increasingly facing under the 'Going Out' strategy and the processes through which its foreign policy

institutions may respond. Indeed, as Levy (1994) states, whilst learning theory may not be able to predict outcomes, it can predict processes (p.123).

The case of China-Sudan and South Sudan relations has been selected for analysis because, in addition to Sino-Sudanese ties becoming the single most consequential African relationship within China's broader international relations, oil cooperation with Sudan was the first of its kind in Africa under the 'Going Out' strategy and thus a study of the relationship provides a unique opportunity to assess the evolution of change and learning processes within Chinese foreign policy in this context over time. Indeed, the establishment of oil-based Sino-Sudanese ties in fact predated the official proclamation of China's official 'Going Out' strategy in 2002. As the early stages of the 'going out' of Chinese NOCs was being formulated during the 1990s, Sudan was targeted as a long-term oil supply base and as an arena to support the global development of CNPC, which acquired its first equity oil stake concession in Africa in Sudan in 1997.

Moreover, China's 'all weather friendship' with Sudan and the ties that were established and cultivated with Khartoum's elites under Jiang Zemin's leadership during the 1990s served as a model for China's later engagements on the continent under the formal 'Going Out' strategy, coined by Hu Jintao as the "new type of strategic partnership" (cited in: *People's Daily*, 2009a). Despite how the internationalisation of China's role in Sudan during the Darfur crisis has become the most frequently cited case exemplifying the challenges China now faces in the international realm as a result of its deepening ties with 'petro states' and 'pariah regimes' in Africa, there has been a lack of in-depth theoretically-driven analyses of this case or, moreover, holistic accounts which place the Darfur crisis within the wider historical context of China's engagement with Sudan since the 1990s. Indeed, as the most visible and controversial case, Sudan is often misleadingly elevated in monolithic representations of China's entire continental engagement despite bearing its own specificities.

Certainly the 'internationalisation' of Sino-Sudanese ties in the context of the Darfur conflict reveals how Beijing has attempted to reconcile a faithful adherence to a principle of 'non-interference' in the internal affairs of other

states while reassuring the international community of its 'responsible image' as a fast rising power. Thus China's Sudan relations does serve as an exemplary case through which to illustrate the impact of such 'strategic partnerships' with 'pariah states' on China's relations with other established powers on the African continent, most importantly the US. However, it also reveals the impact of political agency of African states and other transnational and regional actors are having on Chinese foreign policy. Indeed, the specific context of the secession of southern Sudan in 2011 and the creation of a new Republic of South Sudan (RSS), where the majority of CNPC's Sudanese oil investments were to be re-located, also serves to illustrate how Beijing's sovereignty doctrine and principle of non-interference has in practice created problems for Beijing's ability to maintain its material interests in a challenging new political context of a triangular China-Sudan-South Sudan partnership.

Moreover, as Sudan remains one of the earliest and largest successful overseas energy projects undertaken by one of China's major state-owned energy companies, CNPC, it also serves as a crucial case through which to assess the shifting relationship between the Chinese state and its predominant state-owned oil company in the recent context of its global expansion. Indeed, the role of China's NOCs is still in a transition phase "between pursuing their own commercial interests and carrying out the evolving geopolitical strategies of their principal owner, the Chinese government" (Lewis, 2007, p.26). In the wider context of a globalised world in which 'geo-economics' is increasingly taking over from the geopolitics of the Cold War, many analysts and scholars in the West view China's NOCs as a strategic arm of the government competing with Western firms for control of strategic assets in the developing world. As such, uncovering the nature and dynamics of this relationship is of interest to students of China's contemporary international relations (Raine, 2009, p.144).

1. 5. 2. Methodological approach

In order to draw out the argument proposed in this thesis that the tactical adaptations that occurred within China's policy towards Sudan involved a process of 'negative learning', there remains the difficult problem of ascertaining how such learning is to be captured and measured. According to Levy (1994),

small-n intensive case studies that utilise a methodology of process-tracing may be better able to explore the nature of the intervening learning process (p.310). In mainstream qualitative research, within-case methods are largely aimed at the discovery and validation of causal mechanisms, and process tracing enables researchers to draw inferences about a hypothesised causal mechanism within the context of a historical case (Bennett and Elman, 2006, p.459). In order to draw out learning processes, this research shall adopt the process-tracing method throughout the analysis of this case study to assess how both words and actions change over time, drawing out inferences within internal Chinese debates that causally link these changes to events and feedback in the exogenous environment.

In addition, Bennett and Elman (2006) argue that a case study analysis that runs from a suitably chosen beginning to the end of the story is likely to be more persuasive than one that starts or ends at an odd or unconvincing moment, and those that have fewer noteworthy breaks in the causal story are to be favored over those that have many (p.460). Indeed, it is the “insistence on providing [a] continuous and theoretically based historical explanation of a case, in which each significant step toward the outcome is explained by reference to a theory, that makes process tracing a powerful method of inference” (Bennett and George, 2005, p.30).

The timeframe for this research will be the 20-year period mediating between 1993 and 2013. The starting point of 1993 marks the initiation of China’s contemporary formal state-state ties with Sudan following its emergence as an international ‘pariah’ with the US government listing Sudan as a state-sponsor of terrorism. In contrast, the Chinese states’ adherence to the principle of ‘non-interference’ in the internal affairs of other countries and subsequent elite based ties with the regime in Khartoum not only allowed for the continuation and deepening of official ties, but also enabled CNPC to enter into the Sudanese oil market from the mid-1990s in which it faced little competition from US multinational oil companies that were prevented by Washington from investing.

The 1993-1999 period covers the successful entrance and expansion of CNPC’s oil interests in Sudan’s oil industry in the context of a protracted north-

south civil war, whilst the 2000-2004 period represents the initial challenges the company faced in consolidating commercial oil-based interests, namely, attacks by local militia groups and sub-state and international NGOs criticism of CNPC's embedded role in the political economy of war in Sudan. Moreover, it also covers increased insecurity in Sudan in the context of the emergence of the Darfur conflict in 2003 just as the north-south civil war was coming to an end. However, within this terrain of emerging challenges, Chinese government and corporate actors continued to implement a tactical approach defined by the separation of politics from economics, the maintenance of elite-based ties and, ultimately, non-involvement in the resolution of Sudanese conflicts.

The period between 2005 and 2013 represents an evolving era of change and tactical adaptation to China's foreign policy approach as the challenges emanating from within the Sudanese context were compounded after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. Indeed, the CPA introduced the South Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) as significant political actors within the Sudanese space, the worsening of local-level insecurity despite the CPA, and the internationalisation of China's Sudan relationship in the context of the Darfur crisis from 2006. Moreover, the navigating of the south's political path towards independence in 2011 represented a heightened challenge to the maintenance of CNPC's oil interests in the south thereafter, and post-secession political tensions between Sudan and South Sudan resulted in the shutdown of southern oil production. The final point of analysis is December 2013 as it marked the compounded insecurity challenges on the ground which for the first time in the Sudanese context resulted in the evacuation of CNPC oil workers as the new nation of South Sudan rapidly descended towards civil war.

According to learning theorists, collective learning at the governmental-institutional level can be identified in changes in thought across broad-based political and intellectual debates vis-à-vis negative experiences in the exogenous environment, and institutional changes in behaviour so as to enable governments to respond to external events and challenges (Legvold, 1991). It has been stated that the "changing norms of intellectual debate" can have important effects on policy behaviour (Tetlock, 1991, p.41). In the case of

unexpected outcomes, “a wider range of individuals and organisations are likely to become involved in the debate over policies and lessons”, and when an individual draws a particular lesson from an experience, “it is likely that at least some others who share the same prior belief and undergo a similar experience will draw a similar lesson” (Bennett, 1999, p.94).

As such, within the framework of ‘adaptive learning’, the candidate will seek to draw out the “changes in schools of thought” within internal debates among China’s implementing institutions and think tanks during the process of China’s foreign policy adaptation that have produced “collectively learned inferences from experience” (Levy, 1994, p.223). Indeed, it has been stated that the public writings and internal discussions of academics, intellectuals and ministry officials “provide a window” through which to look into the ideas and domestic debates that define the policymaking context in China (Jakobson and Knox, 2010, p.34).

The candidate asserts it is possible to draw out ‘negative learning’ if a causal link between negative feedback in the environment and shifting debates within governmental institutions can be detected. As such, the research shall monitor governmental debates vis-à-vis ‘crisis points’ as they emerged along the trajectory of heightened challenges between 2005 and 2013. It shall then seek to draw out causal linkages between changes in the centre ground of governmental debates vis-à-vis experience in the exogenous Sudanese context to the subsequent institutional adaptations of China’s foreign policy in practice.

However, as the bureaucracies and institutions that make up governments are often in intense competition with each other for influence and power, as according to bureaucratic and organisational models in FPA, there is an issue of being able to ascertain whether policy changes at this level of analysis occur as a result of learning or shifts in materially based political coalitions (i.e. one group’s policy position coming into favour) (Allison, 1971). Bennett (1999) states that policy changes that result from learning that cuts across material coalitions is a likely explanation if one can identify that the policy changes are a response to unexpected outcomes which challenge collectively held ideas across a governments’ institutional system (p.95).

The candidate recognises that the governmental agencies implementing Beijing's foreign economic policies do diverge with regards to interests, for example between MFA and the more profit-oriented MOFCOM, however this thesis argues that the unexpected challenges that Beijing's policy implementers experienced within the Sudan case did challenge collectively held ideas.

At the same time, however, it is also crucial to be aware of the well-known potential limitations to collective learning among foreign policy institutions. For example, as Tetlock states, "the normative environment is not, of course, always quite so hospitable to creative questioning of the underlying premises of policy", and a "groupthink-like atmosphere sometimes falls on intellectual debate over policy issues" (Tetlock, 1991, p.41). This is particularly the case within the policymaking structures of the Chinese party-state, in which the role of the academic community and research think tanks is predominantly to serve the policy-making community, rather than to criticise particular policies.²⁵

In order to address the issues of validity and reliability within qualitative research, the process of 'triangulation' was considered throughout the course of this research inquiry. Triangulation is a process of "using multiple perceptions to clarify meanings...or interpretations...[and to] clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen" (Stake, 2000, pp.443-4). As such, data collected from primary sources, secondary sources, and interviews were all cross-referenced with each other, so as to reinforce the assertion of particular views (Davies, 2001, pp.73-80).

The research is based on qualitative research conducted through extensive fieldwork and intensive desktop research. In-depth interviews with qualified informants have constituted a major primary source. Key fieldwork was conducted in 2010 (September-December in China), 2011 (January-September in China; October-December in South Sudan), 2012 (March-May in South Sudan; August in China; November-December in South Sudan) and 2013 (January in China). Altogether there were 30 in-depth interviews in South

²⁵ Interview, Shanghai Institutes for International Affairs (SIIA), Centre for West Asian and African Studies, 14 January 2013.

Sudan and 20 in China. Interviewees in both countries included government officials from the ministries of energy, foreign affairs, commerce, national banks, embassy diplomats, and state-owned companies including national oil companies. In addition, a host of think tank and university scholars and journalists were also interviewed.

An additional 20 interviews over the period between 2008-2014 were conducted in the US, the UK, Kenya, and Ethiopia where interviewees included energy experts, scholars, and government officials and embassy diplomats. All the interviews were conducted on the basis of an interview-guide with open-ended questions, and thus were semi-structured and in-depth in order to allow for a fairly open framework, and to allow both the interviewer and the interviewee the flexibility to probe for details or discuss any more sensitive issues as they arose.

Additional secondary sources that have been analysed include relevant books and journal articles, media statements (particularly those issued by the government-owned Xinhua News Agency), and public statements issued by the relevant governmental institutions and implementing agents of China's foreign economic policies in Sudan.

Chinese language academic journal articles and think tank policy reports have also been extensively utilised and analysed throughout this thesis. In light of the opaque nature of the Chinese political system and Beijing's foreign policy decision-making processes, assessing the discourse of Chinese academics and ministry think tank analysts can "provide insights into evolving positions on foreign policy" in China (Alden and Large, Forthcoming, p.3).

Studies of China's academic and think tank environment reveal how research institutions in China are broadly intertwined with the CPC party-state (Abb, 2013, p.10; Zhu 2012; Bondiguel and Kellner, 2010, p.11). This is particularly the case with semi-official Chinese research institutes, such as CASS, which are headed by government-nominated personnel and receive core government funds for regular research tasks assigned to them. The policy debates and recommendations of such semi-official institutes are thus "somewhat shaped by government directives" (Zhu, 2012). As such, Abb asserts that by analysing the

topics that these institutes are assigned to research and the debates that evolve as a result, “it is possible to gauge what issues the [Chinese] administration is focused on” as well as “the impulses acting on Chinese decisionmakers” (Abb, 2013, pp.30, 10).

Prominent Chinese academic institutions such as Peking University, Fudan University and Tsinghua University are seen to be comparatively more autonomous than semi-official institutes because they receive considerably less government funding (Abb, 2013, p.10). Nevertheless, they are not entirely independent from the party-state, as scholars in China are more generally expected to “contribute to the cause of regime preservation” (Abb, 2013, p.10).

As discussed previously, China’s senior decision-makers regularly consult leading intellectuals at prominent universities as they struggle to fathom the complex nature of international affairs and the multitude of challenges China faces abroad (Jakobson and Knox, 2010, p.34). Moreover, Chinese government ministries are increasingly utilising Chinese scholars “to develop the normative basis for shifts in China’s foreign policy” towards a particular regions (Alden and Large, Forthcoming, p.3).²⁶

As such, Chinese think tank research and scholarly debates can be seen to both reflect and influence discussions on key foreign policy issues confronting the government (Alden and Large, Forthcoming, p.3). Within this thesis, Chinese language academic texts and think tank reports are analysed in order to draw out internal debates regarding Chinese experiences and responses to challenges within the Sudanese context, and under the ‘Going Out’ strategy more generally.

1. 5. 3. Structure of the thesis

This thesis is structured into 7 chapters, including the introduction and conclusion. Having situated the research and provided an analytical framework to guide the research here, Chapter 2 offers a detailed description of the broad

²⁶ Alden and Large use the example here of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ approach to Chinese academics to elaborate the case for a ‘new security concept’ which in 2003 brought about China’s shift towards multilateral engagement in ASEAN (see Alden and Large, Forthcoming, p.3).

evolution of China-Africa relations since the founding of the PRC in 1949 and China-Sudan relations since the establishment of formal diplomatic ties in 1956.

The purpose of this chapter is to show how economic and specifically resource-based interests since the 'reform and opening up policy' in the 1978 have replaced the ideological imperatives that had driven China's Africa policy during the Cold War. Moreover, it details how the advent of oil cooperation in Sino-Sudanese relations in the 1990s led China's NOC to become deeply inserted into Sudan's local political economy, and, as initial challenges emerged in this context between 2000-2004, Chinese actors responded with the continuation of tactical beliefs and a strict adherence to the principles that have been at the core of China's broader foreign policy since the 1950s.

The period of change and tactical adaptation within China's Sudan policy between 2005 and 2013 will be described in Chapters 3 and 4, which are divided into assessing these changes according to two distinct themes. Chapter 3 details change and adaptation in China's approach vis-à-vis the issues of external intervention and involvement in conflict mediation in Sudan and South Sudan, while Chapter 4 describes change and adaptation in relation to the secession of South Sudan and attempts to 'contain' CNPCs interests in the Sudanese context.

In Chapter 5, the candidate then analyses the process of collective 'specific lesson' learning by Chinese foreign policy institutions in response to 'crisis points' that occurred along this trajectory of adapting (as detailed in Chapters 3 and 4). Chapter 6 then seeks to assess the series of 'broader lessons' that Chinese foreign policy implementers have learnt regarding the nature of internal conflict in Sudan and China's evolving peace and security role therein. The concluding remarks in Chapter 7 seek to summarise how we can understand change in the case of China-Sudan relations and its broader implications for assessing learning within China's foreign policy under the 'Going Out' strategy.

CHAPTER 2. FROM IDEOLOGY TO OIL: THE EVOLUTION OF CHINA-AFRICA RELATIONS AND THE CASE OF SUDAN

In detailing the evolution of China's relations with Africa since the founding of the PRC in 1949, this chapter seeks to draw out the broad shift in China's engagement from the Maoist period (1949-1977) which was motivated by ideological and strategic imperatives in the context of the Cold War, to one that was driven primarily by economic considerations following China's 'reform and opening up' (1978-1999) with a focus on the growing primacy of resource-seeking, and particularly the development of oil-based ties. Moreover, in detailing this broad shift within the historical context of China's Sudan relations 'before and after oil' (1956-2004), it will reveal how the advent of oil cooperation led to the insertion of China's leading NOC into the Sudanese political economy and the development of a more substantive and consequential Chinese role in Sudan.

The overall aim of detailing the foundation of oil-based ties between China and Sudan is to draw out the tactical foreign policy approach (namely, the separation of politics from economics, an elite-based engagement, and the relative autonomy of China's leading NOC) that achieved the strategic goal of facilitating the successful entrance of CNPC into Sudan's oil sector and, crucially, which characterised China's response when initial challenges emerged within the Sudanese context (2000-2004).

This will serve to reveal continuity within China's broad African engagement since the 1950s during this early shift towards economic-based ties; namely, the fact that China's interests and policies continued not to be effected or determined by local developments within African environments and a strict adherence in practice to China's fundamental foreign policy principles of respect for state sovereignty and non-interference.

2.1. Historical Background of China's Foreign Policy towards Africa

China has a long but chequered history in Africa dating back to when indirect trade links were first made during the 15th Century. Zheng He, an explorer and statesman during China's early Ming Dynasty, had led three naval expeditions between 1412 and 1422 that reached eastern Africa (Dreyer, 2007, pp.75-144). When China looked to the continent during the 19th Century, it did so "gloomily" as a "negative example of the fate which awaited their country if they failed to rise to the challenge of foreign invasion and foreign influence" (Snow, 1994, p.283). It was not until Mao Zedong's founding of the PRC in 1949, after which he claimed that China had 'stood up' and rid China of 'foreign domination', that a positive perception of the African continent developed and Africa began to occupy a key position within Chinese international relations.

Mao believed that his country could set a positive example for Africa and, as independence movements arose across the continent, the Chinese leader compared the state of Africa with China's position between the period between the Boxer Rebellion and the Fourth of May Movement (Snow, 1994, p.284). From the 1950s, the Chinese began to look back on their in fact rather chequered history with Africa as one of principled continuity, drawing on their common experiences under European oppression during the 19th Century (Alden and Alves, 2008).

Within Chinese official rhetoric, the most prominent symbolic connection linking China and Africa within this framework of anti-colonial solidarity has been that of the British imperial figure General Charles Gordon. Although Gordon had in fact helped prop up the Qing emperor in the early 1860s through leading the Ever Victorious Army that had suppressed the Taiping Rebellion (Platt, 2012, pp113-140), the Chinese Communist Party leadership reformulated this narrative to foster ties based on shared experiences with African countries, particularly Sudan (Large and Patey, 2011, p.5)

Indeed, during the Maoist era Gordon was increasingly depicted as the key mobiliser of the imperial forces that defeated China during the Opium Wars (Lee et al, 2012, p.436). The fact that he was later killed by the Sudanese Mahdist

rebels in 1885 after serving as governor general of the Turko-Egyptian Sudan was hailed by both Chinese and Sudanese officials as a rare case of genuine common colonial experience between China and Africa (Chen, 1980; Large and Patey, 2011, p.5).

2. 1. 1. Ideology and Principles: Mao and the Third World (1949-1977)

China's foreign policy towards Africa during the Maoist period was incorporated into Mao's broader 'Third World policy', particularly in the global context of superpower rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union (SU) from the 1950s. During this period Chinese foreign policy was declared to be firmly anchored upon the principle of Third World solidarity "in a common struggle against both superpowers to maintain world peace" which took on a particularly revolutionary ideological tone following the deepening of tensions between China and the Soviet Union in 1956 (Kim, 1984a, p.178).

China's relationship with Africa during this period was guided by a broader set of foreign policy principles, the 'Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence', which were developed in response to China's perception of geo-political realities at the time. The Five Principles of respect for sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, noninterference, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence, were first initiated by China with India and Burma in 1954 and were later revealed by the Chinese premier Zhou Enlai and the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharal Nehru at the historic Bandung Conference of twenty-nine African and Asian countries in 1955. They became the "basic principles of Chinese foreign policy" and were characterised as a "joint Sino-Third World normative venture" (Kim, 1989, p.152).

Certainly, the Five Principles were intended to become a "powerful force of morality and justice" in international relations (Kim, 1989, p.152), however, they were also overtly strategic in origin. The intention of Bandung was to cement Afro-Asian solidarity in the face of Cold War political divisions, and placed Africa and the Third World firmly in the 'intermediate zone' between the socialist and imperialist camps in Mao's worldview (Cheng and Shi, 2009, p.88). In addition, Mao had also sought to shore up support in Africa and the broader Third World

to prevent US from blocking China's attempts to enter the United Nations and also to curb Taiwan's attempt to shore up influence in Third World and garner support for Beijing's 'One China' policy (Ogunsanwo, 1974, p.71).

The peaceful coexistence line began to merge into a more 'militant anti-imperialist' policy soon after the Bandung conference following the Sino-Soviet dispute in 1956 (Van Ness, 1971, p.13). Stepping up his revolutionary plans at home and abroad, Mao highlighted the leading role that China would play in promoting and supporting revolutionary struggles against the imperialist superpowers in Asia, Africa and Latin America. A tension between the Five Principles and an international discourse dominated by a language of revolution and rebellion became evident as China was drawn into various proxy wars across Africa, from Mozambique and Angola to Algeria, which was arguably seen to compromise China's principles particularly regarding non-interference (Snow, 1988, p.96). Nevertheless, Chinese intellectuals assert that Mao's foreign policy had been in line with the United Nations and the general movement towards decolonisation in world affairs that had legitimised the transfer of national-self determination to local peoples, and China was supporting Third World countries' resistance to imperial interference (Gill, 2007).

Moreover, whilst China's overall strategy towards the Third World at the time was overtly radical and ideological in asserting an anti-imperialist offensive, it is important to note that Beijing's tactics were also "astutely pragmatic", as it sought to build a broad alliance on several levels with both communist and non-communist governments (Van Ness, 1971, p.16). Beijing's core preference was "to stabilise relations with established governments" of the Third World that were in the process of 'decolonising', which in China's view "provided firmer opposition to the superpowers, rather than to cultivate revolutionary groups" (Shichor, 1979, p.5). Such pragmatic considerations were evident throughout China's Third World engagements at the time, such as in Sudan, French Somaliland, Iraq, Kashmir, and Burma where in each case Beijing had established and was maintaining diplomatic relations with the governments under attack by revolutionary movements with which it sought to oppose the superpowers (Van Ness, 1971, p.99).

Indeed, it is pertinent that China's basic attitudes, position and policies "were governed by a more general appraisal of the global situation" and the most effective approach through which to oppose the superpowers than by local domestic developments in the Third World per se (Shichor, 1979, p.3). As such, any shifts or changes in China's Cold War policies vis-à-vis Africa and the Third World were guided only by perceptions of *international* developments, as displayed in the fact that at times when Mao Zedong perceived that the superpowers were in retreat, the Chinese tended to lose interests or became indifferent to internal affairs in the Third World (Shichor, 1979, p.3).

2. 1. 2. Economic pragmatism: The reform period (1978-1999)

An evident shift in China's Africa policy after 1978 occurred within the broader context of domestic and international change following the death of Mao Zedong in September 1976, as Deng Xiaoping sought to address China's pressing economic situation under the 'reform and opening up' policy. Indeed, a general shift took place within policymaking from the primacy of ideology (the 'politics in command model') to an emerging economic pragmatism (the 'modernisation in command model'), which inevitably caused "a general decline in Chinese normative politics" (Kim, 1984a, p.183).

Within the realm of foreign policy, Chinese activism generally declined as China focused inwards, increasingly withdrawing from international conflicts and abstaining on most decisions in the UN Security Council (UNSC) of which it had become a member in 1971, and also as a result of the opening of Sino-American relations in the early 1970s and the reopening of Sino-Soviet relations in the 1980s.²⁷ However, in order to reassure the Third world of its 'independence' from superpowers despite this recent rapprochement, China announced a new 'independent' foreign policy at the Twelfth National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in September 1982, and reaffirmed that China's relations would continue to be governed by the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (Yu, 1988, p.856).

²⁷ For further details of China's foreign policy under Deng Xiaoping, refer to: Zhao (2001).

With China's Third World membership re-instated, Africa reassumed a key role within China's foreign policy during the 1980s. However the drivers of this policy had clearly shifted from ideology to economic pragmatism. During Premier Zhao Ziyang's Africa tour to eleven countries between December 1982 and January 1983, China articulated this new drive within its Africa policy through the 'Four Principles of Sino-African Economic and Technical Cooperation'. These principles - mutual benefits, practical results, diversity in form, and common development – emphasised a re-orientation in China's Africa policy towards economic results in line with China's emerging domestic developmental priorities (Yu, 1988, p.856). However, also as a result of China's new prioritising of internal modernisation and limited resources, Zhao also announced the down-sizing of China's aid projects from large-scale technical assistance to smaller investments with quicker returns and, as such, the reemphasis on rhetoric of Third World, or 'South South', cooperation in line with the 'Five Principles' was also intended to skim over this reduction in foreign aid (Cheng and Shi, 2009, p.89).

However, it was China's Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989, which would mark a watershed in its strengthened Africa relations from the early 1990s (Taylor, 1998, p.445). Following significant criticism of China's human rights record in the West following Tiananmen, African leaders had been quick to show their solidarity for Beijing's decisive response, and China began to refocus its attentions back to the Third World in its bid to resist Western 'hegemonism' (Taylor, 1998, p.445). Moreover, China was increasingly motivated by the political imperative of seeking to defend its 'One China' policy in response to Taiwan's enhanced diplomatic efforts in Africa from the early 1990s (Raine, 2009, p.46).

Local-level political dynamics within African states continued not to be deemed significant as China's priority in the early 1990s was the 'macro-level' goal of cultivating partnerships of solidarity, based on 'South-South' cooperation as common enemies of 'neo-imperialism', with African governments. Both Chinese and African elites have long held deep suspicion of criticism of their regimes on the grounds of 'western centric' norms of human rights and liberal democracy, and China tapped into such suspicions in Africa by emphasising human rights

such as 'economic rights', rather than individual rights as conceptualised in the West (Taylor, 2009, pp.94-5). In this context, Chinese aid to African countries also rapidly increased immediately following Tiananmen from US\$60.4 million in 1988 towards 13 countries, to US\$374.6 million to 14 African states in 1990 (Taylor, 2004, p.87).

China's continued rhetoric of south-south solidarity also appeared to gloss over a shift in China's approach vis-à-vis African conflict in the post-Cold War era. In contrast with China's direct role in various proxy wars of national liberation in Africa during the Maoist period in an effort fend off 'superpower imperialism', Beijing increasingly supported an emerging African trend towards buttressing regional, particularly African Union (AU), mechanisms to resolve internal conflicts in Africa in opposition to Western 'interventionist' efforts through the UN.

China perceived such 'African solutions to African problems' to have "a less intrusive impact on third world countries' sovereignty than those stemming from the global collective security system led by the UNSC" (Van Hoeymissen, 2011, p.93). Chinese analysts Huang Zhaoyu and Zhao Jinfu proclaimed that at the UNSC, "China dares to speak out to maintain justice for African nations, support African countries to independently handle their internal affairs and to equally participate in international affairs" (Huang and Zhao, 2009, p.67). Not only was this perception informed by Beijing's sustained foreign policy impulse to facilitate 'developing world' solidarity, but has since the 1990s also served China's strategic interests, as this "willingness to support African views strengthens its own ties to African leaders" in that they no longer have to rely on traditional Western states, and especially ex-colonial powers, to represent their interests on the UNSC (Saferworld, 2011, p.63).

Moreover, that the 'Five Principles' and the rhetoric of 'south-south solidarity' were reapplied with vigor following Tiananmen, was not only in line with China's interests in garnering a broad value-based opposition to the West, but also belied an increasing shift in China's Africa policy towards other more materially-based 'macro-level' goals vis-à-vis Africa. As China's domestic economic development accelerated, its leaders became increasingly focused on

encouraging Chinese manufacturers and SOEs to take advantage of the commercial opportunities presented by Africa's economic reform programs in the 1990s through joint ventures and economic cooperation (Taylor, 2009, p.14).

The growth of China-Africa commercial ties in the 1990s were facilitated through a plethora of high-level government exchanges, with Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen visiting 14 African countries between June 1989 and June 1992, which were also a "preparatory stage for the full revival of Africa in China's foreign policy" that emerged at the start of the 21st century (Alden and Alves, 2008, pp.53-4).

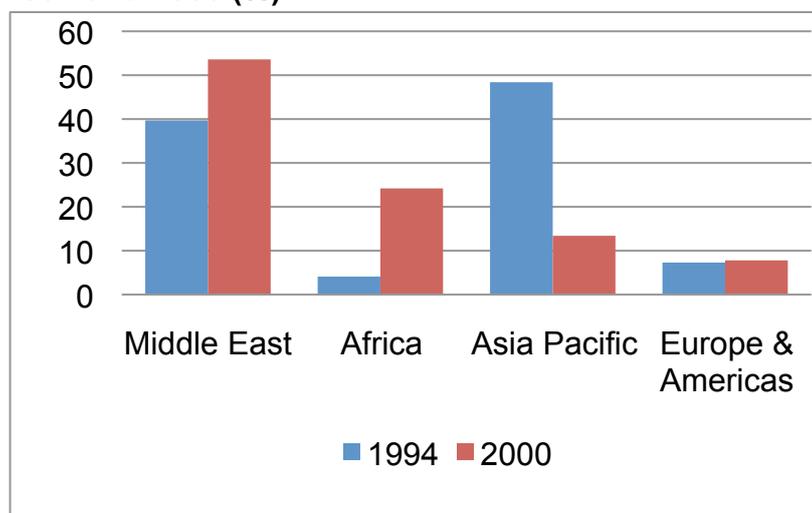
It is stated that it was during the 1996 Africa tour that Jiang Zemin launched the notion of establishing the multilateral Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), through which to foster economic ties particularly through trade and joint exploration of natural resources, which was formally created in 2000 (Alden and Alves, 2008, p.54).

As stated previously, of key importance to this thesis is growing interest of both the Chinese government and Chinese companies in Africa's natural resources, particularly crude oil, which emerged especially after China became a net importer of oil from 1993. Figure 2.1, below, details how Africa's share in China's total oil imports increased dramatically between 1994 and 2000 from 4.1% and 24.4%, respectively.

Prior to 1992, Angola was the only African energy supplier to China. Beijing increased its Angolan imports substantially from 1993 (Cheng and Shi, 2009, p.105), and by 2000 it was the top source of African crude oil for China, contributing 12.3% of China's total oil imports that year (see figure 2. 2., p.95). Although Sudan accounted for 4.7% of China's total oil imports and was its second highest source of crude oil for Africa in 2000 (see table 2. 1., below), until 2000 the presence of Chinese NOCs equity oil investments in Africa were confined exclusively to Sudan, since CNPC first became a major stakeholder in Sudan's Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Consortium (GNPOC) in 1997, and

Sudan accounted for 50% of Chinese NOCs total foreign oil production by 2000 (Downs, 2000, p.53).

Figure 2. 1. Regional shares of China’s crude oil imports, 1994 and 2000 (%)



Source: Cheng and Shi, 2009, p. 104.

Table 2. 1. Top African crude oil sources for China, 2000

Country	% China's total oil imports
Angola	12.3%
Sudan	4.7%
DR Congo	2.1%

Source: Yearbook of China's Economic Foreign Relations and Trade, 2002.

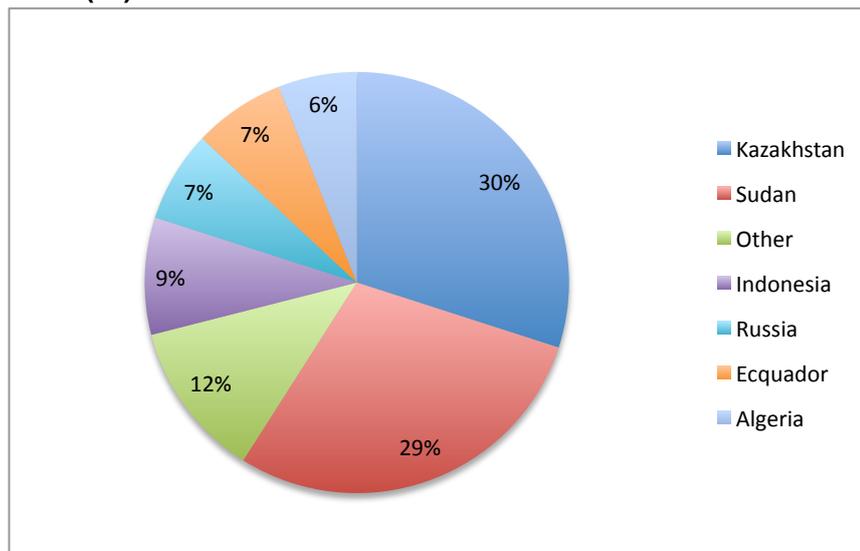
CNPC's acquisition of equity stakes in Sudan in 1997 was the first major investment of this type by a Chinese NOC in Africa, and by 2008 CNPC had amassed assets worth about \$7 billion in Sudan (Downs, 2010, p.86). In 2007, CNPC's Sudan operations had become the company's second highest source of overseas oil production (see figure. 2. 3., p.95).

As such, Sudan is "first and foremost a key investment destination" for Chinese NOCs in Africa (Large and Patey, 2011a, p.16), however it has also assumed

an important role within China's total oil imports from Africa and the world more generally, as by 2011 Sudan was China's seventh main oil supplier (see figure 2. 3., below).

The growth of China's oil imports from Sudan which began in 1999 after Khartoum began to export crude (which is detailed later in this chapter), from when CNPC also began to reap profits from its original investment in 1997, was a key point from which the CNPC's 'going out' to Sudan gained wide approval from the Chinese government.²⁸

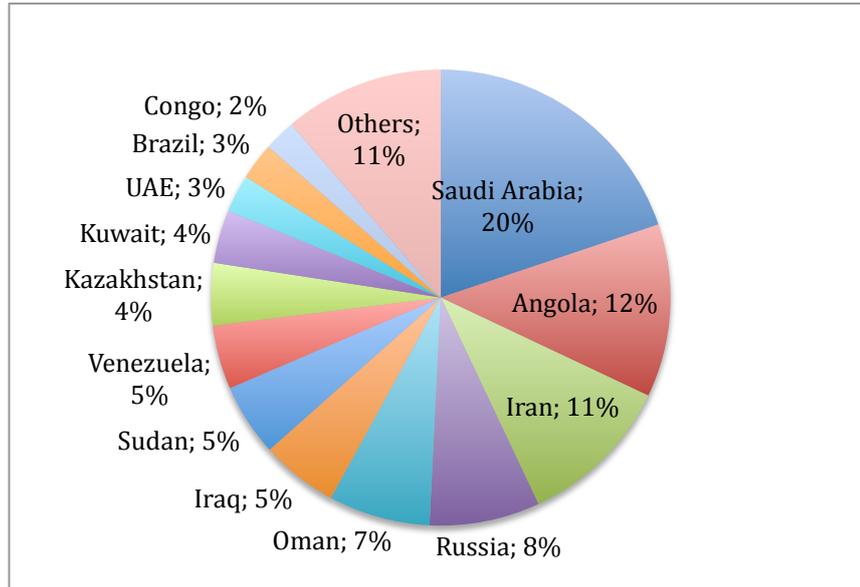
Figure 2. 2. Overseas liquid production of China's NOCs, 2007 (%)



Source: Downs, 2010, p. 85.

²⁸ Interview, CNPC, Beijing, China, 13 December 2010.

Figure 2. 3. China's crude oil imports by sources, 2011 (%)



Source: US Energy Information Administration (EIA) statistics, 2011

As such, CNPC's investments in Sudan's oil industry from the mid-1990s represented a prelude to the Chinese government's proclamation of an official 'Going Out' strategy in the 21st century under which NOCs were encouraged to secure exploration and supply contracts with Africa's oil producing states. Moreover, the Chinese governments' high-level 'oil diplomacy' vis-à-vis African governments in support of its NOCs efforts was also first developed during the 1990s (Zweig and Bi, 2005, p.104). For example, during his visit to Nigeria in 1997, Premier Li Peng signed two oil exploration agreements for the Chad River Basin and the Niger River delta (Cheng and Shi, 2009, p.104).

Detailing the evolution of China's Africa relations since 1949 reveals how pragmatic economic imperatives and China's interest particularly Africa's reserves crude oil, have become significant drivers within Beijing's Africa policy since the 1990s. However, it also serves to draw out how the 'Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence' have been reasserted within China's foreign policy rhetoric of 'south-south solidarity' in the post-Cold War era. As Alden and Alves (2008) have stated, it is the "all-purpose vocabulary" of the 'Five Principles', whose sweeping generalisations are able to "encompass a broad range of policies that seemingly transcend the shifts in ideology and application" that have come to characterise China's contemporary foreign policy towards Africa (p.55).

2.2. China-Sudan Relations 'Before and After Oil' (1956-2004)

The final part of this chapter seeks to exemplify the evolution of China's Africa policy within the case of Sudan since 1956, particularly in order to draw out how the advent of oil ties has resulted in a deepening Chinese role within Sudan's internal politico-economic environment. Moreover, it will also reveal how the continuity of China's foreign policy rhetoric in line with the 'Five Principles' since the 1950s defined how China would respond to initial challenges as they emerged within the Sudanese context between 2000 and 2004.

2. 2. 1. After independence: principles and pragmatism

With the establishment of formal diplomatic ties between China and Sudan on 4th February 1959, the parameters of Beijing's policy towards Khartoum were defined according to both deep-seated principles and the pragmatic pursuit of strategic goals in the early stages of the Cold War. From the outset, Beijing's wider foreign policy rhetoric of 'Afro-Asian' solidarity was grounded tangibly within its 'special relationship' with Sudan due to their common history of colonial oppression as personified by the historic figure of 'Chinese' Gordon (Large, 2009, p.613). The killing of Gordon at the hand of the Mahdi was resurrected within China as a symbol in China-Sudan relations, representing a 'glorious phase' in Sudan's anti-colonial struggle (Pen, 1978), and in the official narrative, the Sudanese "succeeded in exacting revenge on Gordon for China in what is portrayed as an act of just anti-colonial resistance" (Large, 2009, p.613).

The core principles of mutual respect for non-interference and mutual respect for sovereignty as enshrined at Bandung also resonated directly with China's own domestic imperatives. Indeed, rather than being affected by Sudan's own internal politics, Beijing had been primarily concerned about Khartoum's links with Taiwan before 1959 (Large 2011b, p.160). Following its independence from Egypt on 1 January 1956, Sudan had responded by affirming the 'One China' policy and became the fourth African country to recognise the PRC on 4th February 1958. Khartoum was also an early supporter of China's bid to enter the United Nations.

In order to cultivate its ties with the post-independence ruling elites in Khartoum, Beijing supported the government throughout Sudan's first civil war (1955-72), according to the principle of non-interference. The first official state visit by Premier Zhou Enlai and Vice-President Chen Yi to Khartoum in January 1964 occurred at a time when the Anyanya rebellion was escalating in southern Sudan where President Abboud's government had been implementing an unpopular policy of forced assimilation and Arabisation of the largely Christian southern population. In contrast to the PRC's active support for 'revolutionary armed conflict' and elsewhere in Africa, having already acquired full independence from Anglo-Egyptian rule 1956, the war in southern Sudan was from the Chinese perspective "a matter of newly sovereign Sudan's 'internal' politics" (Large 2011b, p.160).

Relations with China were further strengthened during President Nimeiri's rule in Sudan (1969-1985), especially during the early 1970s when both countries also enjoyed good relations with the US in the fluctuating context of the Cold War (Large, 2008d, p.2). Shortly after Nimeiri's first visit to China in 1970, Beijing provided its first interest-free loan to Sudan, which was repayable in Sudanese crops (Shinn and Eisenman, 2012, p. 251). Following the failed coup attempt against Nimeiri by the Sudan Communist Party (SCP) in 1971 Sino-Sudanese ties were further enhanced. Whereas the Soviet Union was associated with the failed coup, leading Khartoum to break ties with Moscow, Beijing's relations with Khartoum were "enhanced by the Chinese government's steadfast support" for Nimeiri under the banner of 'non-interference' in Sudan's domestic political affairs (Woodward, 2011, p38). In order to further strengthen ties in 1971, China provided another interest-free loan to Sudan and offered to help train and equip the Sudanese armed forces (Shinn and Eisenman, 2012, p.251).

China also benefitted economically as a result of the deteriorating relationship between Sudan and the Soviet Union. Sudan's total exports to the Soviet Union declined from 16 per cent in 1970 to nil in 1973 when the PRC subsequently

became Sudan's most important client (Kaikati, 1980, pp.114-115).²⁹ Aside from trade, cooperation between China and Sudan also spiked in the 1970s as Beijing also began to supply Nimeiri's government with arms, economic grants, soft loans, and technical military assistance (Srinivasan, 2008, p.58). Between 1970 and 1972, the PRC granted Sudan US\$28 million in interest free loans for a variety of development projects, including the Chinese-built friendship Hall in Khartoum which "symbolised the flourishing state relations of the 1970s" (Large, 2008d, p.2).

However, despite this notable strengthening of economic ties between Beijing and the Nimeiri government in the early 1970s, US' role would become comparatively more significant within Sudan's politico-economic landscape throughout the decade, with its companies' increasing involvement in the oil sector. Indeed, in 1974 Nimeiri had granted licenses for oil prospecting to the American company, Chevron, followed by other contracts with US firms (Anderson, 2000, p.18).³⁰ In turn, Nimeiri's regime increasingly became a strategic priority to the US government as the Reagan administration's high profile hostility towards Libya drew the US and Sudan into a closer military alliance (Johnson, 2012, p. 57).³¹

Although a north-south peace agreement was signed in Addis Ababa in 1972, a second civil war was to erupt in Sudan in 1983 following the formation of a new Sudanese rebel army, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLA/M) under the leadership of Sudanese army colonel John Garang. It was the American and French corporations spearheading the development of Sudan's strategic and politically divisive oil sector that the SPLA targeted. To prevent further rebel threats to oil development, the Khartoum authorities began arming Baggara cattle-owning nomads to push the southern Nuer and Dinka communities off their land in the oil regions. However, the insecurity of

²⁹ Although it is important to note that the United States and Western European countries continued to dominate the list of Sudan's top suppliers. According to Kaikati, the settlement in 1973 of the compensation issue for British companies nationalised by Sudan in 1969 had resulted in a more favorable climate for British exporters, making the country Sudan's most important supplier, accounting for 14.2 percent of total imports in 1973. See: Kaikati, 1980, p114-115.

³⁰ Nimeiri was also keen to further amend ties with the US following the murder of two American diplomats by Palestinian terrorists in Khartoum in 1973.

³¹ The warming trend had continued as President Ford received Nimeiri during an unofficial visit in 1976, after which U.S. aid had resumed, and escalated further following his endorsement of the American-sponsored Camp David peace agreement of 1979 between Egypt and Israel. See: Anderson, 2000, pp.14-18

operating in the South had become too much of a risk for the US oil company Chevron, and following the killing of three of its workers in February 1984, the company suspended its operations in the south (Patey, 2014, p.52).

In contrast with the US, by not having any substantial investments in Sudan, China was not directly affected by the start and spread of the second southern civil war, and Beijing's relations with Khartoum continued, "despite Sudan's deepening economic crisis and political upheaval" (Large, 2011b, p.160). Moreover, Sudan would rapidly gain in significance within China's foreign policy in the years immediately following the military coup of 30 June 1989, orchestrated by the National Islamic Front (NIF) and led by General Omar al-Bashir, which brought a new regime to power in Khartoum.

The coup occurred the same month that the world's attention was focused on the Chinese government's crackdown on protestors in Tiananmen Square. Thus, at the time of President al-Bashir's first visit to Beijing in November 1990, both countries were facing intense scrutiny from the West. The Sudanese regime, notably its most influential figure, Hassan al-Turabi, was criticised for its position of support for Saddam Hussein in the lead up to the 1991 Gulf War, and in June 1989 the European Union (EU) and the US had placed arms embargos on China in response to the Tiananmen massacre.

Rather than being concerned about the ideological nature of the regime itself or governance issues, as the US government would increasingly become, China's leadership was ultimately interested in the sustainability and stability of the regime. During the visit of its leader Omar Hassan al-Bashir to Beijing in November 1990 the new Chinese President Jiang Zemin told him that, "without political stability and unity, it is impossible to push forward the economy" (Cited in: Harris, 1993, p.211).

Sino-Sudanese relations were strengthened with new fervour as both sides sought to strengthen military ties from 1990, following the arrival of the first Chinese military delegation to Khartoum in January, and an Iranian funded Chinese arms deal to Khartoum soon followed in 1991 (Small Arms Survey, 2007, p.4). As it will be shown below, it was Sudan's increasing isolation in the

international community that paved the way for increased Chinese influence in Sudan from the mid 1990s.

2. 2. 2. The entrance of CNPC in the context of civil war (1993-1999)

It was the Chinese governments' willingness to engage with what became seen as a 'pariah regime' in the West that made the initial entrance of CNPC into the Sudanese oil market a possibility. Sudan's international isolation, and the subsequent strengthening of ties with China, began with the worsening of diplomatic relations between the US government and Khartoum. In line with its plans as a radical Islamic state, by the early 1990s the regime had begun to open its doors to militant Islamic groups seeking to destabilise various states in the region. The symbol of this became the Popular Arab and Islamic Congress, which had an ambitious plan to replace the Arab League with a more active, popular body headed by Hassan Turabi, the main ideological force behind the ruling NIF party in Khartoum (Woodward, 2006, pp.47-8).

In Washington, the new Clinton administration inherited from its predecessor a commitment to the new governments in Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Uganda, articulated as support for an 'African Renaissance', and Khartoum's hostility towards its neighbours "became a factor in defining the US's attitude towards its former ally" (Johnson, 2011, p.102). However, it was the first attack on the World Trade Centre in New York in 1993, and CIA allegations that there were connections between the perpetrators and Sudan, that led to the US government adding Sudan to its list of states supporting terrorism the same year. This also resulted in economic and financial restrictions, including arms related exports and sales, and the US also opposed World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans to Sudan (Woodward, 2006, pp.53-4).

As mutual accusations between Khartoum and Washington signaled the worsening of ties, efforts were being made to expand trade between China and Sudan beyond that of arms sales (which had dominated economic cooperation in the early 1990s), for example through the opening of a Chinese trade fair in Khartoum in 1993. In the same year, whilst in China, the Sudanese Foreign Minister signed educational, agro-industrial, economic, technological and

cultural cooperation agreements, and announced that from the Sudanese perspective, relations with China had changed from “traditional” to “strategic” (cited in: Burr and Collins, 2003, p.248).

This shift towards a ‘strategic’ relationship was premised on Sudan’s interest from 1994 in the involvement of Chinese state-owned corporations in the development of its oil sector. Since the departure of Chevron in 1992, Khartoum had begun to embark upon a strategy of attracting investment from Western junior oil companies and state-owned corporations from Asia unaffected by US restrictions and which would be willing to operate in the unstable oil-bearing regions of Sudan.

In January 1994, during the Sudan leg of a six-nation tour, the Chinese Foreign Minister and Vice-premier Qian Qichen found the Sudanese government offering investment opportunities in oil, mining, and other sectors. In December 1994, a Sudanese delegation visited Beijing for a meeting of the Sino-Sudanese Economic and Trade Joint Commission: however, China’s Minister for Foreign Trade and Economic Co-operation, Wu Yi, did not respond enthusiastically to her Sudanese counterpart’s encouragement of Chinese companies to invest in Sudan’s oil industry (Burr and Collins, 2003, p.248).

Rather than the Chinese government itself, it was CNPC, having since 1993 made initial steps abroad in Canada and Peru during the first phase of its internationalisation (1993-2002) that first expressed an interest in the Sudanese government’s request. By the mid-1990s, Chinese NOCs had begun to step up their overseas acquisitions abroad as they realised that without internationally listed subsidiaries (CNPC did not establish PetroChina until 2000), they were not constrained by shareholders from undertaking high-risk projects in ‘pariah states’ such as Sudan where other investors were uncomfortable with the political or human rights situation (Downs, 2008, p.30). In late 1994, CNPC surveyed the geological data of Sudan’s oilfields and concluded that the fields in question were similar to China’s Bohai Bay region. However, the company did not agree to invest at this point as it still lacked capital for initial forays abroad and was keen to garner Chinese state support for its entrance into Sudan (Jakobson and Zha, 2006, p.66).

Meanwhile, an attempted assassination on Egypt's President Mubarak in Addis Ababa in June 1995 ushered in a new chapter in the intensifying international confrontation towards Sudan, led by the US. When it came to light that there were links between the ruling NIF party, notably Hassan Al-Turabi, and the assassination attempt, the US and the rest of the international community began to seek the imposition of UN sanctions on Sudan. In this context, Khartoum stepped up its efforts to secure financial and political support from less discerning partners. China was considered one of the few countries upon which Sudan could hope to rely on for support in international politics, due to Beijing's veto power in the UN Security Council coupled with its policy of 'non-interference' (Burr and Collins, 2003, p.248). It was in this context of intensified international pressure on and criticism of the regime in Khartoum that 'energy cooperation' between China and Sudan gathered momentum.

In August 1995, at the invitation of CNPC General Manager Wang Tao, the Sudanese Minister of Energy and Mines, Major General Salah Karrar, visited Beijing where he met with the Chinese Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen. Whilst the Chinese reaffirmed their interest in cooperating with the Sudanese to develop their oil production, there were apparently no agreements signed to do so at this stage (Burr and Collins, 2003, p.248). However, it would be Chinese oilmen within Beijing's senior party leadership, as key architects of CNPC's 'going out' in the 1990s that would ultimately play "the pivotal role in advancing oil relations with Sudan" (Patey, 2014, p.94). Zhou Yongkang, an alternate member of the CPC Central Committee since 1992 who would become CNPC General Manager for two years from late 1996, and Zeng Qinghong, then director of the General Office of the CPC, were instrumental in pushing the Sudan deal through with President Jiang Zemin (Patey, 2014, p.94).

The policy aims of Khartoum to evade US restrictions and begin oil production, and the emerging objective of CNPC to enter the Sudanese oil market, were finally given official Chinese state backing during President al-Bashir's state visit to Beijing in September 1995. The state-owned EXIM Bank's initial task was to promote the sale of Chinese-made products overseas; however, it signed a

framework agreement with Sudan to provide a RMB150 million (US\$18 million) concessional loan. According to the Sudanese ambassador to China at the time, RMB100 million of the loan was for a CNPC oil project in Sudan's Block 6 left by Chevron and the remaining RMB50 million for gold mining projects (Alsharif, 2013).

After discussions with representatives from Sudan's Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank of Sudan it was agreed that the credit from EXIM Bank would be provided to Chinese companies while the project would come under the supervision of Sudan's Central Bank. In turn, Sudan agreed to give Chinese companies generous concession terms, including no restrictions on profit repatriations and exemptions from all domestic taxes on exported oil (Zhao, H., 2008, p. 105).

Subsequently, the CNPC gained a 92% interest in Chevron's Southern Sudan Block 6 in the Muglad Basin and CNPC International established a subsidiary company CNPCI (Nile) Ltd in Khartoum in December 1995 (Jakobson and Zha, 2006, p.66). According to one Sudanese diplomat, the outcome of the September 1995 visit to Beijing marked the "institutionalisation of relations" and "the beginning of serious cooperation between Sudan and China" which was based on oil cooperation (Alsharif, 2013). Chinese analysts assert that China's formal state backing of CNPC's entrance into Sudan represented that it was "business interests that founded the beginning story" of China's expanding energy cooperation in Sudan and more broadly across Africa, as the central government became increasingly concerned about energy security (see Chapter 1).³²

Meanwhile, the Chinese governments' overarching rhetoric of 'south-south' solidarity and its political support for Khartoum within the UNSC represented opposition to the US governments' attempts to punish the Sudanese regime for its facilitation of international terrorism.³³ From 1996 Washington's State Department concurrently began seeking to bring about regime change in Sudan

³² Interview, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), Beijing, China, 15 March 2011

³³ Interview, Peking University, School for International Studies (SIS), Beijing, China, 23 December 2010

through a 'frontline state' strategy of supporting efforts by Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Uganda to bring down the Sudanese government (Woodward, 2006, pp.96-7).

The extension of non-lethal US military assistance totalling US\$20 million was agreed, including for C-130 transport aircraft and communications equipment. However, only half of this amount was actually delivered due to the outbreak of war between Ethiopia and Eritrea in May 1998, which effectively ended hopes in the US of "coherent regional pressure against the regime in Khartoum" (Crockett, 2010, p.145).

Conversely, while anti-Sudan sentiment was building in American political circles, Khartoum was beginning to attempt to end its international isolation. Bashir increasingly sought to limit al-Turabi's influence in the government and by 1996 had become convinced that Osama bin Laden and his Islamic extremist supporters in Khartoum were a unnecessary liability. Following repeated requests from the US Central Intelligence Agency and National Security Council officials, the Sudanese government eventually sent Osama bin Laden to Afghanistan in May 1996 (Collins, 2008, pp.220).

Nevertheless, Washington continued to assert additional pressure on Khartoum in 1997 by imposing its own sanctions, which included restrictions on US imports from and exports to Sudan, restrictions on financial transactions, an asset freeze against the government of Sudan, and a prohibition on US arms sales or transfers to Sudan.

In this context, China had begun to leverage its position within the UNSC to protect Sudan from a series of sanctions that were passed during this period. Although Beijing had voted in favour of UNSC Resolution 1044, which called on Sudan to cease sheltering terrorists, it abstained from voting on UNSC Resolutions 1054 and 1070 which imposed further sanctions on Sudanese officials.

China's UN representative stated that, while his country "strongly condemned terrorism" and that the perpetrators of the assassination attempt should be brought to justice, China "opposed in principle the frequent recourse to

sanctions under Chapter VII [of the UN Charter]”, preferring instead to insist upon dialogue and mediation with the target country (UNSC, 1996).

As CNPC’s oil interests were not yet fully established and oil in Sudan would not begin to flow until 1999, it is apparent that the Chinese governments’ support for Khartoum at the UNSC was not from the outset simply the result of Sino-Sudanese oil cooperation, and was rooted in China’s broader perception regarding state sovereignty and external interference. However, as Patey observes, once CNPC had made its first investment in Sudan and continued to expand its interests in the context of civil war, there became “even greater reason for the Chinese government to protect Sudan’s sovereignty from international intervention” (Patey, 2014, p.176).

It is apparent that CNPC’s further expansion into the Sudanese oil market in the midst of civil war was primarily a result of the company’s relative autonomy from the Chinese government in its decision-making regarding investments abroad, combined with its willingness to accept higher risks when making these investments at this stage.

By the mid-1990s, in their efforts to transform into globally competitive corporations Chinese NOCs increasingly sought to gain stakes in consortiums abroad through which they could gain operating experience and learn from their consortium partners (Downs, 2008, p.27). This moment came for CNPC in Sudan in 1996, after the Canadian oil company Arakis began seeking cooperation with other foreign companies to share investment risk in the promising blocks 1, 2, and 4 in Unity State of Sudan’s Muglad Basin.

In early March 1997, after Arakis had sold off most of its assets, the CNPC signed an Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement (EPSA) with the Sudanese government and took on the principal position in the Greater Nile Operating Corporation (GNPOC), formed in December 1996, with CNPC holding 40%, Malaysian Petronas taking another 30%, while the Sudan government maintained a 5% holding (see table 2.2., p.113). In Beijing, CNPC was viewed to have scored a major success in the competitive world of international petroleum, and the signing ceremony of GNPOC in Khartoum was

broadcast live on Beijing radio and television in March 1997 (Burr and Collins, 2003, p.232).

With this infusion of new capital, the consortium partners agreed to fund all ongoing exploration and development and a 1,500km export pipeline. Arakis might continue to lead the venture, but nearly all future funding, at least US\$400 million from CNPC and US\$300 million from Petronas, “would come from two nations seemingly immune to Western pressure or world opinion” (Burr and Collins, 2003, p.232). The immediate goal was to raise Sudanese crude oil production from 10,000 b/d to 150,000 b/d by mid-1999 and to make Sudan self-sufficient in oil, with CNPC pledging to build a new oil refinery with a capacity of 50,000 b/d, the amount consumed daily in Sudan.

CNPC had outbid its competitors to winning its stake in GNPOC by proposing to Khartoum that it would construct the refinery (Taylor, 2011, p.27). Moreover, the offer marked the first occasion in which a CNPC public investment was structured as an oil-for-infrastructure ‘package deal’, in which the construction of the refinery would be repaid in oil, an approach that in the coming years would be adopted by Chinese companies across Africa as they sought to tackle competition from Western firms.

It is apparent that initial Chinese government finance and official backing had certainly facilitated the initial entrance of CNPC in Sudan in 1995, however, by 1997 it was the apparent willingness of Chinese NOCs to accept “higher levels of political risk and lower rates of return” than most IOCs that proved to be more influential in CNPC’s further expansion in Sudan than government support (Patey, 2014, p.96).

It was Chevron that had undertaken the initial risky geological surveys across Sudan’s vast terrain in the late 1970s, and CNPC benefitted from many risk-mitigating international operating procedures through its entrance into the joint operating consortium, as the EPSAs signed with the Sudanese government included a ‘stabilisation clause’.³⁴ However, the CNPC was proposing the oil

³⁴ A stabilisation clause is a mechanism to mitigate risk for the company, whereby the host government commits to compensate the investor if changes to the legal framework that governed at the time of signature negatively affect the economic equilibrium of the venture. See: ICG (2012), p. 22.

infrastructure at a time when international oil prices were in fact lower than when Chevron left, demonstrating “little concern with the calculated rate of return on its proposed investments”, and CNPC was able to benefit from its relative autonomy from Chinese government decision-making – unlike other Asian NOCs – as they were able to make decisions “on the spot...without having to constantly call home” (Patey, 2014, pp.63-5).

Oil production in southern Sudan had historically been constrained by the lack of proper infrastructure. CNPC utilised this challenge to facilitate the entrance of its oil service subsidiaries to gain operating experience abroad, and it was not long until a number of CNPC subsidiary companies dominated Sudan’s oil sector (Patey, 2014, pp.63-5). In 1998, CNPC’s construction arm, the China Petroleum Engineering & Construction (Group) Corporation (CPECC), was contracted to construct the majority of the 1,600 km GNPOC pipeline from blocks 1 and 2 to the Red Sea to connect oil production with the international market, which would be completed in time for the NIF party’s tenth anniversary on 30 June, 1999.

The pipeline project displayed how Chinese companies were willing to sacrifice short-term gain for long-term goals such as gaining operating experience abroad, as according to the Vice President of CPECC, “a Western firm couldn’t have done what we did... Sudan wanted it done in 18 months and we did it, even though we knew we wouldn’t make any money” (Cited in: Johnson, 1999).

Oil development in Sudan continued according to established patterns as during the Chevron period, and was deeply intertwined with the dynamics of armed conflict in the civil war with southern Sudan. President al-Bashir continued in his predecessors’ footsteps in deploying the army and armed the militias of the Arab ‘Baggara’ nomadic cattle herders in the oil-rich “transition zone” between northern and southern Sudan, who continued to displace the southern Nuer and Dinka groups surrounding the oilfields to make the area “safe” for oil exploration and production (Rone, 2003, pp.53).

However, in contrast with oil exploration during the 1980s, in the 1990s the Sudanese government implemented a strategy of dividing and buying off

southern Nuer groups occupying strategic territory that had broken away from the mainstream SPLA. This move officially opened the door to oil development in a way that had not been possible during the Chevron era, as it neutralised the southern rebel forces that might have threatened the oilfields, particularly GNPOC's Blocks 1, 2 and 4 which straddled the border between northern and southern Sudan (see figure 2.4., p.108) (Rone, 2003, pp.129-133).

Unlike Chevron before them, CNPC was willing to risk that the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the pro-government militias could provide the security necessary in and around the oilfields, and was encouraged by the signing of the Khartoum Peace Agreement in 1997 that brought the southern militias into closer collaboration with the Sudanese government (Patey, 2014, pp.107-8). In addition, CNPC was at the time focused more on concerns regarding the possibility of heightened external attacks on Sudan as a result of its 'pariah' status. In August 1998 US military bombed the El Shifa pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum due to suspicions that it had been manufacturing nerve gas for terrorist purposes; however, evidence of which was later proved to be false (Burr and Collins, 2003, p.239).

As the civil war continued unabated, Zhou Yongkang returned to Sudan as the Chinese governmental envoy, now as China's Minister of Land and Resources, to attend the inauguration of the GNPOC pipeline, which took place with great fanfare on 3 July, 1999. After Zhou joined Sudanese Vice President Ali Osman Taha in turning on the taps in the Heglig oilfield, Sudan exported oil for the first time on 30 August 1999 from the Port Bashair terminal. As a result, CNPC announced that the Sudan project had become "the first overseas large oilfield operated by China", with the Chinese government-run news agency calling Sudan's successful first export of oil from the CNPC-run oilfields "a major breakthrough in China's overseas oil work" (Cited in: Rone, 2003, p.129).

In line with Beijing's diplomatic and military ties with a succession of Sudanese leaders since the 1950s, underpinned by non-interference and respect for Sudanese sovereignty, as the second civil war continued into the late 1990s the Chinese party-state had maintained political relations with the ruling NIF party in

the GoS and refrained from establishing ties with or providing support for the SPLA/M.

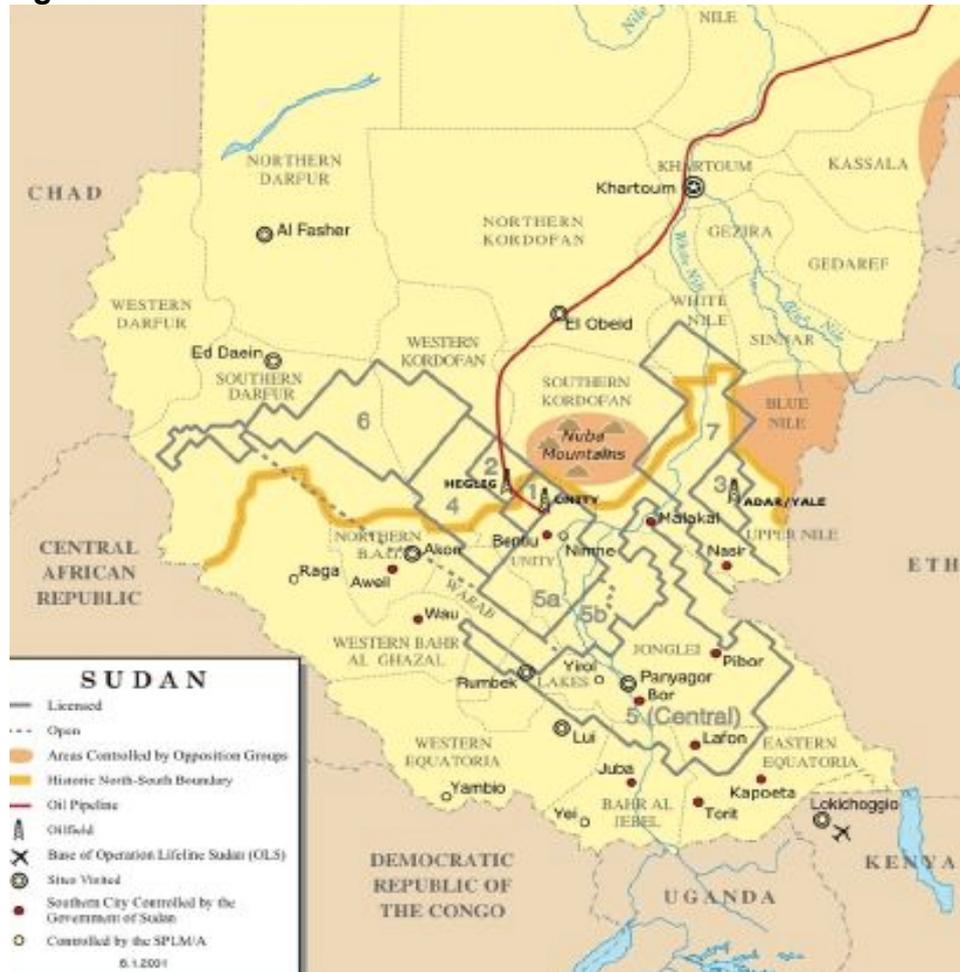
Indeed, China's belief in the separation of Chinese commercial ties from local politics, within a state-centric foreign policy framework of non-interference in Sudan's internal affairs, from the Chinese perspective legitimised its military-industrial complexes' continued facilitation of arms sales to bolster the central state in Sudan,³⁵ from small and light weapons (SALW) to tanks and fighter jets (Small Arms Survey, 2007, p.5).

In practice, however, through the embedded role of Chinese companies in Sudan, China had become inserted into the political economy of civil war by the mid-1990s that was increasingly driven by the dynamics of resource extraction, which further entrenched north-south divisions.

Although most of the oilfields and 'extraction zones' were located in the centre south, all the refining and petrochemical activities were concentrated around Khartoum or Port Sudan, which for the opposition in the south, was a reflection of northern domination of the south (Dittgen, 2012, pp.201-2).

³⁵ Interview, Department for Developing Countries, China Institute for International Studies (CIIS), Beijing, China, 6 January 2011.

Figure 2. 4. Sudan's civil war and the location of oil concession blocks



Source: USAID, 2001

CNPC's pivotal role in getting Sudan's oil online had a direct impact on local elite politics in Khartoum. In December 1999, shortly after celebrating the tenth anniversary of the National Salvation Revolution that brought the NIF to power, President al-Bashir officially ousted Turabi and, with the NIF now known as the National Congress Party (NCP), would steer the party away from Turabi's previous project of political Islam and focused more on regime perpetuation (Large and Patey, 2011a, p.181). In turning Sudan into an oil-exporting state, President al-Bashir had succeeded where his predecessors had failed, and directly reaping the fruits of oil extraction would enable al-Bashir to maintain his position in Khartoum. As Sudan's key oil investor, CNPC subsequently became increasingly invested in the longevity of NCP rule.

2. 2. 3. Early signs of a backlash (1999-2001)

It was this emerging pattern of intertwining Sino-Sudanese interests based on oil extraction that would increasingly involve China in Sudan's civil war, and

CNPC would begin to face a backlash both at the domestic level in Sudan and within the wider international context. As will be detailed here, both the Chinese government and CNPC responded to such challenges in accordance with the principles underlining China's successful reemergence in Sudan since the early 1990s; namely, a strict adherence to non-interference and the separation of its business role from local politics. Despite initial signs of a backlash to Chinese engagement during this period, such forms of resistance did little to impact upon Chinese interests at this stage.

During wartime Sudan the model of Chinese engagement of claiming to remove its business interests from local politics meant that CNPC maintained a distance from the local communities affected by their operations, and this distance played a role in creating negative perceptions of the company (Anthony, 2013, p.13). CNPC was seen to have brought its low social and environmental standards to Sudan in the 1990s, and the company's failure to hire local staff led to numerous complaints from southerners, for example when CNPC had brought in a team of 10,000 Chinese labourers to speed up the construction of the pipeline (Johnson, 1999).

From the company's perspective its surplus labour was cheaper than hiring local staff, and its Chinese workers were prepared to work the long 15 hour days that were required to construct the pipeline in such a short timeframe (Johnson, 1999). Regarding complaints vis-a-vis the GNPOC's environmental practices, the prevailing view at CNPC the time was that it was usually the host states' responsibility to legally require the implementation of environment protection practices (Dittgen, 2012, p.209). It was not until 1991 that efforts were first made to preserve the environment and natural resources in Sudan, and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) were not mandatory at the beginning of the oil era, and only became so in 2001 when President al-Bashir finally signed an environmental protection act (Ali, 2007, p.71).

More generally, from the southern Sudanese perspective the role of CNPC and other foreign companies demonstrated willingness to side with Khartoum entailed complicity in state-sponsored violence against civilians who were

forcefully displaced from areas surrounding the oilfields, thus constituting 'interference' in Sudan's internal affairs.³⁶

However, Chinese diplomats continued to shun official engagement with the SPLA in line with China's position of non-interference, which during the 1990s was informed by a belief (shared by both the company and government officials) that the particular policy adopted by a local government to provide security for oil development was its own internal affair.³⁷

Nevertheless, it was this emerging perspective in the south that would have consequences for CNPC, with a number of sabotage attacks and the kidnapping and killing of Chinese workers (Rone, 2003, pp.190-1). Once completed, the pipeline formed an obvious target for rebel attacks. In January 2001 a CNPC exploration rig came under attack by rebel forces at Tamur and in August that year, SPLA fighters conducted a surprise attacks on the Hegling oilfield, which led to the GNPOC shutting down its oil pumps for twelve hours as a precautionary measure (Patey, 2014, pp.108-9).

However, despite this an emerging backlash against Chinese interests in Sudan, it is apparent that neither the Chinese government or CNPC expressed acute concern about these attacks and did not issue any public statements on the issue, reflecting that at this point, China continued to believe that the Sudanese government had the capacity to both contain the rebels and protect the oilfields from severe damage.³⁸ Ultimately, unlike Chevron before it, intra-state war and insecurity did not lead CNPC to exit Sudan.

By 2000 it was also apparent that CNPC's embedded role in Sudan would become consequential for the company, and Sudan's own international relations would increasingly affect the company's interests there. Seeking to expand its international operations, in April 1999 CNPC had announced the first International Public Offering (IPO) by a Chinese company that intended to raise US\$10 billion through its listing on the NYSE (Rone, 2003, p.461).

³⁶ Interview, Juba University, Juba, South Sudan, 7 March 2012

³⁷ Interview, China Export-Import (EXIM) Bank, Beijing, China, 28 August 2012; Interview, CNPC, Beijing, China, 13 December 2010

³⁸ Interview, Government of the Republic of South Sudan, Ministry of Defence, Juba, South Sudan, 23 December 2011

The IPO ran into immediate problems as a result of CNPC's operations in Sudan and China's own human rights record. US representatives expressed disapproval of the CNPC's listing on NYSE, arguing that this would bypass the US economic sanctions imposed on Sudan, a state sponsor of terrorism. In response, CNPC erected a 'firewall' by creating a separate company, PetroChina to float the IPO. CNPC's domestic China holdings would be spun off to PetroChina and the CNPC would exclude its Sudan operations from the IPO, however critics argued that CNPC's operations in Sudan could still benefit from funds earned by PetroChina. Ultimately, continued opposition in the US and political pressure on large institutional investors successfully undercut PetroChina's IPO in March 2000, which raised only US\$2.9 billion.³⁹

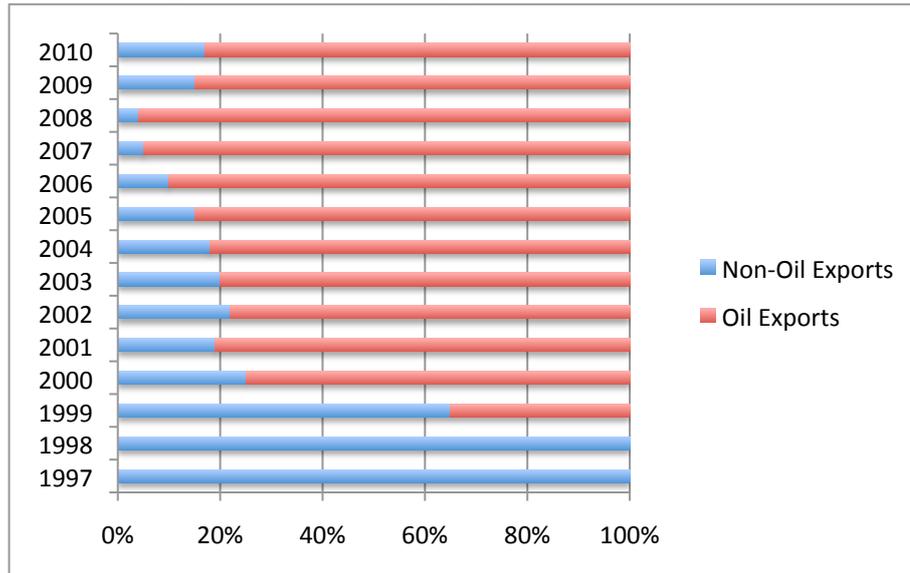
As such, international relations between the GoS and the American government "forced CNPC to alter its strategic behaviour, narrowing the albeit wide scope of expansion in the country" (Patey, 2006, p.35). However, as Patey points out, while deteriorating US-Sudan ties weighed in on CNPC strategic behaviour, pressure from international human rights groups at the time did little to influence the company (Patey, 2006, p.35).

Throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s, CNPC was focused on reaping the fruits of Sudan's functioning oil industry. Sudan's new capacity to export marked a significant change in the country's economic makeup, which would see an overwhelming dependence on oil over the following decade. The decline in significance of non-oil exports, comprising 100% of export earnings in 1998 to less than 10% a decade later, and the rising contribution of the petroleum sector, reaching more than 90% of exports in 2007, illustrates this (see figure 2.5., below).

The key role of Chinese investment in this process was clearly rewarded, as evident in the phenomenal surge in China's imports of Sudanese oil, which grew from 5,000 barrels per day in 1999 to 129,000b/d in 2002 (see figure 2.6., below).

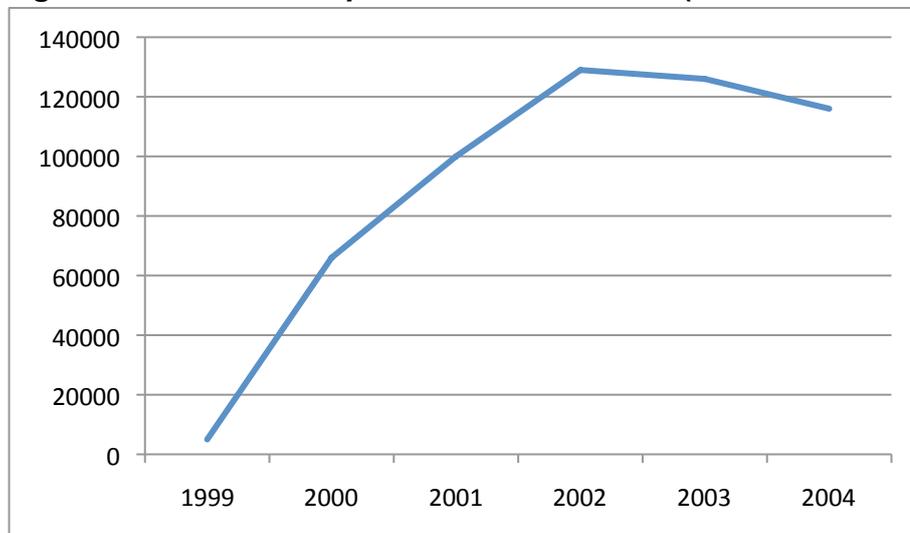
³⁹ For a detailed analysis of the CNPC/PetroChina IPO see Rone (2003), pp. 461-467.

Figure 2. 5. Contribution of oil and non-oil sectors to Sudan's exports, 1997-2010 (%)



Source: Siddig, 2012, p.4.

Figure 2. 6. China's imports of Sudanese oil (thousand barrels per day)



Source: US Energy Information Administration (EIA) energy reports, 1999-2004.

Moreover, CNPC announced plans to establish two new oilfields in Sudan's Blocks 3 and 7 (Melut Basin) with a combined output of 180,000 barrels per day (see table 2.2., below). At the same time, it was announced that the GNPOC consortium had received revenue of more than US\$600 million from its concession since exports began in September 1999, and Sudan accounted for two-thirds of CNPC's overseas production in 2000 (Rone, 2003, p.620). In addition to further oil cooperation, the Chinese government and its companies

further expanded investments in Sudan's wider infrastructure development during this period.⁴⁰

Table. 2. 2. Sudan's oil blocks in which Chinese NOCs are stakeholders, 2002

Blocks	Oil Concession Holders
1 (Unity), 2 (Heglig), 4 (Kaikang)	Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company (GNPOC): China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) (China) 40%; Petronas Carigali (Malaysia) 30%; ONGC Videsh (India) 25%; Sudapet (Sudan) 5%
3 (Adar) & 7 (Melut)	Petrodar: China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) (China) 41%; Petronas Carigali (Malaysia) 40%; Sudapet (Sudan) 8% Gulf Petroleum Corporation (Qatar) 6%; Al-Thani Corporation of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) 5%;
6	China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) (China) 95% and Sudapet (Sudan) 5%

Source: Author, compiled from: CNPC, 2009, p. 6.

Chinese cooperation in the development of Sudan's oil industry would also contribute towards a significant shift in Sudan's relations with other external powers, as at the start of the new millennium, the sum of the country's debt to China rose to rival that of the western-led financial institutions of the IMF and the World Bank (Rone, 2003, p.43). One example through which Sudan's debt to China had grown was through oil-for-infrastructure packages such as the Khartoum refinery, a joint venture between the Khartoum government and CNPC which was completed by CPECC, on May 16 2000.

According to external reports, the CNPC had secured a valuable concession in the contract: if debt service on this refinery was not met, the CNPC has the right to lift the equivalent of crude oil in kind – which would leave Sudan without its domestic fuel to refine. As such, debt service payments for the refinery, amounting to US \$60 million, would have priority over all other debt service payments, such as to the IMF, the World Bank, and other creditors (Rone, 2003, p.24). By 2009, Sudan still owed a total of US\$1.69 billion of outstanding debt to China, indicating the Khartoum governments' ongoing dependence on Chinese investment and a key factor in the evolution of Chinese interests in the

⁴⁰ For example, in 2001 Harbin Power Engineering Company (HPE) constructed the Sudan Power Station with the help of a US\$110 million loan by China EXIM Bank.

longevity of the NCP-ruled Khartoum regime in the long-term, regardless of its domestic affairs (Patey, 2014, p.96).

Within the UNSC, the Chinese government continued to protect the Khartoum government from Washington's efforts to inflict sanctions. In February 2000 the US government joined its Canadian counterpart in announcing an intention to inflict sanctions on the Chinese-led GNPOC consortium, adding its companies to the list of entities owned or controlled by the government of Sudan with which US persons were forbidden to do business.

However, China's utilised its influence as a permanent UNSC member to pressure the US into blocking any Security Council consideration of Sudan, through threatening to also raise the issue of the US bombing of Sudan's Al Shifa pharmaceutical plant in 1998. Intent on avoiding a Security Council investigation of the missile strike, Washington urged Ottawa to refrain from putting Sudan on the Security Council agenda (Rone, 2003, p.415).

Fundamentally, neither the limited success of the IPO nor Western civil society criticism affected the companies' focus on expanding its operations in Sudan and the Chinese governments' continued efforts to protect Khartoum from UN sanctions as oil production and civil war continued unabated.

2. 2. 4. Challenges to the consolidation of Chinese interests (2002-2004)

a) The North-South Peace Negotiations

In contrast with relative ease with which the CNPC gained a dominant position in the oil sector during the 1990s, facilitated through the Chinese government's official ties with Khartoum which were deepened as a result of the CNPCs oil cooperation with the Sudanese government, new challenges were to emerge in Sudan's oil sector in tandem with emerging political dynamics associated with the north-south peace process that had been underway since the 1990s.

In accordance with China's own desired politics regarding a strong Chinese party-state upholding the monopoly on the use of force and maintaining unity

within its sovereign boundaries, during Sudan's civil war, "China assumed that Khartoum would quash the southern rebellion".⁴¹ However, in practice, far from quashing the demands of the south, by 1997 the Khartoum government had begun to tread a steady path towards acceptance, on paper at least, of Southern self-determination.⁴²

It was not until after the 9/11 attacks in 2001 that the Bush Administration in the US brought a new commitment to supporting the stalled north-south peace process under the regional Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) mediators. In 2002 a ceasefire between the GoS and the SPLA was signed and the Machakos Protocol, agreed in Kenya on 20 July the same year, established the framework of the future peace agreement that would commit both sides to "make the unity of the Sudan an attractive option especially to the people of South Sudan", but also granting the south "the right to self-determination, inter alia, through a referendum to determine their future status" (*Machakos Protocol*, 2002, p.3).

Although Chinese companies had occupied the prime oil investment position in Sudan since its entrance at the height of the civil war in 1996, in contrast with embedded role of Bush Administration in the peace talks, and in line with a strict adherence to the foreign policy principle of non-interference, Chinese diplomats did not assume any kind of conflict resolution role or engage in supporting the IGAD mediators to bring about a final peace agreement between both sides. To the extent that Beijing's diplomats conducted engagement with the NCP regarding the negotiations, this was specifically in reference to Chinese commercial interests according to the logic of a conceptual distinction between local politics and China's economic involvement.

Indeed, as the peace negotiations for a final deal continued in Naivasha, Kenya, in 2004 one of the key sticking points between both sides had been the finalisation of the wealth sharing arrangements and the intended 2.5% of Sudan's oil revenue to be allocated to the southern communities of the oil

⁴¹ Interview, Government of the Republic of South Sudan, Ministry of Defense, Juba, South Sudan, 23 December 2011.

⁴² In 1997 it accepted the Declaration of Principles (DOP), which all the fragmented southern movements had endorsed and which set out the south's right of self-determination. See: Johnson (2011), pp. 100-5.

producing states. In this context, it is apparent that China's embassy diplomats in Kenya conducted their own ad-hoc behind the scenes bilateral discussions with NCP delegates outside the formal structure of the negotiations.⁴³ According to a senior IGAD negotiator and members of the SPLM, China's focus here was not on constructively facilitating the finalisation of the peace process but, rather, merely seeking assurances that its arrangements would not negatively impact upon its companies' investments in Sudan's oil sector and that the status-quo of oil production and exports would continue.⁴⁴

Moreover, Beijing continued to shun official diplomatic engagement with the SPLM. South Sudanese perceptions of China continued to be broadly negative at this stage; firstly as a supporter of Khartoum thus as a 'wartime enemy' of the south and secondly as a result of CNPC's key role in the economic exploitation of the south through which the NCP had benefited from southern oil (Large, 2011b, p.163). Moreover, as the peace negotiations continued in Naivasha in 2004 and the UN began planning its mission in Sudan, SPLM officials expressed the opinion that Chinese peacekeepers would not be welcome as part of the UN mission (Large, 2011b, p.163). Nevertheless, due to the SPLM's pragmatic political considerations of potential Chinese support or use of its veto as a permanent member of the UNSC with regards to south Sudanese issues in the future, it is apparent that during 2004 SPLM representatives stepped up their lobbying of Chinese diplomats to engage with their party at the embassy in Nairobi.⁴⁵

However, fundamentally, in light of its 'non-interference' doctrine China maintained its core Sudanese engagement at the elite level with the NCP and its ties with the SPLM would not become formalised until the post-CPA era (see Chapter 4). Indeed, according to the chief IGAD negotiator, the SPLA expressed their frustration that, despite the location of Chinese investments in oil projects located in southern territory in Upper Nile (Blocks 3 and 7), the Chinese affirmed that it would only be possible to engage with the SPLA/M

⁴³ Interview, Lead negotiator of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), Nairobi, Kenya, 28 February 2012

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Interview, South Sudanese journalist, Juba, South Sudan, 7 March, 2012; Interview, Juba University, Juba, South Sudan, 7 March 2012

should they have already reached a formal agreement with the Khartoum government.⁴⁶

Certainly, it is the case that neither Sudan, China, nor the wider international community believed at this point that the breakup of Sudan, with the south and its oil reserves forming an independent entity, was inevitable. Indeed, the SPLA/M leader, John Garang, had officially stated since 1994 that the strategy of his movement was to achieve a peace agreement through which to firstly attain a Sudanese confederation of northern and southern Sudan (LeRiche and Arnold, 2012, pp.35-6). In other words, at this stage, the SPLM was still officially committed to a process “that would endeavor to create a reformed and united Sudan, but still allow for southern independence should Khartoum fail to make continued unity attractive” (LeRiche and Arnold, 2012, p. 37).

Nevertheless, the initial agreement signed with Khartoum under the Machakos Protocol that opened talks to the signing of a comprehensive peace deal under the CPA displayed to China that, aside from the issue of self-determination, “the SPLM was certainly set to play a large role in Sudan’s politics” and the oil sector in particular within a united Sudan once the peace deal was finalised.⁴⁷ However, in line with Beijing’s strict adherence to a policy of non-interference and non-engagement below the elite level of the NCP, which has enabled the successful entrance of the CNPC into Sudan in the 1990s, in fact limited China from official engagement with the south at this stage.

In 2002, CNPC had faced an internal challenge to its dominance within Sudan’s oil sector for the first time since its successful entrance and expansion after 1996. In October, facing intensified civil society pressure within Canada, Talisman announced that it had agreed to sell its Sudan assets to ONGC Videsh Limited, a subsidiary of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited, India’s national oil company.⁴⁸ Significantly, the Sudanese government acted against CNPC’s bid to increase its share by purchasing the share Talisman formerly held. This development was viewed by many Chinese observers as a reflection

⁴⁶ Interview, Lead IGAD negotiator of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), Nairobi, Kenya, 28 February 2012

⁴⁷ Interview, Juba University, Juba, South Sudan, 7 March 2012

⁴⁸ Talisman Press Release, “Talisman to Sell Sudan Assets For C1.2 billion,” October 30, 2002, available online at: <http://micro.newswire.ca/releases/October2002/30/c6739.htm> (accessed 2 February 2013).

of both the Sudanese government's desire to reduce its dependence on one major foreign (i.e., Chinese) company's interests involved in the country's oil exploration as well as the limits of the Sudanese government's inclination to "reward" Chinese business interests in exchange for the Chinese government's support of Sudan in the United Nations (Jakobson and Zha, 2006, p.67).

Although this development came as a surprise to CNPC, and there had been little that the company or the Chinese government could have in fact done to prevent this challenge to a further expansion of oil interests, China utilised this as an opportunity to re-iterate its non-interference in local affairs, as in this case China did not intervene even though it would have been in its interests (Li, 2007, pp.77-8). Nevertheless, it is apparent that this set back did little to dent the ongoing expansion of CNPC's operations in Sudan, and it was both the company and the Chinese government's long-established ties with the ruling NCP that ensured that this was the case. Indeed, oil cooperation continued, and in 2004 the Khartoum government had awarded CNPC with a contract to develop a 740km oil pipeline from the Fula oilfields in Western Kordofan to the main oil refinery in Khartoum and the CNPC's 95% share of block 6, which extends into southern Darfur, began production in 2004.

b) China and the Darfur crisis

At the time that a peace agreement between the north and south had been edging closer in 2002, a rebellion was welling in Sudan's western region of Darfur.⁴⁹ The Darfuris shared the resentments of other regional Sudanese against the ruling northern elite since Sudan's independence, as a result of political and economic marginalisation. However, it was the 'Arabisation' of the struggle, with Khartoum's employment of the *janjaweed*, an Arab militia, to attack and force the non-Arab Darfuri tribes initially to make way for Arab resettlement since the 1990s, that brought the taint of racism and ethnic cleansing that would shape the conflict, leading many to characterise it later as genocide (Cockett, 2010, pp.174-5).

⁴⁹ For an in-depth analysis of the Darfur conflict, see: Flint and de Waal (2008).

Chinese international relations analysts have characterised Beijing's policy vis-à-vis the conflict in Sudan's western Darfur region during the first year since the initial eruption of hostilities in February 2003 as one of 'neutrality' and 'indifference' regarding its resolution (Jian, 2012, p.7). Chinese foreign policy officials and diplomats viewed Darfur as a 'local affair' and had been "successfully persuaded by Sudan government that made Chinese leaders believe what happened in Western Sudan was just local violence that could be controlled by government (sic)" (Jian, 2012, p.7).

As such, it has been stated by an informed Sudanese scholar based in Beijing at the time that the Darfur conflict was perceived among Chinese foreign policy elites to be an internal affair that could be left to the Sudanese central government to handle (Ahmed, 2010, p. 6). This perception accorded with the traditional Chinese belief in central party-state's core interest in and capability to contain disputes and ensure stability and unity within its sovereign territory.

It was within such a state-centric foreign policy framework that China continued to strengthen its military ties with the Sudanese government, including significant arms sales, as the Darfur conflict erupted. It would later come to light that between 2003 and 2006 China sold twenty A-5C Fatan fighter bombers and six K-8 advanced trainer aircraft to Khartoum, which had facilitated the Sudan Armed Forces' (SAF) bombing campaigns in Darfur during this period (Shinn, 2009, p.90). During the same time period, China was also Sudan's largest supplier of small arms, selling each year an average of US\$14 million worth (Shinn, 2009, p.90). It was such expanding military ties between China and Sudan during this early period of the conflict that in part laid the foundations for an increasingly globalised and consequential Chinese role in the Darfur context that would emerge from 2006 and pose a significant foreign policy challenge for the Chinese government.

In the meantime, however, the unfolding events in Darfur during the first year of the conflict in 2003 did not attract significant attention of China's top leadership. The MFA's West Asia and North Africa department continued to implement a Sudan policy in line with the broad agenda of promoting strengthened bilateral state-state ties, deeper commercial and military relations, and the reassertion of

China's policy of 'non-interference'. According to one Sudanese academic, this policy was in practice translated into "non-involvement" in Sudan's internal political affairs regarding Darfur (Ahmed, 2010, p.6). In essence, this approach accorded with a belief at the time that Beijing could separate its commercial role from political involvement at the local level.

In addition, Beijing was able to maintain its preferred position of non-involvement in the Darfur issue particularly as the international community continued to focus on global issues elsewhere. Indeed, from early 2003, the world's attention remained focused almost exclusively on the US-led invasion of Iraq and Darfur was consumed in the wider geo-politics of the time (Cockett, 2010, p.177). Moreover, on Sudan issues, feeling the pressure of years of congressional and Christian right campaigning over the south, Washington was focused on pushing through a north-south peace agreement before the US elections in November 2004 (Cockett, 2010, p.177). As such, rather than the international community, from February 2003, it was the African Union (AU) that had taken on the role of principal international mediator, in what was termed "an African solution to African problems" (Johnson, 2011, p. 177).

However, a tipping point in the international response to Darfur came in March 2004, when the UN was provided with strong evidence of the government's role in coordinating the mass killing, rape and displacement of its own citizens, which elevated the significance of what was happening in Darfur within the Security Council and within Western media (Cockett, 2010, pp.200-1). By 2004 the US government began to take a special interest in encouraging China's potential role in defusing the situation in Darfur. Since 9/11 the US had been developing a broad energy security strategy centered on diversifying oil supplies away from the Persian Gulf, with African oil being seen as a national strategic interest (Wihbey and Schutz, 2002).

In this context, China's expanding presence on the continent, including the dominant position of its oil companies in Sudan, had become of concern to the Bush Administration. In turn, a prevailing opinion within China's foreign policy community was increasingly that the Darfur issue became an influential factor in

Sino-US relations as a result of “oil politics” and geo-strategic competition between both countries in Sudan and Africa more broadly (Chen, 2007, p.48).

According to Chen (2007), a senior professor at the Institute for American Studies at the China Institute for Contemporary International Relations, the Darfur issue had begun to influence the Sino-US relationship from mid-2004, when disagreements regarding both the nature of and solution to the Darfur conflict – and the role of external actors therein - had become apparent (p.48).

In June 2004, in response to public pressure, the US Congress passed a resolution stating that the crisis in Darfur did amount to “genocide”, accusing the Janjaweed militia and the Sudanese government of genocidal intent in Darfur (Srinivasan, 2008, p.67). China resisted any reference to the term ‘genocide’, and in July, Beijing’s state-owned online newspaper, *China Daily*, officially referred to the Darfur issue as a ‘humanitarian crisis’ (*People’s Daily*, 2004).

The term ‘humanitarian crisis’ more appropriately attuned with an emerging consensus amongst the few Chinese Africa scholars that were focused on the study Sudan at the time, particularly in historical and cultural spheres, that saw the Darfur issue as a local issue and one that was rooted in underdevelopment (Jiang and Liu, 2005). It was argued that development in the region was hindered by environmental factors that caused local tribes to compete for scarce resources (Yu, 2004).

Whilst western UN officials and academics also concurred that climate change and subsequent resource scarcity certainly were ‘key ingredients’ leading to conflict in Darfur, however, they also factored in the role of the state in creating a “constellation of undeveloped regions” in Sudan and fuelling ethnic conflict in Darfur (Johnson, 2006, p.93). As such, China ‘de-politicised’ and ‘de-localised’ the under-development issue in Darfur by almost exclusively attributing the causes of conflict to factors outside the realm of Sudanese state responsibility.

As stated in Chapter 1, it is also important to view China’s position on Darfur at this stage within the wider context of Beijing’s perception of its international standing at the time and, in particular, Sino-US relations. In addition to

emerging concerns regarding a geo-strategic rivalry in the developing world, following the US invasion of Iraq that had occurred unilaterally in the absence of formal UN backing, quiet concern had been growing within Chinese foreign policy circles regarding the pursuit of narrow oil interests and the undermining of state sovereignty by Western powers on 'humanitarian grounds' (Srinivasan, 2008, p.67).

By late 2004, the US was primarily deemed to be a "strategic rival of China", as Beijing became increasingly concerned about President Bush's democratisation project, through support for 'colour revolutions' in the Caucasus, and elevated Sino-US tensions in the Taiwan straits (Shi, 2007, pp23-4). As such, within this context of heightened fears regarding US encroachments upon the sovereign unity of the PRC, Beijing's cooperation with Washington over the Darfur conflict was somewhat absent at this time.

Against this backdrop, China was concerned about the political 'interference' approach of the US in its seeking a 'resolution' of the Darfur conflict, and viewed the appropriate role of external actors to be only that of contributing towards Sudan's economic development (Srinivasan, 2008, p.66).

Indeed, according to Chinese scholars, during this period Beijing eschewed political involvement in the dispute in accordance with a strict interpretation of the principle of 'non-interference in other's internal affairs' (不干涉内政) and maintained its singular focus since the late 1990s of expanding Chinese economic interests throughout the country (Zeng, 2012, p.93).

Indeed, the Darfur crisis was emerging in the context of the increasingly multifaceted and extensive nature of Sino-Sudanese commercial relations. Beyond the oil sector, Chinese corporations became heavily involved in the construction of highways, railways, bridges, dams, and power projects across northern Sudan in 2004 (Srinivasan 2008, pp.63-4).

Nevertheless, with American and European armed forces deeply embedded in the ongoing military intervention in Iraq, there was little appetite in Western capitals for concerted UN involvement in resolving the situation in Darfur at this

stage.⁵⁰ Rather, the onus fell on the AU, and in April 2004, after the signing of a Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement by the government of Sudan and two rebel movements in Darfur, the AU approved to send a monitoring mission to Darfur (AMIS), which was deployed in June 2004 (Holslag, 2007, p.6).

Beijing's diplomats continued to affirm China's position within the Security Council that Darfur was an internal affair and that "the Sudanese government bears primary responsibility to resolve Darfur" (cited in: UNSC, 2004). However, Beijing simultaneously aligned its position with AU member states and, whilst its Assistant Foreign Minister Lu Guozeng visited Khartoum in August 2004, Liu confirmed the roles of the AU and the League of Arab States in supporting Khartoum's dealing with the Darfur crisis and that he "hoped to see an appropriate solution to the Darfur issue *within the framework of the African Union* at an early date (emphasis added)" (Cited in: Jian, 2012, p.8).

China's diplomatic discourse in support of the AU was viewed in Beijing as a way in which to continue to protect Sudanese sovereignty from external encroachments, particularly Western powers within the UNSC, whilst also being seen to support a 'local' African solution to the crisis, even if this was not solely at the domestic state level.

In the Council, China referred to ongoing AU mediation and peacekeeping initiatives as a valuable and sufficient alternative for UN action during this period and, in the same vein, China stated that the AU mediation in Darfur had to be given priority and could only be negatively affected by UN sanctions on Sudan (Van Hoeymissen, 2011, p.105).

Indeed, the US pursuit of sanctions, or diplomatic and economic 'measures', against the Sudanese government to incentivise Khartoum to stem the conflict in Darfur from mid 2004 faced strong resistance from the Chinese government. More than mere rhetoric, and resonating with the PRC's own recent experience under US and EU sanctions following the Tiananmen Square crackdown in

⁵⁰ Telephone interview, United Nations Mission in Sudan (UMIS) official (2004-2005), 24 October 2011.

1989, there exists a skepticism with the Chinese policy making community regarding sanctions as a tool of coercion.⁵¹

It is apparent that Beijing’s UN diplomats adopted what one Chinese scholar has termed a “defensive” (捍卫) stance regarding non-interference and the protection of Sudanese sovereignty, by continuing to maintain that it was an internal affair that did not have a bearing on international peace and security, meaning that action by the UNSC, including the use of sanctions, was unwarranted (Pan, 2012) (see table 2.3., below).

Table 2. 3. China’s participation in the UN Security Council regarding Sudan, 2004

Date	Resolution Title	China’s Vote	Voting Summary
11/06/2004	Security Council Resolution 1547 [establishment of a UN advance team in Sudan as a special political mission]	Yes	Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstention: 0
30/07/2004	Security Council Resolution 1556 [[On endorsing the deployment of international monitors and imposing an arms embargo against the Sudan]	Abstention	Yes: 13 No: 0 Abstention: 2 (China and Pakistan)
17/09/2004	Security Council Resolution 1564 [On expanding the monitoring mission in Darfur and on the establishment of an international commission of inquiry to investigate human rights abuses in the Sudan]	Abstention	Yes: 11 No: 0 Abstention: 4 (China, Russia, Algeria, Pakistan)
19/11/2004	Security Council Resolution 1574 [On a comprehensive Peace Agreement in the Sudan]	Yes	Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstention: 0

Source: United Nations Bibliographic Information System, Dag Hammerskjold library

In accordance with this perspective, China voted in favour of resolutions regarding practical non-coercive initiatives seeking to impact on the situation on the ground, such as UNSCR 1547 in June 2004 on the establishment of a UN advance team in Sudan. In addition, China provided support within the Council

⁵¹ Interview, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, China, 25 June 2011

for the long-standing peace initiative in Sudan of ending the north-south civil war, for example through voting in favour of UNSCR 1574 in November 2004, which called on both the Sudanese government and the SPLA to conclude a peace agreement by the end of the year.

In contrast, with regards to sanctions, the Chinese delegation required that the Security Council “should consider” sanctions instead of automatically imposing them” (Cited in: UNSC, 2004b). During the drafting of UNSR 1556 in July 2004 on imposing an arms embargo on Sudan, Beijing assented to the need to disarm the Janjaweed factions, however it also opposed restrictions that would effect the regular armed forces as these were “not helpful and could further complicate the situation”, and China abstained from voting (Cited in: UNSC, 2004). Such discourse reflected a staunch aversion to targeting the formal state security apparatus, which was viewed to further undermine the central states’ capacity to achieve unity and stability within its own territorial boundaries, and it was in this framework that China extended aid assistance directly to the Khartoum government for the humanitarian crisis in Darfur (Large, 2008d, p.8).⁵²

As such, Beijing’s shielding of Sudan within the UNSC in 2004, just as it had during the 1990s in an effort to block US efforts to punish Khartoum for its terrorist links, was not “simply a pact sealed in oil” (Patey, 2014, p.176). However, the expansion of CNPC’s interests in Sudan and the subsequent rise in China’s imports of Sudanese oil certainly contributed towards China’s efforts to not only protect the sanctity of Sudanese sovereignty, but also its own economic interests in Sudan. Indeed, the US government-proposed UNSCR 1564 of 17 September threatened to impose economic sanctions on the Sudan and its oil industry if it failed to meet the UN’s requirement of improving the security situation in Darfur (UNSC, 2004a).

During the drafting process of UNSCR 1564, Beijing succeeded in ensuring against the threat of oil trading sanctions on Khartoum in pledging to veto any bid to impose an embargo, thus forcing the US to water down the text regarding its threat of sanctions (*Sudan Tribune*, 2004). China abstained in the voting

⁵² On 16 August 2004 China confirmed it would extend RMB 5 million of aid to Sudan.

round, and a few days later Chinese officials explained that they would block the economic measures in any case, making the resolution lose all its credibility (Wang, 2004). Indeed, such an embargo would have had a direct impact upon the commercial interests of the CNPC in Sudan and China's own imports of Sudanese oil. China's imports of Sudanese oil had steadied at 116,000 b/d in 2004 and in August, Chinaoil, a subsidiary of the CNPC and Sinochem, had been awarded contracts to purchase approximately half the Nile Blend crude oil for sale in the last quarter of 2004 (*Sudan Tribune*, 2004).

Beijing's role in abstaining on key resolutions and limiting punitive sanctions against Sudan within the Security Council had begun to attract external criticism within the US from mid-2004. There were accusations that Beijing wasn't doing enough to utilise its leverage with Khartoum, and public calls on Washington to pressure the Chinese government to address the situation in Darfur. However, in the context of such criticism, Beijing's official rhetoric continued to reflect an aversion to more assertive action in resolving the issue, viewing such action to be contrary to China's principle of 'non-interference'. Indeed, responding to such criticism of its seeming indifference to Sudan's poor human rights record, deputy Chinese foreign minister Zhou Wenzhong stated China's official position at this stage: "business is business...we try to separate politics from business. The internal situation in Sudan is an internal affair, we are not in a position to impose upon them" (Cited in: French, 2004).

In this context, by the end of 2004, there were indications of a growing debate and uncertainty within US and European policy-making circles and among UN diplomats as to whether China's increasingly embedded business interests in Sudan would lead Beijing to become a 'productive partner' or a 'road block' on Sudanese issues, and in particular the negative impact that the latter outcome may have upon broader China-US relations (Thompson, 2004).

Meanwhile, wider media coverage in the US began linking China to the atrocities in Darfur, drawing on various human rights reports highlighting that bilateral ties between China and Sudan were based on oil, arms, and diplomatic support (Blumenthal, 2004). Within a state-centric foreign policy framework the Chinese government and CNPC did not publicly respond to such civil society

criticism, reflecting little concern regarding the potential impact of non-state actors on China's interests. More generally, within Chinese foreign policy making circles at this stage, a 'local issue' in Darfur was not viewed to be one that could directly impact on China.

Whilst China certainly had an interest in ongoing oil imports from Sudan, peace and security in far-flung oil producing states in which Chinese businesses were seeking access to energy sources were not at this stage seen as connected to China's leaderships' domestic goal of attaining energy security for continued economic growth and internal stability. Indeed, such a focus on internal issues "surpassed any sense of urgency in confronting external problems" and drove a mostly passive approach to world affairs (Shi, 2004).

However, on the other hand, by mid-2004, international stability and averting the danger of confrontation with the US through promoting China's 'peaceful rise', were increasingly perceived as critical factors in ensuring continued domestic growth and stability (Shi, 2004) (see Chapter 1). As such, it is also apparent that by mid-2004 Chinese diplomats sought assurances from their Sudanese counterparts that the Darfur crisis would be contained at the local level and not become an issue of international contention. Indeed, it has been documented that in August 2004, Zhai Jun, then director of the West Asia and North Africa Department at the Chinese MFA, met with Arab ambassadors in Beijing, whom he informed that Assistant Foreign Minister Lu Guozeng had delivered such a message to Khartoum. In September, the Chinese Foreign Minister Lui Zhaoxing met with his Sudanese counterpart, Mustafa Ismail, who sought to reassure Li regarding the measures adopted by the Sudanese government in alleviating the situation in Darfur (Ahmed, 2010, pp.7-8).

c) CNPC's 'protectors become predators'

Following the signing of the Machakos Protocol between the GOS and the SPLM/A in 2002, and with the outbreak of conflict in Darfur, changes started to take shape on the ground in the oil regions that presented indications of future instability in Sudan even after the final CPA would be signed in 2005. Significantly, the Misseriya fighters of Southern Kordofan that had once

protected the oilfields during the civil war, asserted that after being disbanded following the ceasefire agreement in 2002 they were abandoned by the Khartoum government and were not compensated for their loyalty and protection of the oil companies during the 1990s (ICG, 2008).

In this context, it became apparent that, “once protectors of CNPC’s interests” in Sudan, armed groups of Misseriya, together with Darfur rebels, “were now turning their anger towards the Chinese company” and, in contrast with the civil war period when most Chinese deaths were attributable to road accidents or disease, Chinese loss of life was increasingly the result of targeted attacks by armed groups (Patey, 2014, p.193). However, despite such a shift in the security situation on the ground, in 2004 the Chinese government and CNPC continued to view such incidents as ‘local affairs’ from which China’s commercial role in Sudan was unrelated and remained largely unconcerned by such developments.

Indeed, in early 2004, CNPC and the Chinese government continued to be under the impression, and were informed by the Sudanese leadership, that the state would continue to protect Chinese interests in Sudan and that the armed rebellion in Darfur “would be brought under control in a short time” (Ahmed, 2010, p.6).

Indeed, on 9 February 2004, the Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir released a public statement claiming that the SAF had “crushed the rebellion in the Darfur region and were in full control of the situation there” and that the SAF would be vigilant “to fend off any armed action in defense of properties and public order” (Cited in: *People’s Daily*, 2004). As a result, Beijing’s foreign policy establishment “didn’t pay much attention” to military conflicts in Darfur at this time (Jian, 2012, p.7).

Nevertheless, the CNPC and other state-owned companies operating in Sudan did begin to face direct attacks by rebels as a result of continued hostilities in Darfur and South Kordofan. In mid-March 2004, rebels abducted two Chinese workers in Southern Darfur. Following their release soon after, with the assistance of the NGO Red Cross, China’s embassy in Khartoum described the

incident as a local affair in which the kidnappers merely intended to gain protection after robbing a local police station (*Xinhua*, 2004). In late March, two Chinese oil workers from Liaohe Oilfield Road Construction Company, a subsidiary of CNPC, were killed near the Heglig field, and again the Chinese state media claimed there was no political motive and that the men were killed for their vehicle (*Xinhua*, 2004).

According to Patey, Chinese diplomats “may have been strictly correct when they suggested that CNPC was simply becoming caught up in local affairs out of their control”, however, “the attacks and kidnappings of Chinese and other foreign oilmen were also part of national politics and civil war” (Patey, 2014, p.194). Indeed, as these attacks would increase in their intensity well into the post-CPA period as rebel groups sought to strike at the ruling NCP’s interests, it is apparent that CNP would increasingly become “a pawn in the Sudanese governments’ strategy of divide and rule” in Darfur and the oil producing regions (Patey, 2014, p.194).

However, China’s position since the 1990s of deeming such attacks as ‘local affairs’ into which it would not ‘interfere’ or become politically involved and an exclusive reliance on the central host state to contain local insecurity would prove to limit Beijing’s capacity to protect Chinese interests; a role it would become apparent that Khartoum was unable to provide. By late 2004 CNPC’s International Department had established an Overseas Security and Health, Safety and Environment Office designated with dealing with factors such as insecurity facing its operations abroad (Patey, 2014, p.194).

However, as a result of an entrance strategy that dealt with risk only to the extent that it sought protection through ties with Khartoum’s political elites, at this stage the company continued to lack internal capacity for independent security assessments of threats on the ground, early warning systems, and tested evacuation procedures to protect the company and its workers from threats faced within such unstable societies.⁵³

⁵³ Interview, CNPC, Beijing, China, 13 December 2010.

2. 3. Chapter conclusions

China's involvement in African environments during the Cold War was driven by a combination of ideological and strategic motivations that were unconnected to material needs or a demand for resources, and was determined by international considerations rather than internal local developments within those environments. Indeed, as it has been shown here, China's relations with post-independence Sudan were established within the strategic framework of Beijing's response to geo-political shifts in the Cold War context, and in particular events that been unfolding in the wider Arab world. Beijing's consistent ties with Khartoum's successive ruling elites throughout this period resulted primarily from a deep-seated and pragmatically applied principle of 'non-interference'; articulated rhetorically through proclamations of a shared history under colonial oppression, and practically through Beijing's unwavering support for Khartoum, including through two civil wars.

As it has been illustrated, it was not until the National Islamic Front (NIF)-backed coup of 1989, as the new regime entered a phase of international isolation resulting from Western-imposed sanctions and particularly its deteriorating relations with the US government, that a new era in Sino-Sudanese relations was ushered in. Although political incentives did partly constitute the broad contours of a new China-Sudan engagement post-1989 in the context of China's post-Tiananmen international relations, it was Chinese investment in Sudan's natural resources that profoundly altered the relationship and would elevate its significance to both countries.

It has been shown here that the process of deepening energy cooperation occurred within the framework of strengthened state-to-state Sino-Sudanese elite-based ties through which the ruling NCP in Khartoum sought the involvement of China's leading NOC's in the development of Sudan's oil industry, just at a time when CNPC's executives were seeking to expand its operations abroad in states in which they would face little competition by Western IOCs. Indeed, it was the Chinese government's adherence to the foreign policy principles of respect for state sovereignty and non-interference in Sudan's internal affairs, and the 'separation of politics from economics' in

practice, that made it possible for CNPC to enter into a petro-state widely perceived within the international community as a 'pariah regime'. It was Beijing's eventual financial backing of the company's initially autonomous 'forays' in Sudan that 'institutionalised' China-Sudan ties from the mid-1990s.

Oil development in Sudan continued according to patterns established during the Chevron period, and was deeply intertwined with the dynamics of armed conflict in the civil war with southern Sudan. In Beijing CNPC was viewed to have scored its first major commercial success abroad. However, it was widely held in the south of the country that the Chinese government, the CNPC and its partners' continued ties with Khartoum under the banner of a policy of 'non-interference' in fact entailed a complicity in state-sponsored violence against the local population due to the transfer of Chinese arms and oil financing to the Sudanese government.

Nevertheless, when initial signs of a 'backlash' to CNPC Sudan involvement emerged between 1999-2001 in form of criticism below the ruling elite level among southern civil society groups and direct attacks on the company's oil infrastructure by the southern SPLM rebels, both CNPC and the Chinese government refrained from responding to such criticism and remained unparsed by such attacks as oil cooperation continued to expand. Moreover, when CNPC's oil investments began to have implications on the international stage, the company continued to remain silent in the face of such criticism and the Chinese government sought to protect the Sudanese regime from US attempts to impose sanctions within the UNSC.

Moreover, when local developments on the ground in Sudan began to pose potential challenges to the consolidation of Chinese interests between 2000-2004, Beijing continued to respond to such challenges according to the tactical approach that had defined CNPC successful entrance into Sudan. Indeed, although political shifts began to emerge as Khartoum and the SPLM entered into negotiations in Machakos to bring about the end to the north-south civil war, Beijing maintained an engagement exclusively at the elite-level with the ruling NCP despite the emergence of the SPLM as a new actor.

With the eruption of conflict in Darfur from 2003 and a growing US interest in China's Sudan engagement, China's response was one of non-involvement and indifference to its resolution and Beijing continued to protect Sudan within the UNSC from external 'interference'. Lastly, as CNPC's oilfield 'protector became predators' and the company increasingly became the target of physical attacks in Sudan, the Chinese government and CNPC continued to view such incidents as 'internal affairs' from which China's commercial role was unrelated and remained unconcerned by such developments.

Fundamentally, China's approach vis-à-vis emerging challenges in the Sudanese context reflected continuity of Chinese perceptions since the 1950s in viewing its ties with the African continent to be inherently positive and beneficial to Chinese interests, and was characterised by an assumption that China's policies and interests were not affected by local developments in Africa. It was these assumptions that would be increasingly challenged within the Sudanese context along the trajectory of compounded challenges between 2005 and 2013.

By 2005 it would become increasingly apparent that the Darfur issue had not been contained at the local level, and the Chinese government's ties with the regime in Khartoum became increasingly 'internationalised' and consequential for China's broader international relations. Moreover, it would not be until after the signing of the north-south Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, with the formal incorporation of the SPLM into a Government of National Unity (GoNU) in Khartoum thereafter, that Beijing and its leading NOC would be forced to navigate the turbulent political waters of Sudan's domestic politics and its direct impact upon CNPC's long-term oil interests in the context of southern secession after 2011. It is in this context of heightened challenges within an increasingly fragile political landscape that adaptations to China's tactical foreign policy approach began to emerge, which will be detailed in the following two chapters.

CHAPTER 3. INTERVENTION AND CONFLICT MEDIATION: FROM DARFUR TO THE INDEPENDENCE OF SOUTH SUDAN

Chinese official rhetoric of foreign policy continuity with the strengthening of bilateral ties with Sudan after 2005, as formalised within China's wider Africa policy as a 'strategic partnership' at the Beijing Summit of the FOCAC in November 2006, belied emerging shifts in China's Sudan engagement in practice, which became increasingly complex and nuanced from 2005.

This chapter is the first of two that seek to detail changes within China's foreign policy approach in response to growing challenges within the Sudanese context. The particular focus here will be on the adaptations to China's policy position with regards to external intervention in Sudanese conflicts and to detail an emerging Chinese conflict mediation role during the 2005-2013 period.

Firstly, it will reveal a gradual shift in China's Darfur diplomacy from one of 'non-involvement' that had defined China's position prior to 2005, as detailed in the previous chapter, to its support for a more robust UN peacekeeping mission in Darfur and the development of Beijing's 'constructive mediation', with increasing cooperation with the international community, to resolve the crisis. Secondly, it will draw out the development towards a further enhanced Chinese role in the resolution of ongoing north-south issues following South Sudan's independence in 2011 and the consolidation of its 'constructive mediation' role in the context of intra-state conflict in the new African nation.

As such, the core aim of this chapter is to reveal how, in the context of heightened challenges, China was forced to adapt its tactical approach of claiming to separate its business activities from internal politics, as underpinned by a policy of non-interference in practice, to enable Beijing to assume a wide and deepening political engagement in the Sudans.

The assertion that change and adaptation is occurring exclusively at the tactical level in this case study will also be buttressed through identifying how fundamental Chinese foreign policy beliefs, pertaining to the sanctity of state sovereignty, have persisted throughout this period of adaptation.

3. 1. Darfur crisis: limited coordination to ‘constructive mediation’ (2005-2008)

3. 1. 1. Support for the AU and ‘limited coordination’ with the international community (January-March 2005)

Contrary to the words of reassurance given to the Chinese by Sudanese officials regarding its efforts to alleviate the conflict and bring about stability in Darfur from mid-2004, as detailed previously, it became apparent at the start of 2005 that the hostilities were continuing unabated, just as a fragile peace deal between Khartoum and SPLA neared its final stages.

Moreover, the UN’s International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur presented its report, which demonstrated that the Sudanese government and the Janjaweed were responsible for gross violations of international human rights and humanitarian law (International Commission of Inquiry, 2005).

From this point it became apparent that China began to adapt its approach of ‘non-involvement’ in the Darfur crisis and prior claims to separate its commercial role in Sudan from local politics, through becoming increasingly more cooperative with other council members within the UNSC than it had during 2004. Indeed, Zeng Yong (2012) has characterised China’s approach from early 2005 as one of ‘limited co-ordination’ with the international community, vis-à-vis both Darfur and north-south issues (p.95). Beijing displayed enhanced willingness to discuss the resolutions on Sudan issues, provided the integrity of Sudanese sovereignty was guaranteed.

For example, China voted in favour of UN Resolution 1590 on 3 March 2005 on the establishment of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS), sanctioning the deployment of up to 10,000 military personnel, plus a civilian

component to support the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Government of Sudan and the SPLA (see table 3. 1., below).

The Khartoum government had already approved of the presence of UN troops in southern Sudan, however, Beijing's diplomats refused that the resolution provided for cooperation between UNMIS and the AU force (AMIS) already present in Darfur because host state consent of UN forces in Darfur was still lacking (Holslag, 2007, p.4).

Table 3. 1. China's participation in the UN Security Council regarding Sudan, 2005

Date	Resolution Title	China's Vote	Voting Summary
24/03/2005	Security Council Resolution 1590 [On establishment of the UN mission in Sudan (UNMIS)]	Yes	Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstention: 0
29/03/2005	Security Council Resolution 1591 [On establishment of a Security Council Committee to monitor implementation of measures in Darfur]	Abstention	Yes: 12 No: 0 Abstention: 3 (China, Russia, Algeria)
31/03/2005	Security Council Resolution 1593 [Referring the situation in Darfur since 1 July 2002 to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court]	Abstention	Yes: 11 No: 0 Abstention: 4 (China, Brazil, Algeria, United States)

Source: United Nations Bibliographic Information System, Dag Hammerskjold library

Although the AMIS force was overstretched and under-resourced, it had been deployed with the consent of the Sudanese government, and hence enjoyed China's support (UNSC, 2005). In addition, the conflict continued to be described by many key African leaders as a purely African issue that did not require international intervention, and thus China could be seen to align its position with African opinion more broadly at this time (Williams, 2008, p.324).

Fundamentally, Western diplomats working within the UN have asserted that China's position of support for the AU and rejection of a non-African UN force in replacement at this time was not, in fact, dissimilar to that of the majority of western states at the time. According to the Political Director at the UN Mission in Sudan during the 2004-2005 period, "the world was still devastated by the Iraq conflict, so an intervention force into an Arab country had no favour anywhere".⁵⁴

China's reluctance to utilise its veto power had also begun to induce criticism of its position vis-à-vis the West from within the Sudanese government, particularly when China was seen to have "provided key support" for the West in allowing the passing of Security Council Resolution 1593 on 31 March 2005, which called for the referral of those suspected of committing atrocities in Darfur to the International Criminal Court (ICC) (Ahmed, 2010). Eventhough China is not a signatory of the ICC, it did not use its veto to block the referral of the Darfur issue to the Court's prosecutor, ultimately because China did want to apply pressure on Sudan to respond to UN requirements and improve the security and humanitarian situation on the ground in Darfur.⁵⁵

Sudanese diplomats have since articulated that Beijing's position had not been one of support for the ICC referral, as Beijing later affirmed that it underestimated its eventual impact and believed the US would block the motion regardless (Alsharif, 2013). However, China's reluctance to use its veto to protect those accused of atrocities in Darfur from facing international justice also signaled China's concerns that such a stand would leave China out of favour with the wider international community. It also served as an early indication that despite China's expanding economic interests on the ground, an 'all weather friendship' with Sudan would be increasingly difficult to implement in the context of deepening international pressure and the negative impact of China's Sudan ties on its relations with the US government in particular.

Nevertheless, China continued to focus on safeguarding and expanding its economic presence in Sudan and preventing its interests in Sudan from being

⁵⁴ Telephone Interview, United Nations Mission in Sudan (UMIS) official, 24 October 2011.

⁵⁵ Interview, Zhejiang Normal University, Institute for West Asian and African Studies (IWAAS), Zhejiang, China, 16 September 2011.

adversely affected by international intervention or sanctions. In March 2005 China's UN Ambassador continued to block or limit international action aimed at punitive sanctions against Khartoum, for example by abstaining on UNSC Resolution 1591, which included measures to impose sanctions on individuals blocking the peace process, on the basis that sanctions "wouldn't help the drive for a political solution" (Cited in: UNSC, 2005a).

As such, China's participation with Western powers within the UN remained limited in this period as Beijing sought to prioritise its bilateral ties in accordance with a continued adherence to the principle of respect for Sudanese sovereignty. According to a UN Peacekeeping Operations official who had worked with Chinese MFA officials in Khartoum at the time, "the focus of the Chinese in Khartoum was bilateral".⁵⁶ Moreover, even China's multilateral involvement in the broader peace process led by the AU in Abuja during 2004-2005 was limited and China "was not particularly engaged" early on and there were no Chinese representatives present at the Abuja peace talks on Darfur.⁵⁷

3. 1. 2. Tentative support for the UN and 'active co-ordination' with the international community (September 2005-July 2006)

Two challenges began to emerge within the Sudanese context from September 2005 that would further push China to tactically adapt its approach vis-à-vis the Darfur conflict. Firstly, by the end of 2005, the conflict in Darfur and China's ties with the Khartoum government was elevated onto the international stage as Beijing began to receive 'negative feedback' from the US government regarding its hitherto policy of diplomatic support for 'pariah regimes' such as Sudan during 2004 and early 2005. Indeed, US policy towards China began to focus on encouraging Beijing's constructive engagement on global issue areas such as Darfur.

On 21 September 2005, the US Deputy Secretary of State, Robert Zoellick, gave a speech to the National Committee on US-China relations in which he called upon China to be a "responsible stakeholder" in the international system.

⁵⁶ Interview, United Nations Department for Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO), New York, US, 2 November 2011

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Whilst acknowledging that “all nations conduct diplomacy to promote their national interests”, Zoellick (2005) asserted that responsible stakeholders “recognise that the international system sustains their peaceful prosperity, so they work to sustain that system”. He argued that China “should take more than oil from Sudan – it should take some responsibility for resolving Sudan’s human crisis... it could work with the United States, the UN, and others to support the African Union’s peacekeeping mission, to provide humanitarian relief to Darfur, and to promote a solution to Sudan’s conflicts” (Zoellick, 2005).

Secondly, shifts in the situation on the ground in Darfur by the end of 2005 meant that international and regional efforts to deploy a UN peacekeeping mission in support of the AU became increasingly inevitable. By late 2005 it had become apparent that AMIS lacked financial means, held a limited mandate, and suffered insufficient military capacity to tackle continuous crimes against humanity and protracted violence in Darfur (Johnson, 2011, p.178). According to the Head of the UN Sudan Mission at the time, the international community’s position shifted in January 2006 because of widespread dissatisfaction with the AU role within the international community.⁵⁸

The US government and EU countries increasingly began to push for the replacement of the AU force with UN peacekeepers, and in January 2006, the AU’s Peace and Security Council accepted ‘in principle’ a takeover by UN forces. Lacking the mandate or resources to continue and with little alternative to resolving the crisis on the ground, the AU formally accepted the UN takeover in March 2006 (AUPSC, 2006). In response to these emerging challenges within the Sudanese context, Chinese analysts state that from mid-2006 Beijing began to enter a phase in the Darfur conflict that was characterised as “active coordination” with the international community (Zeng, 2012, p.99). It is evident that China’s policy adapted in response to negative feedback and international pressure, predominantly from the US as the Darfur issue increasingly intersected the Sino-US relationship. There were initial signals of enhanced cooperation and coordination at the highest political level. During President Hu Jintao’s visit to Washington in April 2006, President Bush stated that “we intend

⁵⁸ Telephone Interview, United Nations Mission in Sudan (UMIS) official, 24 October 2011

to deepen our cooperation in addressing threats to global security” that included the crisis in Darfur (White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2006).

China’s official position in January 2006 continued to reflect a preference for ‘African solutions to African problems’ in accordance with Beijing’s broad Africa policy guidelines of in the first instance supporting “the positive efforts by the AU and other African regional organisations and African countries to settle regional conflicts” for which China would provide assistance “within our own capacity” (State Council, 2006). Moreover, the Chinese ambassador to Sudan, Deng Shaoqin, openly stated that Beijing continued to be “opposed to any intervention by the United Nations in the internal affairs of Sudan under the pretext of human rights violations” (Cited in: UNSC, 2006). This certainly illustrates how China’s fundamental position of respect for Sudanese sovereignty continued to underpin Beijing’s Darfur diplomacy.

Nevertheless, UN diplomats stated that even during this time, “China did not actively resist” the idea of the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force,⁵⁹ and Chinese MFA diplomats admit that the AU’s ‘in principle’ acceptance of such UN support became a “turning point” for discussions within the UNSC with regards to unanimous agreement that the UN should become “involved more deeply on a larger scale” in Darfur.⁶⁰

In this context of international pressure and AU consensus in light of emerging challenges facing the AMIS peacekeeping force on the ground, it is apparent that Beijing began to pragmatically adapt its position and policy discourse vis-à-vis UN involvement in Darfur.

Following the AU’s formal acceptance of a UN peacekeeping force in March 2006, China’s Foreign Minister announced Beijing’s intention to continue to encourage the international community’s support for AMIS in its responsibilities for monitoring the implementation of the Abuja Peace Agreement, however, also implying China’s willingness to support the transition from AMIS to a UN-

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Interview, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, China, 25 June 2011.

led operation, as this “is a decision in principle made by the AU” (Cited in: UNSC, 2006e).

China’s position was that the purpose of a UN operation would be to “assist the Sudanese government and various factions” in Darfur in implementing the Abuja agreement, and from Beijing’s perspective, the “consent and cooperation of the Sudanese government are pre-requisites for the deployment of a UN operation” (Cited in: UNSC, 2006e). In lieu of Sudanese consent, according to a senior Chinese diplomat from this point “China became engaged in trying to convince the Khartoum government” regarding the AU’s emerging position of support for a UN peacekeeping force in Darfur.⁶¹

As such, from early 2006, China for the first time began to introduce a degree of flexibility to its position on ‘non-interference’ from that of non-involvement to actively sending messages to the Khartoum government in order to encourage its cooperation with the AU and the UN. Nevertheless, in line with Beijing’s interest in maintaining ties with Sudan and avoiding perceptions in Sudan of Chinese interference, China continued to maintain a low profile, conducting talks behind the scenes within its bilateral relations, and chose to act as “a messenger man” with China’s appeal taking the form of “joining and echoing the pledges of other regional actors, than making proposals by itself” (Holslag, 2007, p.4).

Beijing’s diplomats at the UN also increased their public support for the humanitarian initiatives of the international community in Sudan, and its UN Ambassador, Wang Bangguo, in the function of Chairman of the Security Council, highlighted his country’s regrets for Sudan’s obstruction to emergency relief operations in Darfur (UNSC, 2006e).

Indeed, the indication of quiet criticism within such public statements contrasted with China’s engagement on Darfur during the 2004-5 period, when Beijing’s diplomats abstained from commenting on the policies or behaviour of the Sudanese government internally in line with China’s policy approach of ‘non-involvement’ and ‘non-interference’ in Sudan’s internal affairs.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Moreover, in contrast to past rhetoric that focused on a 'business is business' approach, China's official discourse regarding the Darfur conflict increasingly began to adopt the language of its support for peace and stability in Sudan, representing a new concern about the stability on the ground.

For example, upon the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) on 5 May 2006 in Abuja, Beijing's Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing stated at the Ministerial Meeting of the Security Council that although the event represented a successful example of 'African solutions to African problems', his country was still "deeply worried about the lack of improvement in the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur", and that China was willing to "help the Sudan realise at an early date peace, stability, prosperity and development and help the country build up a harmonious society in which all factions coexist in peace and the people enjoy security and well-being" (Cited in: UNSC, 2006e).

This new perspective and China's evolving cooperation with the international community vis-à-vis a UN peacekeeping force in Darfur was reflected in China's voting behaviour in the Security Council (see table 3. 2., below). On 16 May China joined the unanimous UNSC vote passing resolution 1679 on strengthening the capacity of AMIS to enforce the security arrangements of the Darfur Peace Agreement, whilst endorsing the decision of the African Union Peace and Security Council on the need for concrete steps to effect a 'follow on' transition from AMIS, to a United Nations operation under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

China voted in favour of the resolution "on the basis of its political support for the AU, and in order to create the conditions necessary for speedy implementation of the resolution", and it was for this reason that "China had not pressed its objection to invoking Chapter VII of the UN Charter" (Cited in: UNSC, 2006a).

Table 3. 2. China's participation in the UN Security Council regarding Sudan, 2006-2007

Date	Resolution Title	China's Vote	Voting Summary
29/03/2006	Security Council Resolution 1672 [On implementation of measures specified in paragraph 3 of resolution 1591 (2005) with respect to Sudanese individuals]	Abstention	Yes: 12 No: 0 Abstention: 3 (China, Qatar, Russia)
16/05/2006	Security Council Resolution 1679 [On implementation of Darfur Peace Agreement]	Yes	Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstention: 0
31/08/2006	Security Council Resolution 1706 [On expansion of the mandate of UNMIS to support the implementation of the DPA]	Abstention	Yes: 12 No: 0 Abstention: 3 (China, Russia, Qatar)
31/07/2007	Security Council Resolution 1769 [On establishment of Hybrid AU/UN Mission in Darfur (UNAMID)]	Yes	Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstention: 0

Source: United Nations Bibliographic Information System, Dag Hammarskjöld library.

However, China continued to oppose the threat of sanctions or the deployment of a UN force without host state consent. According to China's perception that coercive measures would induce less cooperative behaviour and a deterioration in the situation on the ground, when in April 2006 sanctions were imposed on four Sudanese officials over their alleged role in conflict in Darfur, in line with Resolution 1591, Chinese diplomats contended that it was "not the right moment" to impose sanctions (cited in: UN Department of Public Information, 2006).

China and Russia had also joined forces in the drafting of Resolution 1679 in May to amend article one, proposed by the US and UK, which would impose sanctions on any individual or group that violates or attempts to block the implementation of the DPA. In the final resolution, China and Russia achieved a degree of protection of Khartoum from the threat of sanctions through softening

the phrase “expressing intention” to “consider taking strong and effective measures” (Holslag, 2007, p.8).

In addition, although China had not pressed its objection to UNSC resolution 1679’s reference to Chapter VII of the UN Charter, Beijing’s diplomats stressed that this “should not be construed as constituting a premise for the Security Council’s future discussions or adoption of its future resolutions on Sudan” (cited in: UN Department of Public Information, 2006b). Indeed, in the associated Security Council debate regarding the United Nations presence, China’s UN Ambassador made clear his insistence on the “basic principle and precondition” of peacekeeping operations that the consent and co-operation of the relevant country must be obtained before any deployment (cited in: UN Department of Public Information, 2006b).

China’s position on Sudanese government acceptance of a UN peacekeeping force formed one of the three principles in China’s official position on peacekeeping operations which must be met before receiving China’s support, namely, consent by the host state, impartiality and the non-use of force except in self defence (i.e. China’s opposition to Chapter VII mandates) (MFA of the PRC, 2011).

Beijing continued to reassure the Sudanese government and African states more broadly that its fundamental adherence to the principle of respect for sovereignty remained unchanged, and to differentiate its role from other external powers in Africa. In January 2006, China’s Africa policy stated that, “China will establish and develop a ‘new type of strategic partnership’ with Africa which features political equality and mutual trust, economic win-win cooperation and cultural exchange” (State Council, 2006). Thus, Beijing’s core interest continued to be that of strengthening political and economic ties with Khartoum and African capitals across Africa. In May 2006, the Sudanese Minister for Industry Ali Ahmed Osman received a delegation of Chinese companies to discuss investments in Sudan’s secondary sector, and military ties were also strengthened in April when China’s Central Military Commission received the Sudanese Defence Minister (Holslag, 2007, p.4).

3. 1. 3. Direct involvement: persuading Khartoum to accept a UNPK force (August 2006-April 2007)

Although Beijing sought to maintain rhetorical continuity within its relationship with Sudan, several additional challenges had begun to emerge within the Sudanese context from May 2006 that also led to further adjustments to China's policy approach vis-à-vis the Darfur conflict from mid-2006. Firstly, by mid-2006 the conflict in Darfur spread across the border into Chad where China's leading NOC CNPC had recently expanded its oil operations (see Chapter 4), thus threatening to further destabilise the region and threaten China's interests therein. Indeed, with the implementation of the DPA stalling only a couple of months after it had been signed in May 2006, and the subsequent surge in violence in both Darfur and in Chad, the US and then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan began to push for a UN force that would require a robust mandate in order to protect citizens and itself as enabled under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

Khartoum continued to object to such a proposal and, through its rigorous diplomatic activity within the AU, Sudan was able to garner support particularly from the AU's Arab Group members (Weschler, 2010, p.8). Nonetheless, the UNSC outlined a seven-stage process that would culminate in the deployment of UN blue helmets (Weschler, 2010, p. 8). In this context, a second challenge for China emerged which pertained to a strengthened consensus broadly among non-Arab African states regarding their frustration with Khartoum's obstruction of AMIS from implementing its mandate, which in turn led them to increasingly accept a more robust UN peacekeeping role.

Finally, as the conflict in Darfur intensified and spilled across Sudan's border into Chad in April, where historical animosity between N'Djamena and Khartoum was once again reignited, Beijing itself became increasingly criticised by INGOs and local Sudanese civil society organisations due to its military ties with the Sudanese government (Amnesty International, 2006; Small Arms Survey, 2007).

Such growing criticism had begun to emerge after a UN Panel of Experts report in January 2006 stated that shell casings collected in Darfur were of

ammunition manufactured in China and that 222 military vehicles identified in Darfur were procured from Dongfeng Automobile Import and Export Limited in China (Shinn, 2009, p.90). Another report found that in February 2006 fighters for the Chadian United Front for Democratic Change rebel group operating in Western Darfur were using arms from Norinco, a large Chinese arms company (Large, 2007a, p.55). In response, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson argued that China stipulates that weapons sold to the Sudanese government are not for use in Darfur, and that Beijing upholds a policy of not selling arms to non-state actors (Shinn, 2009, p.90).

In essence, despite growing international criticism Chinese officials and scholars continued to justify its military cooperation with Sudan by maintaining that it is only the government of a sovereign state that holds the legitimate right to a monopoly on the use of force.⁶² A report by Saferworld (2011) argues that, while Chinese arms may not be a “quid pro quo for oil”, it may also serve China’s interests by supporting the GoS’s capacity to provide security. Chinese oil and other commercial interests within Sudan benefit from stability and security and, within this framework, Chinese military assistance to GoS forces by supplying weapons is viewed to be “assisting in creating these conditions” (p.50).

Nevertheless, in the context of a deteriorating regional security situation, growing African consensus regarding the UN mission transition, and growing international scrutiny of China’s Sudan ties, Beijing enabled the passing of the Security Council Resolution 1706 (2006) on 31 August inviting the consent of the Sudanese government to the deployment of a 17,700-strong UN force and expanding the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) to include deployments in Darfur, effectively transforming the African presence in Darfur to a comprehensive international presence.

Khartoum promptly rejected Resolution 1706 as “violating its sovereignty” by seeking to deploy a force with lightly veiled ‘colonial’ ambitions (*BBC News*, 2006). As such, China’s abstention rather than vote of support enabled Beijing

⁶² Interview, Chinese Embassy in the United States of America, Washington D. C., US, 4 October 2013; Interview, Department for Developing Countries Studies, China Institute for International Studies (CIIS), Beijing, China, 6 January 2011

to not only display its continued respect for Sudanese sovereignty, but also prevented China from losing favour with the wider bloc of Arab countries in the League of Arab States (LAS) whose position, as reflected in Qatar's abstention (the only Arab country represented on the UNSC), was of support for the GoS, including its rejection of the proposed transition. Beijing's position was that while it agreed to "almost all of the contents of the resolution", including a new acceptance that the force required a strong mandate under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to be effective, the consent of the Sudanese government still had to be obtained, not merely 'invited', ideally prior to the council vote and certainly prior to any deployment of any force (Cited in: UNSC, 2006d).

Beijing was also increasingly aware of strengthened AU consensus on the issue as all the African member states, including Ghana, Congo, and Tanzania who co-sponsored the resolution, voted in favour. In principle, China maintains that international measures invoking the use of force are only legitimate if the host nation's consent can be obtained, however, lacking such consent, the support of regional organisations emerges as "a critical factor in swaying China to take a cooperative stance" (Van Hoeymissen, 2011, p.95). Indeed, according to one Western diplomat, an effective way of getting China on board when a Chapter VII resolution is tabled pertaining to an African issue is to first "forge a consensus among key African stakeholders and African members of the UNSC" (Cited in: Van Hoeymissen, 2011, p.95).

As such, whilst China declined to provide its full support for the resolution due to the absence of host state acceptance, the public statements of Beijing's diplomats were adapted in order to assert that its official position on the replacement of AMIS had shifted somewhat to full support of the proposal: "China is in favour of replacing AMIS with UN operation...this is a good idea and realistic option, and it will help improve the situation on the ground and serve the interests of all parties" (Wang, 2006). Moreover, key Chinese political figures publicly expressed their concern about the situation, with the aim of both warding off criticism of China's posture, and "showing the Sudanese regime that it had gone too far" (Holslag, 2007, p.6).

Straying from its usual line of avoiding criticism of Sudan, Beijing had made its opinion known that Khartoum should accept the UN mission, and according to Sudanese analysts, this was met with anger by Sudanese officials (Ahmed, 2010, p.7). China also agreed to the clause stating UNMIS's role in a referendum to be held in 2010 determining if Darfur should become an autonomous region; a move that was referred to as "a remarkable shift given China's traditional position on secession" (Holslag, 2007, p.5). However, rather than a shift in China's principled position on state sovereignty and unity, Darfur had become one of the more prominent instances of China "carefully reading the AU's positions and aligning its policies to these", even if these positions did not necessarily correspond to China's own preferences (Van Hoeymissen, 2011, p.95).

In lieu of the Sudanese government's acceptance of the UN proposal, the resolution that would have seen UNMIS troops deployed to Darfur by October 2006 was not implemented. From this point, both UN and AU officials sought to find a way in which UN peacekeepers could be deployed in Darfur in a way that could be accepted by the Sudanese government. By November, an entirely new concept of peacekeeping operation for Darfur emerged: in the immediate short term, the UN would considerably strengthen the existing AU mission prior to the transition to a 'hybrid' mission that would be run jointly by the UN and the AU.⁶³ With this goal realised, the focus of the UN and AU became that of Sudanese acceptance of Kofi Annan's 3-stage plan: firstly to reinforce the existing AU contingent, then the deployment of several hundred UN soldiers and police officers to help the 7,000 AU troops in Sudan, and the third step being the AU-UN hybrid peacekeeping force.

Whilst Beijing increasingly sought to align its position in accordance with the broad African consensus on the Darfur crisis, the Khartoum government's continued refusal to allow UN peacekeepers would further lead China to adapt its policy on non-interference to push for its acceptance. Indeed, from late 2006 onwards, China began to utilise its diplomatic access to the Sudanese ruling elite to press Sudan "discretely but decidedly" to accept the Annan Plan in Darfur (Van Hoeymissen, 2011, p.95). Indeed, such a move required subtle

⁶³ Interview, UNPKO, New York, US, 2 November 2011.

adaptation of China's non-interference policy in practice, as Beijing began attempting to quietly convince Khartoum to assume a flexible stance vis-à-vis the UN, just at a time when the Khartoum government resolutely described the idea of replacing the AU forces as "an attempt by the West to reoccupy the Sudan" (Ahmed, 2010, p.7).

In September Chinese Premier Wen Jiabiao stated that he was "very much concerned about the stability in Darfur" and reiterated his support to send in UN peacekeepers (Cited in: ICG, 2008b, p.26). On 15 September China's UN Ambassador, Wang Guanghua, entreated that Beijing had "sent a message to [Sudan] that we feel the UN taking over is a good idea, but it is up to them to agree to that...we are not imposing on them" (Cited in: Holslag, 2007, p.5). Nevertheless, China's Vice President attempted to reassure the Khartoum government that the UN mission would not undermine the position of the Sudanese government and recommended starting "constructive negotiations" on the possible shape of this operation (ICG, 2008b, p.27).

However, it is apparent that at this stage, there was yet to be a significant change in Sudan's behaviour despite Chinese encouragement, as in late September 2006 the US government raised the threat of more international sanctions against Sudan if the SAF did not stop military operations in the Darfur region and its government accept a UN peacekeeping force. Moreover, Western diplomats appeared largely unaware of China's quiet behind-the-scenes efforts to encourage Khartoum's cooperation, and they continued to encourage China to more actively press Sudan to accept the UN's position.⁶⁴

In this context of increased direct international pressure on China and ongoing resistance from Khartoum, Ambassador Wang stepped up Chinese diplomacy on the issue and reportedly played a crucial diplomatic role in Addis Ababa in mid-November when Sudan finally joined the AU's High Level Consultation on the Situation in Darfur. His efforts assisted in building Sudanese support for the 'three-phase' Annan Plan for the establishment of a compromise 'hybrid UN-AU peacekeeping force'. Indeed, according to a senior Chinese diplomat,

⁶⁴ Telephone interview, United Nations Special Envoy to Darfur, Sudan (2006-2008), 4 October 2011

Ambassador Wang had been “personally involved...serving as a go between, between Khartoum and Washington”.⁶⁵

As such, far from resisting involvement in the crisis on ‘non-interference’ grounds, Beijing’s diplomats had adjusted their diplomatic approach in order to ‘provide a bridge’ between the opposing positions of the US and Sudanese governments and to seek consensus regarding the UN-AU peacekeeping force. For example, Ambassador Wang made it clear to Sudan’s Foreign Minister Lam Akol that there was no hidden agenda in the effort to introduce a stronger peacekeeping force, while also registering China’s displeasure with Khartoum’s stubborn stance (Holslag, 2007, p.6). As such, it is certainly evident that it was not only international pressure on China to influence Sudan but increasingly Beijing’s own frustration regarding the behaviour of the Sudanese government.

Just shortly before the Darfur peace process was due to restart, President Hu Jintao met with President al-Bashir at the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation on 2nd November, where the Chinese leader urged his Sudanese counterpart to show flexibility on the Annan Plan. Having conducted past words of encouragement behind the scenes, Hu made a rare public appeal that “the Sudanese government can find an appropriate settlement, maintain stability, and constantly improve the humanitarian situation in the region” (Cited in: Holslag, 2007, p.5).

Moreover, the US government had become increasingly aware of the more engaged role that China had adopted, and the discourse of its State Department officials correspondingly shifted from that of urging China to act as a ‘responsible stakeholder’ to that of seeking closer coordination on the issue.

After his appointment by President Bush, the US Special Envoy to Sudan, Andrew Natsios, traveled to China in January 2007, asserting that the US “appreciates China’s important and constructive role in the Darfur issue” whilst agreeing with China that “negotiations remained the best solution to resolving the issue” (Cited in: Embassy of the PRC in the Republic of South Africa, 2007).

⁶⁵ Interview, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, China, 25 June 2011

However, this was followed shortly after by President Hu Jintao's highly publicised visit to Khartoum in early February 2007, during which Chinese public discourse continued to emphasise its economic ties with Sudan, with President Hu unveiling a package that included an interest free loan of approximately US\$13 million for a new Presidential palace, as well as debt cancellation of up to US\$70 million. Such announcements drew international opprobrium, particularly within the US media.

Certainly, the fact that Beijing continued to seek strengthened economic ties with the Sudanese government to an extent suggested that, "at the same time as changing its diplomatic role, China's expanding economic ties belie a notion of a shift in the Chinese engagement" (Large, 2008c, p.38).

Nevertheless, the case that behind the scenes, China's policy makers had continued its adaptation of the policy of non-interference to directly involve its President, who reportedly intervened personally to press al-Bashir to stick to his commitments (Huang, 2007, p.837). Moreover, prior to leaving Sudan, President Hu delivered a rare public statement that outlined China's recommended "four principles" that should provide the basis for an international approach to Darfur in the pursuit of a solution to the Darfur issue and for Sudan's "regional peace and stability": respect for Sudan's sovereignty and territorial integrity; solving the issue through peaceful means and dialogue; the African Union and the United Nations should play constructive roles through a peacekeeping mission in Darfur; and, to improve the humanitarian situation in Darfur and living conditions of local people (Cited in: *Xinhua*, 2007).

China's UN Ambassador Wang publicised Hu Jintao's visit, stating that, "usually China does not send messages, but this time they did... it was a clear strong message that the proposal from Kofi Annan is a good one and Sudan has to accept it" (Cited in: Varner, 2007).

China's increasing frustration with Khartoum also became more evident within the statements of Beijing's diplomats. For example, as differences continued to arise between Sudan and the UN over the implementation of the second phase of the Annan plan, in mid-March China's UN Ambassador Wang openly

expressed his frustration that Bashir had reneged his earlier agreement to allow the hybrid peacekeeping mission to enter Darfur (Evans and Steinberg, 2007).

On 8 April, Zhai Jun visited Sudan and was the first senior Chinese official to visit the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and to meet with a wide range of faction and military leaders as well as local refugees in Darfur. According to Huang, the visit allowed Beijing officials to “engage in a dialogue with the concerned parties and to get a clearer assessment of the current realities of the humanitarian situation in Darfur” (Huang, 2007, p.839).

Following the visit, Jun pressed al-Bashir to ameliorate the situation and to commit to its acceptance of the Annan Plan, indicating an increased awareness of the lack of progress in the humanitarian and security situation on the ground (Ahmed, 2010, p.8).

China’s exerted diplomatic efforts vis-à-vis Khartoum were finally seen to bear fruit on 16 April 2007 when the Sudanese government reached a consensus with the UN and the AU on implementing the second phase of the Annan Plan, with US State Department officials affirming that China had “played a pivotal role in brokering the agreement” (Cited in: *China Daily*, 2007).

3. 1. 4. The ‘Genocide Olympics’ campaign: China’s public diplomacy (May-December 2007)

Despite the growing nuances and flexibility increasingly displayed within China’s foreign diplomacy and stance on ‘non-interference’ since 2006, as the AU-UN Hybrid mission was yet to be implemented a growing Darfur advocacy civil society movement in the US was not convinced that China, in light of its extensive political, military and economic ties with Khartoum, was exercising its full muscle in pushing the government to take concerted steps to end the Darfur conflict.

When it was announced China would be hosting of 2008 Olympics, it had been dubbed as China’s ‘coming out party’ because, as one senior Chinese official

asserted, “winning the host rights means winning the respect, trust, and favour of the international community” (Cited in: Economy and Segal, 2008).

China’s role in Sudan and the Darfur conflict would become increasingly internationalised in this context, with critics increasingly utilising the term ‘Genocide Olympics’ (*Washington Post*, 2006). From May 2007 a plethora of celebrities and advocacy groups formed the campaign ‘Dream for Darfur’, which explicitly stated the goal of its mission as “to leverage the Olympics to urge China to use its influence with the Sudanese regime to allow a robust civilian protection force into Darfur”.⁶⁶

Meanwhile, pressure on China was stepped up when a letter to President Hu Jintao from the Chairman of the US Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, Joseph Biden, and signed by 108 Members of US Congress, contained veiled threats against China’s image during Beijing’s 2008 Olympics, declaring that “if China fails to do its part, it risks being forever known as the host of the ‘Genocide Olympics” (US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, 2007).

Behavioural changes in China’s policy vis-à-vis the Darfur crisis were very soon apparent, as the day after the Congressional letter was received in early May 2007, the Chinese government established a new ambassador level post, Special Envoy for African Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and appointed Liu Guijin, the former Chinese ambassador to South Africa, with a mission to focus on the Darfur issue. China also announced that it was to send a 275-member engineering unit to the peacekeeping force in Darfur to take part in the implementation of the second phase of the Annan plan.

Through its Special Envoy, Beijing began to step up bilateral exchanges over Darfur (see table 3. 3., below) as China increasingly sought to improve its ‘public relations’ within the context of Sudan. Indeed, soon after taking on the his new role in May, Liu Guijin visited Khartoum, and like Assistant Foreign Minister Zhai Jun had previously, Liu also made a publicised visit to Darfur and met with local Darfurians to “investigate the situations by himself”, and made the

⁶⁶ See website of ‘Dream of Darfur’, available at: <http://www.dreamfordarfur.org> (accessed 21 April 2012)

following statement upon returning from the Sudan trip in which he attempted to publicly articulate China's approach to resolving the Darfur issue:

We made it clear to the Sudanese side that it was in the immediate and long-term interests of Sudan to accept the Annan proposal, since it was universally recognised as a comprehensive solution to the Darfur issue. China has been trying every possible channel to carry through the message to Sudan, and the [Sudanese] government apparently agreed with us. You can describe China's role in resolving the Darfur issues as unique, since we speak and act in a manner of our African friends understand and accept (Cited in: Embassy of the PRC in Libya, 2007).

As such, Beijing became increasingly aware of the need to improve the communication of China's distinctive approach and conflict resolution role, and Chinese diplomats in Washington began to step up their public diplomacy with a wide variety of NGOs, activist groups, lawmakers and journalists "to highlight the steps Beijing has taken to end the conflict" (ICG, 2008b, p. 27, note. 216).

Table 3. 3. Meetings of high-level Chinese officials with Sudanese government representatives regarding Darfur, 2005-2008

Date	Meeting
23/04/2005	President Hu Jintao met with Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir in Jakarta
07/09/2006	Vice-President Zeng Qinghong met with Sudanese Assistant President Nafie Ali Nafie
02/11/2006	President Hu Jintao met with President al-Bashir in the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, exerting pressure on the latter over Darfur
16/01/2007	Zhai Jun visited Sudan
02/02/2007	President Hu Jintao visited Sudan
03/2007	Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Wu Bangguo and State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan met with Sudanese Assistant President Nafie Ali Nafie
08/04/2007	Zhai Jun visited Khartoum and Darfur
22/05/2007	Special Envoy for African Affairs, Liu Guijin, visited Khartoum and Darfur
23/06/2007	Special Envoy for African Affairs, Liu Guijin, visited Khartoum
19/07/2007	Hu Jintao met with Sudanese First Vice President Salva Kiir Mayardit in Beijing
24/10/2007	Special Envoy for African Affairs, Liu Guijin, visited Khartoum

02/2008	Special Envoy for African Affairs, Liu Guijin, visited Khartoum and Darfur
11/06/2008	President Hu Jintao and Vice President Xi Jinping met with Sudanese Vice President Ali Osman Mohammed Taha in Beijing
11/07/2008	State Councilor Dai Bingguo met with Sudanese Presidential advisor Mustafa osman Ismail
29/07/2008	Vice President Xi Jinping met with Awad Ahmed al-Jaz, special envoy of the Sudanese President

Source: Elaborated by the author, drawing from media reports in the *Sudan Tribune*

It is apparent that the ‘Genocide Olympics’ campaign had succeeded in pushing China to step up its public pressure on Sudan and that the efforts of the new Special Envoy had born fruit. On 12th June 2007, Sudan declared in a joint statement with the AU and UN that it had explicitly accepted the third and final phase of the Annan proposal without reservation. Special Envoy Liu alluded that this was a result of Chinese pressure, even though he was still careful to frame China’s action as “persuading the Sudanese government to be more flexible and be more concerned about the humanitarian and security situation” (Cited in: *China News Net*, 2007).

It is also evident that the establishment of a Chinese Special Envoy for African Affairs had created further opportunity for coordination and cooperation with the West, as Lui Guijin was increasingly seen to work closely with his Western counterparts such as Andrew Natsios, with whom Liu attended the Darfur negotiations in Libya in July 2007. Indeed, Liu Guijin stated that Chinese leaders and policymakers welcomed Western initiatives that were seen to improve the security situation on the ground, such as France’s proposal of opening up a humanitarian corridor to Darfur “on the condition that the relevant countries accept it” (Cited in: Embassy of the PRC in Libya, 2007).

In framing China as the “mediator with an open attitude”, Beijing was increasingly seen to utilise its ties with both the US and Sudan and develop a facilitating or ‘bridging’ role in the resolution of the conflict, and at the Paris meeting in June, the Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi was argued to have acted as a mediator in smoothing out difficulties between Sudan and certain Western countries (Embassy of the PRC in Libya, 2007). Indeed, Lui Guijin asserted that Beijing had also been “trying to persuade our Western colleagues

that an iron hand may not necessarily be the only way to solve problems...imposing sanctions will only make the situation even more complicated by discouraging Sudanese government cooperation on resolving the issue” (Cited in: Embassy of the PRC in Libya, 2007).

China’s enhanced support for the implementation of the AU-UN Hybrid peacekeeping mission was evident on 31 July 2007 when Beijing voted in favour in the Security Council for UN Security Council Resolution 1769 on the deployment of 25,000 troops to Darfur, with China going to great lengths to ensure that the text was finalised and adopted under its presidency. This allowed Beijing to eliminate certain coercive provisions, such as the threat of new sanctions and references to the arms embargo and the UN Panel of Experts (ICG, 2009, p.21). Nevertheless, the final resolution had also demanded the cessation of aerial bombings and authorised protection of aid workers and civilians under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which permits the use of military force to deal with threats to international peace and security (UNSC, 2007).

The fact that China continued to vote on the resolution, despite its traditional opposition to reference to Chapter VII, which was traditionally seen to provide the West with opportunities to ‘interfere’ in internal affairs, reflected the extent of China’s concern regarding the ongoing insecurity in the Darfur region. Moreover, Chinese diplomats privately requested to the Sudanese government that it implement the resolution, and Khartoum issued a statement the next day promising it would (ICG, 2008b, p.28).

Also recognising the need to address growing international criticism of Beijing’s Darfur policy, Liu had begun to pursue a more active diplomacy with regards to cooperating with the international community. For example, in December 2007, Liu participated in a track-two dialogue on China-Africa-US relations in Washington, DC with his US counterpart Andrew Natsios and the AU Director for Peace and Security Sam Ibok. According to academics who had been present, in private sessions Special Envoy Liu stated that China accepted “the need for greater alignment of its policies toward Darfur with the West”, and his counterparts publicly acknowledged Beijing's constructive efforts in the lead up

to the deployment of the first batch of peacekeepers to support the Annan Plan (Cited in: Huang, 2007, pp. 840-1).

Despite significant adaptations to China's policy on non-interference in practice as it increasingly assumed a politically engaged role vis-à-vis Darfur, official statements by Beijing's foreign ministry officials continued to emphasise that China's principle of respecting state sovereignty remained sacrosanct. For example, one MFA official argued that China had maintained its stance on the condition of host state acceptance of a UN humanitarian intervention within its borders and, as such, "China has been consistently stressing that Sudan's sovereignty and territorial integrity should be respected and maintained" (Zhai, 2007, p.63).

Within scholarly debates on Darfur, experts such as Yu and Wang asserted that Beijing has ensured that the interests of all stakeholders, particularly the government of Sudan, are respected and the principle of sovereignty as enshrined in the UN Charter continued to be upheld (Yu and Wang, 2008). At a Beijing symposium on China-Sudan relations in July 2007, Chinese scholars criticised Western analysis that reached the overly simplistic conclusion that China's principle of respect for non-interference had been abandoned in the Sudanese context (Wang, 2008a, p.13).

In reference to change in the Darfur case, Chinese scholars resolutely maintain that while Chinese policies in practice may display propensity for adaptation and change, the principles underlying them remain unchanged (Li, 2007, p.74). As such, it was a policy of non-interference in practice that would continue to be tactically adapted as Beijing sought to step up its political involvement to being about the final deployment of the hybrid peacekeeping mission in Darfur from 2008.

3. 1. 5. China's 'constructive mediation' and mixed response to the ICC (January 2008-January 2009)

In early 2008, it became apparent that Khartoum had begun to adopt tactics to obstruct the execution of UN Resolution 1769, and was accused of delaying the

deployment of peacekeepers in Darfur, as Sudan insisted that non-African troops could not enter the country until after African troops had been fully deployed (ICG, 2009, p.21). The role China played in securing the Sudanese government's consent to the operation, and the presence of its troops on the ground, had given it a vested interest in the success of the mission, and delays regarding the protection of Chinese peacekeepers had already led Chinese negotiators to acknowledge that mistrust was growing in the relationship between China and Sudan (ICG, 2009, p.21).

In context of China's increasing frustration with Khartoum's reluctance to improve the security situation on the ground in Darfur, despite reassurances to China that it would, Beijing's diplomats responded to such 'negative feedback' by further cooperating with the international community's efforts to stabilise the broader region both in statements and actions. In early consultations with France, Beijing supported a French resolution on Chad calling for the dispatch of mainly European peacekeepers under the auspices of Chapter VII. Moreover, Special Envoy Liu Guijin adopted rare critical discourse to express his anxiety over the situation in Darfur, in stating that "the patience of the international community has run out" (Cited in: *China News Net*, 2008).

Regional actors also began to step up their pressure on China to utilise its ties with Khartoum to exercise restraint vis-à-vis the increasingly fraught Chad-Sudan impasse. During a visit to Beijing in April 2007, Chad's Minister of Foreign Affairs urged the PRC to pressure Khartoum into ending its support of the Chadian armed opposition.

China had officially established relations with Chad in August 2006 after Sudanese-sponsored rebels had attempted to overthrow President Deby's government in April that year. According to reports, China had indirectly provided arms for the rebels in eastern Chad via the Sudanese government and offered Deby a deal that promised an end to the rebel threat if Chad switched its support from Taiwan to the PRC (Shinn and Eisenman, 2012, p. 224). Within months of the resumption of relations in mid-2006, China had announced plans to build an oil refinery and other infrastructure projects in Chad to support the growth of CNPC's oil interests there (Dittgen and Large, 2012).

As such, with commercial interests now embedded in both countries, China was perceived to be a key potential peace broker between the two states. When Chadian rebels again attempted to overthrow the Deby government with Sudanese support in early 2008, China suffered a US\$1 billion loss in its oil projects and other investments (Shinn and Eisenman, 2012, p. 245).

Following the attempted siege, Chad's envoy to the United Nations expressed his hope that "China would bring to bear more pressure on the Sudan to stop the process of destabilisation in Chad", and when Li Zhaoxing visited the Central African Republic, President Francois Bozize joined Chad's appeal for exerting more pressure on Sudan (Holslag, 2009, p.28).

It has been argued by Chinese academic experts that the subsequent adaptations in China's Sudan policy can be described as 'constructive mediation' (*jianshexing tiaojie* 建设性调解) (Pan, 2012, p.52), which began to involve Beijing's engagement with all stakeholders below the elite level in Sudan in its increasingly holistic diplomatic approach to resolving the regional crisis. After the rebels attacked the capital, Special Envoy Liu Guijin was careful to publicly insist that China would not become involved in mediating between Khartoum and N'Djamena. However, in practice Beijing began to deepen its political engagement to ease Chad-Sudan ties through conducting a new form of Chinese crisis engagement that has been termed "shuttle diplomacy" (Zhang, 2012, p.5).

Following his fourth visit to Sudan between 24 and 28 February, Beijing's Special Envoy held consultations with President Deby in Chad, "with the purpose of persuading both countries to further improve relations" (Cited in: Permanent Mission of the PRC to the UN, 2007). Moreover, whilst in Khartoum, following a visit to Darfur, Liu Guijin urged Sudan to remove obstacles to full deployment of UNAMID: "the Sudan government should cooperate better with the international community and demonstrate greater flexibility on some technical issues... and anti-government organisations in the Darfur region should return to the negotiating table" (Cited in: McDoom, 2008).

Significantly, although in an ad-hoc and informal sense rather than officiating a new official policy, China's Special Envoy began to adapt China's traditionally state-centric and elite-led approach by also meeting with rebel leaders in Darfur in an effort to encourage their return to the negotiations with Khartoum. For example, during his visit to Sudan in late February 2008, Liu met with Minni Minawi, the SLM/A leader, a move that would have been unimaginable in the past, and also visited IDP camps in Darfur (*Xinua*, 2008).

This had been politically possible for Beijing as a result of prior consultations with the Sudanese authorities in order to ensure that China was not perceived to be "interfering in internal affairs", as Khartoum was reassured that Beijing was simply attempting to "convince them to re-enter talks" with the central government.⁶⁷ It was also politically possible for China as Minawi was additionally an Assistant President of Sudan within the GoNU, as stipulated within the DPA.

It is apparent that Liu delivered three key messages to the rebel movement leaders: firstly, because of the suffering of their own people in the IDP camps, he urged them to find the political will to return to the negotiating table and talk with the government; secondly, rather than holding preconditions such as security to return to the negotiations to take such concerns to the negotiating table and come to an arrangement with the government; and, finally, that China was a friend of all Sudanese people, including the Fur people of Darfur.⁶⁸

Meanwhile, the Darfur crisis entered a new phase when on 14 July 2008 the general attorney of the ICC, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, called for the issue of a warrant to arrest the Sudanese President al-Bashir for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Darfur. China found itself confronted by new challenges as a result of the Darfur crisis as the ICC call was issued less than a month before the opening of the Olympic Games in Beijing, moreover, the arrest warrant produced intense debates and divisions within the international community.

⁶⁷ Interview, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, China, 25 June 2011

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Whilst African and Arab states did not deny that the ICC is an instrument of justice and called for legal mechanisms to end impunity in Sudan, it was argued that the ICC prosecution was hindering the peace process and security of African peacekeepers, and during an emergency session on 28 July, the AU Peace and Security Council requested the UN Security Council to defer the ICC process and instructed its members not to allow the arrest of President Bashir. However, the US and other Western powers generally supported the ICC case and stated that they wanted genuine policy changes from the NCP before they will consider a Security Council deferral, as permitted under the Court's Rome Statute (ICG, 2009a).

Like the majority of AU member states, the Chinese government does agree more broadly with the principle of a universal criminal court capable of making "the individuals who perpetrate the gravest crimes receive due punishment" (MFA of the PRC, 2003), however, Chinese diplomats and official state media clearly stated China's position in line with that of the AU that in the case of Sudan, the ICC indictment was an obstacle to peace on the ground in Darfur and arguing that a deferral of the case was necessary (Saferworld, 2011, p.65).

Moreover, evident concerns within Beijing regarding a potential Western agenda to bring about regime change in Sudan through the ICC indictment, was expressed in a public statement by Special Envoy Liu Guijin, who argued that "no one has the right to take away the immunity of a head of state, not even the UN Security Council" (Cited in: Saferworld, 2011, p.65). Prior to the issuing of the ICC the arrest warrant Special Envoy Liu Guijin visited several Western capitals and, in private meetings with his counterparts, attempted "to convince them to delay the process to give more chance for peace in Darfur".⁶⁹ The reasoning behind this was that arrest warrants would be viewed by Khartoum as "tantamount to provocation" and would in fact ensure that al-Bashir and the NCP was "less willing to make a compromise", and ultimately Western states must "engage with Khartoum if they wish to solve the problem on the ground".⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Interview, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, China, 25 June 2011

⁷⁰ Ibid.

However, during the course of 2008 and 2009 Chinese diplomatic behaviour also indicated that while Beijing shared African and Arab opposition to the ICC case against President al-Bashir, it was believed to be “more appropriate if one of the UNSC’s African members took the initiative to try to defer the case”, as Beijing attempted to avert being pitted against the West in the debate (Van Hoeymissen, 2011, p.97). Moreover, it is apparent that Beijing also lacked an incentive to actively prevent the arrest warrant as it had received reassurances within Sudan’s NCP elites that the oil interests of CNPC would be respected and maintained regardless of the outcome of the ICC.

Indeed, according to an informed Sudanese scholar: “the Chinese should not be worried for their investment; Awad al-Jaz [Sudan’s Finance Minister] is the caretaker and not al-Bashir, and many [in the elite] benefit from the business of oil... today if we [the NCP] decided to remove Bashir, their interests would remain intact in Sudan, north and south” (Cited in: ICG, 2009a, p.131).

As such, Beijing’s resultant diplomatic approach vis-à-vis the ICC issue and foreign policy goal became focused on that of carefully avoiding being seen by either African or Western states to be taking sides, and Beijing increasingly began “playing a bridging role between Khartoum and Washington” in an attempt to build international consensus on the issue. Indeed, Chinese diplomats continued to stress to their Western counterparts that they needed to encourage positive behaviour from Khartoum, for example by de-listing Sudan from its list of terrorist states, because in reality Khartoum no longer supports al-Qaeda and there is considerable cooperation between the US and Sudanese intelligence services regarding terrorism in the region.⁷¹

In turn, prior to the ICC arrest warrant being issued, Liu Guijin flew to Khartoum and ‘suggested’ to President al-Bashir that “even if the warrant is issued [Sudan] must react proportionally and rationally, and do everything to protect foreigners and humanitarian workers on the ground in Sudan”.⁷²

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

It is important to note the inherent limitations on China's capacity to influence the behaviour of President al-Bashir and the NCP. Indeed, according to the Sudanese President's own calculations of not wanting to burn bridges with the new Obama administration he opted for a carefully measured form of confrontation vis-à-vis the ICC when the court's Pre-Trial Chamber issued the arrest warrant against Bashir on 4 March 2009.

However, despite Chinese advice regarding the protection of foreigners in Sudan, the Khartoum government soon after expelled thirteen international aid and service NGOs and dissolved three local NGOs on the grounds that they had been cooperating with the ICC (ICG, 2009a, p.18).

Whilst Beijing has resolutely maintained its political, economic and military ties with President al-Bashir and the ruling NCP in Khartoum throughout a decade of adaptation to China's diplomacy regarding the Darfur issue, this broader change has not been lost on Sudanese diplomats and officials. Indeed, from their public condemnation of China's decision not to use its UNSC veto to block the referral of the Darfur issue to the Court's prosecutor in 2005, to the issuing of an arrest warrant of President al-Bashir in 2008 and the emergence of Chinese ties with the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) in the same time period (see Chapter 4) indicates that, as one noted Sudanese diplomat opined in 2013, "China's priorities have changed since we started cooperation in the 1990s" (Alsharif, 2013).

3. 2. An evolving mediation role in Sudan-South Sudan tensions (2005-2013)

3.2.1. Implementing the CPA and China's pre-referendum diplomacy (2005-2011)

More than two years passed before an outline agreed at Machakos in 2002 produced the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the government in Khartoum and the Southern rebel movement, the SPLM, which was signed on 9th January 2005. The CPA established two governing entities

as part of a six year interim period: a Government of National Unity (GoNU) operating on a power sharing basis, between the NCP and SPLM and the semi-autonomous regional Government of South Sudan (GoSS) based in the new southern capital of Juba (*CPA*, 2005, pp.11-44).

Although China had not been involved in the initiatives that had led to the agreement, after observing the CPA signing, Beijing did become a 'de-facto' CPA guarantor (*CPA*, 2005, p.15). Despite the CPA stating that at the end of a six year interim period there would be an internationally monitored referendum for the people of South Sudan to vote for unity or secession in 2011, Beijing publicly expressed its support for the implementation of the peace agreement which in the first instance encouraged all parties to "make unity attractive" (Large and Patey, 2010, p.18). As such, Chinese diplomats assert that Beijing adapted to international and regional consensus on the need to encourage full implementation of the CPA and for a peaceful post-conflict transition.⁷³

During Salva Kiir's first official visit to Beijing as First-Vice President of the GoNU and President of the GoSS in July 2007, it was stated that the Chinese government's message to Juba was "clear, strong and straightforward: to fully implement the CPA".⁷⁴ It was suggested that during a trip to Beijing by President al-Bashir, Chinese diplomats sought to encourage Bashir to fulfil his promise to "work cooperatively with the south" in the spirit of the CPA and avoid becoming an "enemy of the international community by breaking this promise".⁷⁵

At the same time, however, Beijing clearly stated its position that external initiatives seeking to ensure stability on the ground continued to require the acceptance of the central authorities in Khartoum. With the consent of Khartoum, China voted in favour of UNSC Resolution 1590 on 24 March 2005 on the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), sanctioning the deployment of up to 10,000 military personnel, plus a civilian component to support the CPA between the GoS and the SPLM/A.

⁷³ Interview, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, China, 25 June 2011

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

As the referendum on Southern secession grew closer, and the 2010 national elections revealed the clear shift in preference towards independence in the south, Beijing's Special Envoy Lui Guijin who had been originally tasked with representing China vis-à-vis the Darfur conflict, became increasingly more involved in encouraging the peaceful conduct of the referendum, and in mid-December 2010, Yang Tao, Political Director of China's mission to the UN, said that both sides should speed up preparations for the referendum vote scheduled for January 2011, as stability in Sudan became a primary consideration of Chinese diplomats (see Chapter 4).

Following the Southern referendum held on 7 January 2011, in which an overwhelming 98.83% of Southerners voted in favour of independence, Beijing was quick to express support for the outcome and affirmed its willingness to cooperate with South Sudan (see Chapter 4), with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' spokesperson also affirming China's hope that "the two sides will continue to resolve controversial issues through dialogue and consultation in line with the principle of mutual understanding and mutual accommodation" (Cited in: *Xinhua*, 2011).

3. 2. 2. North-south border dispute on the eve of independence (June 2011)

Following the failure of North-South negotiations in March 2011 to produce agreements on post-secession oil arrangements, oil issues became increasingly prominent in the lead up to independence day in July 2011. Although agreements were made about security arrangements in order to ensure that oil would keep flowing, key questions remained unanswered, namely; who owned the oil fields straddling the (not yet fully demarcated) north-south border; whether a revenue-sharing formula would be retained, and, if not, what price the south would pay to access export pipelines and ports in the north; and how state-owned oil assets, including those held by the state oil company Sudapet, would be distributed after southern secession (Shankleman, 2011).

Moreover, in just under two months before the south was due to gain formal independence, the security situation along the disputed north-south border also deteriorated dramatically, bringing the country to the brink of civil war following the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) invasion and occupation of the contested border town of Abyei on 21 May. Whereas the Chinese government refrained from making a formal statement on the conflict, the Obama administration asserted that failure to withdraw northern forces from Abyei could “set back the process of normalising relations” between Sudan and the US and inhibit the international community’s ability to move forward on issues critical to Sudan’s future (White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2011).

It is apparent that there had been quiet expectations among Western diplomatic circles in Khartoum that, in light of Chinese considerable oil interests along the north-south border that China would actively seek a resolution to the crisis, in line with Beijing’s prior efforts to pressure Khartoum to accept the UN peacekeeping force in Darfur.⁷⁶ However, the north-south dispute in Abyei was taking place in a contrasting politico-economic context to that of the crisis in Darfur in the sense that, on the eve of southern secession from Sudan, the core issue of contention revolved around the demarcation of the disputed north-south border between the two governments in Khartoum and Juba. Whereas encouraging one central authority to accept a peacekeeping force in Darfur was relatively easy for China, in light of the core Chinese principle of respect for state sovereignty, resolving the highly politically charged border dispute between two governing parties on the verge of separation posed a significant diplomatic challenge for China.

Nevertheless, it is important to state that Chinese diplomacy vis-à-vis Sudanese conflict issues did not revert to its pre-2006 characterisation of non-involvement or non-cooperation with the international community. Indeed, China’s Special Envoy Liu Guijin quietly maintained Chinese engagement during the Abyei crisis and, following a shuttle trip to both Khartoum and Juba, he visited Washington to consult with his American counterparts in order to ‘exchange views’ on the situation in Sudan.⁷⁷ It was stated that when meeting in Doha, Lui

⁷⁶ Telephone interview, British Embassy in Sudan, Khartoum, 18th January 2012

⁷⁷ Interview, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, China, 25 June 2011

Guijin and the US Special Envoy Princeton Lyman privately discussed the issue of why the South would provoke the North in Abyei at such a critical moment, while Chinese diplomats acknowledged that the reaction of Khartoum was “a little too much”.⁷⁸ Indeed, during his visit to Khartoum on 11 June, China’s Special Envoy urged both north and south Sudan to “adhere to the peace option”, adding that China “is ready to exert joint efforts with Sudan to find solutions to the outstanding issues” (Cited in *People’s Daily*, 2011).

3. 2. 3. Crisis management after independence: utilising China’s economic leverage (2011-2013)

The initial days following the official independence of the Republic of South Sudan (RSS)⁷⁹ on 9th July were marked by a mood of optimism for the new nation and its relationship with its northern neighbour throughout the international community, with President al-Bashir stating that, “the will of the people of the south has to be respected” (Cited in: *BBC News*,, 2011). However, despite initial optimism felt by all stakeholders in the peaceful transition to ‘two Sudans’, by early August the situation had deteriorated rapidly when the government in Khartoum detained a ship containing 600,000 tonnes of crude oil pumped from South Sudanese wells at the Port of Sudan, claiming the shipper had failed to pay customs duties.

The incident marked the start of what was to become an increasingly fraught relationship with Sudan during the first year of the existence of South Sudan, and the recurrent failure of the negotiations between both sides to yield an agreement on the fees that Juba should pay Khartoum for the use of northern oil infrastructure for the export of Southern oil would prompt renewed rhetoric of war. In this fragile context, it would become apparent that the Chinese engagement had entered a new phase that has been described by one Sudanese diplomat as one defined as “crisis management” (Alsharif, 2013).

The ship was released two days before the Chinese Foreign Minister, Yang Jiechi, visited both sovereign states, the first of such by a Chinese official since southern independence. Whilst Yang articulated China’s role in a post-

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Hereby referred to as ‘South Sudan’ or Juba

independence Sudan and South Sudan as one primarily of supporting economic development in both states (see Chapter 4), the Foreign Minister also unveiled the Chinese government's increasingly active diplomatic approach to north-south issues in expressing Beijing's preparedness to mediate between Sudan and South Sudan in order to bridge their differentiating views regarding outstanding post-secession issues through 'dialogue' (*Sudan Tribune*, 2011). Indeed, Chinese diplomats were more comfortable adopting a mediation role between Sudan and South Sudan within a state-state triangular framework rather than appearing to 'interfere' in internal north-south affairs prior to independence.⁸⁰

As a result of its NOCs' deeply invested position in the Sudan's oil sectors, the Chinese government increasingly attracted international attention as it was perceived to be the only external actor with leverage on both sides and the financial resources with which to encourage a final deal. In November 2011, the AU High Level Panel (AUHIP) negotiators leading the Sudan-South Sudan talks in Addis Ababa had submitted an agreement proposal that included a total package of US\$5.4 billion that would be paid by Juba to Khartoum to help cover one third of Sudan's incoming revenue gap with the loss of southern oil, with Khartoum covering another third through austerity measures, the international community providing the remaining third. However, Khartoum calculated a higher revenue gap of US\$10.4 billion and expressed reservations about the role of the international community to cover one third of this due to a continued lack of trust (Enough Project, 2011).

The AU mediators and Western officials expressed their hope that Beijing would finance one third of the figure calculated as Khartoum's loss of oil revenue following southern independence, as that would also enable Beijing to "positively impact the negotiations and potentially curry favour with both North and South" (ICG, 2012, p.26). Meanwhile, in line with an emergent US attempt to encourage China to utilise its position of economic strength and commercial ties with Khartoum to help bring about an agreement, rather than purely its diplomatic tools of persuasion as during the Darfur case, the US government utilised the high-level forum of the 'US-China sub-Dialogue on Africa' to

⁸⁰ Interview, Chinese Embassy in the Republic of South Sudan, Juba, South Sudan, 1 December 2012

pressure the Chinese government to be a responsible actor on the continent, emphasising their mutual interest in stability in the Sudans and the hope China would employ its strength to complement US efforts to that end (ICG, 2012, p.14).

However, the Chinese government appeared reticent to finance the final third of Khartoum's loss of oil revenue, and its foreign policy actors and scholars responded to the revived, but somewhat quieter, US government calls on Beijing to be a 'responsible actor' in this case less actively than was evident from 2005 in the context of the Darfur crisis.

As detailed in Chapter 4, China's policy vis-à-vis Sudan and South Sudan tensions after independence was driven increasingly by considerations of China's interests in investment protection in the context of ongoing Sudan-South Sudan tensions, and in a new context of potential US energy competition in the new African nation, rather than its international image.

From November 2011 it became apparent that South Sudan was intending to shutdown southern oil production as the AUHIP talks foundered and reports on 3 December that Sudan was blocking 3.4 million barrels of Southern oil exports since holding shipments purchased by Chinese and European oil trading companies in an attempt to weaken Juba's position at the negotiating table.

In response to the situation, Chinese diplomats adapted their rhetoric in an attempt to take on a more active stance in the conflict and to avert potential worsening of the situation, leading to the halting of oil production in South Sudan. For example, in response to hearing of the blocked oil exports, Beijing's ambassador to Khartoum, Luo Xiaoguang, adopted a rare critical position towards Sudan, calling the move to seize crude exports as "very serious and unjustified" (Cited in: *Africa-Asia Confidential*, 2011).

Moreover, in response to the deteriorating situation both at the negotiations and on the ground as clashes between the SPLA and the SAF along the disputed border escalated bringing both countries to the brink of war, in early December 2011 Beijing dispatched its Special Envoy for African Affairs, Liu Guijin to Juba

and Khartoum, who had last come to Sudan in June 2011, to encourage an oil agreement between both sides. Liu encouraged the parties to accept the interim AUHIP proposal that was on the table and sought verbal commitment that neither side would take further unilateral action and, moreover, he noted that the failure to reach an agreement would mean “the whole region would be effected”, and the consequences of “stopping oil production would be ‘lose-lose’ for all” (Cited in: *Radio Netherlands*, 2011). He asserted during his meetings at the South Sudanese Ministry of Petroleum and Mining in Juba that China’s core interest was “to see the continued production and flow of crude oil”.⁸¹

Meanwhile, Chinese diplomatic forays in Juba were increasingly focused on directly supporting the process in which the Chinese-led oil consortiums had begun to hold talks with Juba to renegotiate their oil contracts with the newly independent state, which became increasingly entangled with the politics of the ongoing negotiations with Khartoum on oil infrastructure sharing, and the Special Envoy and CPC delegates utilised their trips to Juba in attempt to encourage the signing of the new contracts (see Chapter 4).

The Chinese government’s ability to implement a ‘balancing act’ within its Sudan relations became increasingly challenged in practice as both countries began seeking to pull China into their respective corners at the AUHIP negotiations. During a meeting with a senior CPC member, Jia Qinglin, President al-Bashir called on Beijing to apply pressure on South Sudan to accept the latest AUHIP-proposed oil agreement, just as Juba was increasingly pressurising its NOC to defend South Sudan’s position at the negotiations (*Sudan Tribune*, 2012a).

Fundamentally, however, despite Chinese diplomatic efforts to encourage both sides to reach a compromise in Addis Ababa, the AUHIP negotiations failed to produce an agreement and with Khartoum continuing to block South Sudanese oil exports, Juba approved the shutdown of southern oil production on 21 January 2012 and ordered the expulsion of the Petrodar consortiums’ Chinese

⁸¹ Interview, Government of the Republic of South Sudan, Ministry of Petroleum and Mining, Juba, South Sudan 9 December 2011.

CNPC President, Liu Yingcai, due to accusation of the company's collusion with the north to steal southern oil (see Chapter 4).

Chinese diplomats privately asserted that this displayed how China's capacity and influence to solve the Sudan's conflict or to have prevented Juba from making such decisions with damaging implications for Chinese oil interests had been severely "overstated" in both Sudan and the West.⁸² Nevertheless, following the oil shutdown, Chinese diplomats and officials did begin to further adapt to this apparent influence deficit within their Sudans diplomacy by stepping up cooperation with the West.

Indeed, according to an informed Western official, it was a combination of the failure of the negotiations in November 2011, the Chinese Special Envoy's diplomatic efforts during visits to Sudan and South Sudan in December, and the final shutdown of oil production in February 2012, that led Liu Guijin to privately press for a 'division of labour' between the West and China to encourage a swift end to the current north-south impasse.⁸³

South Sudan's traditional supporters in the West, namely the Troika countries, were themselves both internally divided over and unable to prevent Juba's unilateral decision to shutdown its oil production, and the catastrophic impact this was inevitably to have upon the new nation's economy that is dependent on oil exports. Nevertheless, Special Envoy Liu was described to have "applied pressure" onto his US counterpart and the then UK Special Envoy, Michael Ryder, to continue to "work on the South to be calm and exercise restraint" following the oil shutdown announcement, whilst the Chinese "worked on their traditional partners in the north".⁸⁴

Meanwhile, a series of security incidents along the Sudan-South Sudan border, namely the kidnapping of 28 Chinese construction workers in South Kordofan in January and South Sudan's invasion and occupation of the border town of Heglig and its oilfields in April 2012, led to mounting Chinese concerns regarding insecurity in the Sudans (see Chapter 4). In response, Beijing again

⁸² Interview, Chinese Embassy in the Republic of South Sudan, Juba, South Sudan, 28 May 2012

⁸³ Interview, British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), London, 2 February 2012

⁸⁴ Ibid.

stepped up its diplomatic forays through its Special Envoy who in February had been replaced with a former Ambassador to South Africa, Zhong Jianhua.

In his new role, Zhong placed Sudan issues at the forefront of his diplomatic duties and made his first visit to Sudan and South Sudan in mid-March (see table 3. 4., below) in order to “encourage them to resolve relevant issues through dialogue and consultation for the sake of their interests as well as regional peace and stability” within the framework of the AUHIP negotiations (Cited in: *Sudan Tribune*, 2012b). Significantly, Special Envoy Zhong expressed his intention to work in closer co-operation with his AU, EU and UK counterparts, reaching out particularly to the US Special Envoy, Princeton Lyman (Mason, 2012).

Table. 3. 4. Visits by high-level Chinese officials to Sudan and South Sudan, 2011-2012

Date	Meeting
7-9 August 2011	Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi visits Khartoum and Juba
8-11 December 2011	Special Envoy Liu Guijin visits Khartoum and Juba
13-14 January 2012	CPC delegation led by Li Yuanchao (then head of CPC Organisation Department) visits Juba and attends signing ceremony of CNPC oil contracts
12-13 March 2012	Special Envoy Zhong Jianhua visits Khartoum and Juba
13-14 May 2012	Special Envoy Zhong Jianhua visits Khartoum and Juba
25-29 August 2012	Special Envoy Zhong Jianhua visits Khartoum and Juba
16-17 December 2012	CPC delegation led by Li Changchun (member of CPC Politburo Standing Committee) visits Khartoum and Juba

Source: Elaborated by the author, drawing upon media articles in the *Sudan Tribune*

This diplomatic gesture conveyed both Beijing’s accelerated diplomacy in response to the recent deterioration in the security situation, and the deepening conversion of interests within the international community to seek a peaceful

and stable outcome to the conflict in the Sudans. Following the rhetorical statements of Beijing's Special Envoy regarding deeper cooperation with the West in encouraging both sides to reach an agreement on outstanding issues within the framework of the AU proposals, it is also apparent that more practical diplomatic Chinese support was offered on an ad-hoc behind-the-scenes basis. Indeed, in mid-March 2012, a diplomat within China's mission to the UN in New York proposed to the South Sudanese UN representative to establish a 'Friends of AU-HIP' grouping which would consist of the US, China and Ethiopia and whose role would be to support and assist the AU-HIP in the negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan.⁸⁵

Whilst it is apparent that the trilateral grouping proposal did not come to fruition due to perceived complications of not including South Sudan's other external partners of the traditional troika, the fact that such a proposal was privately initiated by Beijing's mid-level representatives New York indicates concrete ways in which Chinese MFA diplomats more broadly have sought a more engaged and practical role in supporting the AU-HIP negotiations beyond the public rhetoric of its Special Envoy and in a way that China would still be able to avoid being viewed as 'picking sides'.

Such initiatives present a more engaged Chinese role than had been evident during the peace process that had led to the signing of the CPA in 2005. Moreover, it indicated China's intention to engage in the resolution of Sudan-South Sudan tensions, not only through its traditional bilateral ties as was predominantly the case in the Darfur crisis, but also through establishing small group structures at the multilateral level.

At the UN level, Beijing also maintained its approach of cautiously refraining from taking a stance in support of either side through continuing to support multilateral initiatives, notably a UNSC resolution aimed at breaking the ongoing deadlock at the AU-HIP talks. On the 2 May, UN Security Resolution 2046 was passed, which laid out a time frame for the Sudans to conclude negotiations under the auspices of the African Union by 22 September, and, significantly,

⁸⁵ According to an original email see by the author. Other such proposals had also been previously in discussion such as a trilateral 'Friends of AUHIP' that would have consisted of China, the Troika and Turkey.

included the threat of sanctions on both states according to Article 41 of the UN Charter in the event of non-compliance.

At the time of the UN voting in May 2012 China's UN representative, Li Baodong, expressed support for the AU's efforts to resolve the disputes and affirmed that China would "continue to take an active role in working with the international community to address the issue" (Cited in: UNSC, 2012b). Whilst stating that Beijing is "always very cautious regarding the threat of use of sanctions", China voted in favour of the resolution, which in its final draft included the Article 41 reference, because it had been broadly supported by the AU (Cited in: UNSC, 2012b). Nevertheless, China's UNSC voting behaviour here certainly represented a "startling divergence from China's repeated, firm opposition to sanctions in the case of Darfur" (Bradbury, 2012, p.393).

Following the passing of the UN Security Council resolution, China's Special Envoy, Zhong Jianhua, continued in his efforts to encourage both sides to resume talks in line with the AU roadmap through stepping up Beijing's 'shuttle diplomacy' between the Sudans and increasing China's support for the AU initiative (see table 3.4. above). An advisor to the AU during the peace talks in Addis Ababa, Alex DeWaal, stated that Beijing had taken "a very simple position" with regard to both parties, which is that it "wants to see oil production and export resumed by a fair agreement as soon as possible", and it has "pressed both parties to negotiate seriously under the facilitation of the African Union" (Cited in Alessi, 2012). As such, it was stated that China had played a "low key but very consistent and firm role" (Cited in: Alessi, 2012).

On 2 August 2012 both Juba and Khartoum reached a preliminary agreement in Addis Ababa on outstanding oil issues, primarily the transit fees that South Sudan should pay the GoS for its use of oil infrastructure in Sudan. Along with the international community, China welcomed the agreement and, in support of the more specific interests of its oil companies, urged South Sudan to "resume the normal production and transportation of crude oil, and take substantial measures to protect the interests of its cooperation partners" (Cited in: *Xinhua*, 2012a). Indeed, according to customs figures, China resumed oil imports from Sudan in August 2012, importing approximately 140,000 tonnes (Aizhu, 2012).

It was argued within certain official quarters in Juba that Chinese actors had played an increasingly active role behind the scenes vis-à-vis the reaching of a final agreement on oil issues (Lynch, 2012). In light of the specific technical knowledge that the CNPC has regarding the financial and logistical aspects of the oil industry, combined with its historical ties cultivated with the petroleum and finance ministries in Khartoum, one cabinet minister in Juba asserted that South Sudan had requested that CNPC representatives assist in encouraging Khartoum to compromise on the transit fee deal, and the company confirmed that they were in discussions with Khartoum in this regard.⁸⁶ Indeed, CNPC representatives were able to confirm the agreed price of oil fees to be paid by Juba to Khartoum to the author two months prior to its official announcement in August.⁸⁷

While the precise details of private bilateral discussions held between Chinese diplomats and government representatives in Khartoum and Juba remain unclear, it is apparent that they warned both sides that “the economic costs resulting from a lasting conflict couldn’t be afforded by their people” (Zhang, 2012, p.5). According to one informed Chinese scholar, an emerging form of Chinese intervention adopted by diplomats and the Special Envoy in their ‘mediation diplomacy’ regarding Sudan-South Sudan oil issues, was to “leverage” China’s established commercial ties and potential investments through asserting prospect of “cutting such economic aid and limiting high-level exchanges so as to pressure both parties to reach effect of negotiation in a short time (sic)” (Sun, 2014, p.285).

Whilst China was still not seen to be proactively setting agendas within multilateral settings or taking the lead on the resolution of Sudanese conflicts in the post-independence era, there has been an emerging quietly coercive diplomacy and ad hoc use of economic leverage within its bilateral ties with Sudan and South Sudan to complement the multilateral conflict resolution efforts at the regional level. This contrasts with the peak of the Darfur crisis in 2007 during which “China never threatened Sudan with economic

⁸⁶ Interview, Government of the Republic of South Sudan, Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Investment, Juba, South Sudan, 28 May 2012

⁸⁷ Interview, CNPC, Juba, South Sudan, 1 June 2012

repercussions over Darfur” (Bradbury, 2012, p.285). Such an evolving approach certainly contrasted with a ‘separation of business from politics’ approach that had characterised China’s previous Sudan engagement prior to 2005.

In late September 2012, the presidents of Sudan and South Sudan officially signed the oil agreement in Addis Ababa, which included the preliminary deal on oil issues allowing for the resumption of oil exports and, crucially, the establishment of a demilitarised zone along their disputed shared border. In an effort to promote stability and the implementation of the oil agreement, in January 2013 Beijing was seen to utilise its economic power to stabilise Sudan’s fledgling economy in the short-term until oil production was resumed through the extension of loans. As discussed in detail in Chapter 4, Chinese diplomats increasingly adopted a discourse of conditionality with regards to stability within discussions with Juba about financial support.

Such continued disputes between Sudan and South Sudan following almost two years of southern independence indeed signifies how both states’ oil industries, and indeed the maintenance of Chinese and other foreign company interests therein, would for the foreseeable future be dependent upon the political will economic necessity of both the governments of Sudan and South Sudan to uphold the fragile peace between them.

With the signing of a security agreement between Sudan and South Sudan on 8 March 2013, widely acknowledged among Western officials to have resulted from mutual necessity on behalf of both governments to prevent further economic and political instability resulting from the absence of oil revenue,⁸⁸ the South Sudanese Minister of Petroleum and Mining ordered the oil companies operating in South Sudan to restart oil production. The UN confirmed on 25 March that both sides had begun to withdraw from the ‘Mile 14’ demilitarised border zone, and after over a year since South Sudan shutdown its oil facilities, oil production was officially resumed on 6 April 2013.

⁸⁸ Interview, United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Political Department official, London, 3 August 2013

Despite the inherent challenges involved in assuming a conflict mediation role between Sudan and South Sudan during throughout this period, with the final resumption of Sudanese oil exports and the strengthening of Sino-Sudanese and South Sudanese commercial ties by mid-2013, Chinese diplomacy was hailed as a success within Chinese discourse. According to China's Special Envoy, the combined diplomatic efforts made by Chinese actors "in solving the Sudan-South Sudan issue have been productive, not only easing the regional tension and promoting the two sides reaching an agreement on oil revenue sharing, but also consolidating China's relations with both countries" (Zhong, 2012, p.2). However, by the end of 2013, it became increasingly apparent that a new era of challenges was emerging for China within the new state of South Sudan, as discussed below.

3. 3. Intra-state mediation in South Sudan: A 'new chapter' in China's foreign policy (December 2013)

By the end of 2013 South Sudan became consumed by violent conflict that spread across the country following a fight between Dinka and Nuer soldiers in the presidential guard on 15 December, which ignited a simmering political power struggle within the ruling SPLM and sparked broader ethnic conflict. A series of key events took place in the weeks and days leading up to the outbreak of conflict. On 6 December, the former Vice-President Riek Machar and a dissatisfied 'pro-democracy' group made up of ex-comrades of John Garang voiced their dissent at a press conference in Juba and announced plans to conduct a public rally in order to speak out about a democratic deficit within the ruling SPLM leadership.

Machar and seven other senior members of the SPLM then withdrew from a meeting of the National Liberation Council (NLC) on 14 December, accusing the President and Party Chairman Salva Kiir of rejecting political dialogue and presiding over undemocratic processes. As the NLC meeting continued the following day, chaos ensued after President Kiir reportedly ordered the disarmament of the Nuer elements within the presidential guard and accused Machar of attempting to stage a coup. Machar nevertheless accepted

leadership of a subsequent rebellion, largely made up of Nuer youths known as the 'white army', against the government, which quickly took on an overtly ethnic dimension. By the end of 2013 the death toll reached 10,000, with more than 200,000 South Sudanese becoming displaced by the fighting and over 30,000 fleeing into neighbouring countries.

Despite South Sudan and the SPLM's historical links with the US, ties had been deteriorating gradually since independence, largely due to US displeasure over rampant corruption and Juba's support for SPLM-N rebels in Sudan, and Washington proved unable to prevent the escalating fighting (Barber and Jackson, 2014). In this context, and as the fighting spread to the oil regions resulting in the evacuation of Chinese CNPC workers (see Chapter 4), the Chinese government became increasingly active in trying to seek a resolution to the crisis, which, according to He Wenping has proved to be a significant "test for China's non-interference policy" in the context of heightened intra-state conflict in a fragile state in which Chinese oil companies are highly invested (He, 2014).

Both the Chinese Special Envoy Ambassador Zhong Jianhua and his US counterpart both visited Juba in December in an effort to broker a ceasefire in support of the regionally-led Inter-Government Authority on Development (IGAD) negotiations, and Beijing and Washington worked together to facilitate the rapid and unanimous adoption of UNSC Resolution 2132 to temporarily increase the overall force levels of UNMISS to 12,500 troops and 1,323 to support its protection of civilians and the provision of humanitarian assistance (He, 2014). Significantly, the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi also met separately with representatives from both the government and the rebel SPLM faction in Addis Ababa, urging both sides to end the violence and restore the rule of law and order (He, 2014).

Beijing's increasing diplomatic confidence was on display when its Special Envoy publicly expressed China's openness about direct engagement with the rebels and adopting a direct mediation between both sides at the negotiations in Addis Ababa. Indeed it was stated that "we also sent messages to the rebels indirectly, telling them we are willing to help them achieve peace... I'm now

trying to establish direct contact with the rebels” to express our will and help achieve a ceasefire without preconditions (Cited in: CCTV, 2014). At the time of writing, negotiations to implement a ceasefire in South Sudan are ongoing, and China’s engaged role in the process continues.

Importantly, China’s Special Envoy, Zhong Jianhua, has stated that Beijing’s public diplomatic efforts to directly mediate in South Sudan marks a “new chapter” in Beijing’s foreign policy more broadly that “will seek to engage more in Africa’s security” (Cited in: Martina, 2014).

Indeed, within the context of China’s role in the resolution of Sudanese conflicts, Beijing’s most recent efforts are notable in the sense that its efforts to publicly assume a key mediation role between central government authorities and opposing rebels factions, albeit led by the former Vice President with whom Beijing has a recent history of official engagement with, represents a shift in China’s approach.

It is imperative to state that even in this context of a significant further shift in China’s actively politically engaged role in the mediation of the South Sudanese conflict, China’s fundamental foreign policy beliefs regarding the respect for state sovereignty have persisted, as in the context of change vis-à-vis Darfur. Indeed, Special Envoy Zhang reaffirmed China’s adherence to a principle of respect for South Sudanese sovereignty in the sense that he would only engage with the rebels should it be “at the request of all parties”, including the South Sudanese government (Cited in: CCTV, 2014).

Chinese scholars and state-owned media have continued to assert that China’s enhanced mediation role in the peace talks could not be regarded as the abandonment of its traditional respect for the principle of ‘non-interference’, but rather represents its tactical adaptation in practice to enable Chinese involvement in resolving the crisis. Indeed, the renowned Chinese Africa scholar He Wenping argued that China’s “constructive engagement” is aimed at resolving problems and building peace, rather than “destructive interference” (He, 2014).

Nevertheless, the ad-hoc and informal diplomatic approach of China's former Special Envoy, Liu Guijin, of adopting a bridging role between the Darfurian rebels and the central government in 2008, had become official content within China's policy in the context of South Sudan. This publicly engaged role certainly reflects a remarkable shift in Chinese 'mediation diplomacy' in the context of internal conflict in Sudan, and Africa more generally.

3. 4. Chapter conclusions

This chapter has revealed that, after 2005, Beijing began to tactically adapt its Sudan policy in response to evolving challenges emanating from within the Sudanese context. This was a process through which Beijing balanced continued political and economic bilateral ties with the Sudanese government, underpinned by China's fundamental foreign policy beliefs regarding the sanctity of state sovereignty, with an increasingly engaged approach within multilateral fora with regards to the resolution of the conflict in Darfur and north-south tensions in the post-CPA context.

Adaptations to China's foreign policy in the Darfur context evolved in tandem with both the emerging reality that the conflict was not being contained by the Sudanese state at the local level and as Beijing's ties with the Khartoum government became increasingly 'internationalised' and consequential for China's wider international image.

Beijing adapted the tactical approach of 'separating economics from politics', and its policy of 'non-interference' in practice, that had characterised China's engagement since the 1990s, to enable a more engaged, and increasingly public, role in persuading Khartoum to accept a joint AU-UN peacekeeping mission in Darfur.

Amid later frustration with the GoS's delaying of the implementation of the Hybrid peacekeeping force as the Darfur conflict rapidly destabilised the broader region, Beijing's diplomats also began to adapt China's tactical approach of engaging exclusively with Sudan's ruling NCP elites in Khartoum. Indeed, China's Special Envoy for African Affairs developed China's 'constructive

mediation' role to enable engagement with all stakeholders in the conflict, specifically the Darfur rebel movements.

It is argued that change and adaptation here has been limited to the tactical level of China's foreign policy belief system. Despite the significant adaptations to China's policy on non-interference in practice vis-à-vis the Darfur conflict, Beijing's foreign policy implementers continued to emphasise that China's principle of respecting state sovereignty remained sacrosanct, as China had maintained its stance on the condition of host state acceptance of a UN humanitarian intervention in Sudan. Chinese scholars resolutely maintained that while China's policy in practice have been adapted in the context of Darfur, the principles underlying them remain consistent.

The tactical level adaptations to China's foreign policy and its tentatively evolving 'constructive mediation' approach in the Darfur crisis were consolidated within the context of Sudan-South Sudan tensions following southern secession and particularly in the recent context of intra-state conflict within Africa's newest nation. Following independence, Beijing publicly offered to mediate between both states as China entered a new era of 'crisis management', and in context of an emergent civil war in South Sudan in late 2013 Beijing's Special Envoy offered to directly mediate between the government and the rebel SPLM faction.

Crucially, in a clear divergence from China's repeated and firm opposition to sanctions in Darfur context, Beijing enabled the passing of a UNSC Resolution on the peace process in the Sudans that referred to the threat of sanctions in the event of non compliance. Moreover, in contrast with the Darfur context during which Beijing had not threatened economic repercussions within its Sudan ties, as China sought to encourage an agreement on oil issues, a form of quietly coercive diplomacy developed in which Beijing sought to leverage its established and potential future economic investment in the Sudans.

At the same time, however, even in this context of a significant further shift in China's active political engagement in the mediation of Sudanese conflicts, including a tentative acceptance of more coercive measures to bring about

stability on the ground, China's fundamental foreign policy beliefs regarding the respect for state sovereignty have persisted, as in the context of change vis-à-vis Darfur.

Chinese scholars asserted that China's enhanced mediation role in the peace talks in the Sudans, and an acceptance of the threat of sanctions that crucially had broader regional support, could not be regarded as the abandonment of its traditional respect for the principle of 'non-interference'. Rather, China had tactically adapted it in practice to enable a more active Chinese involvement in resolving the crisis. Beijing reaffirmed its adherence to a principle of respect for South Sudanese sovereignty in the sense that it would only engage with the South Sudanese rebels should it be at the request of all parties, including the central government in Juba.

Nevertheless, this latest move importantly represented how the initially informal, ad-hoc and behind the scenes approach of providing a bridge between the Khartoum government and the rebel factions in the context of Darfur had now become an official content of China's mediation diplomacy.

More broadly speaking, such publicly active efforts to assume a mediation role in South Sudan, which has occurred outside the realm of international pressure and in response to China's own concerns, certainly marks a new chapter in China's politically engaged role in peace and security initiatives in the Sudanese context. Crucially, it illustrates an evolved role that is far removed from the 'separation of business from politics approach' that had defined Beijing's engagement during the early stages of its 'Going Out' strategy in Sudan.

CHAPTER 4. NAVIGATING THE INTERNAL POLITICS OF SOUTHERN SECESSION & THE ‘CONTAINMENT’ OF CNPC IN SUDAN

On 4 February 2009, China and Sudan celebrated their ‘golden jubilee’ anniversary, marking the fiftieth year since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1959, and the tenth year since Sudan first became an oil-exporting nation. In a message of congratulations to his Sudanese counterpart, President Hu Jintao stated that half a century of bilateral ties “have withstood various kinds of tests on the international stage and managed to see a smooth development based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence” (Cited in: *People’s Daily*, 2009). Such rhetorical messages of continuity belie significant shifts in the content and makeup of the Sino-Sudanese relationship in practice following the signing of the CPA in 2005.

This chapter seeks to provide a detailed description of a second strand of adaptations to China’s Sudan policy in the context of emerging challenges within the Sudanese context, namely, China’s adjustment to Sudan’s shifting internal post-CPA political dynamics and the Chinese government’s attempts to ‘contain’ CNPC’s oil interests therein. It will detail how in response to the emergence of the semi-autonomous GoSS, both Chinese diplomats and CNPC representatives sought to adapt their traditional tactical approach of developing ties exclusively with the ruling NCP in Khartoum to engage both beyond and below this elite level. Moreover, it will detail how Chinese foreign policy implementers sought to balance established ties with the north with their deepening diplomatic forays in southern Sudan, where the majority of CNPC’s oil investments were located, as independence approached.

Moreover, it will draw out the process whereby the Chinese government has attempted to alter CNPC’s earlier autonomy within the Sudanese context, as detailed in Chapter 2. Indeed, after 2005, a policy of ‘containment’ has evolved whereby Beijing has sought to both encourage the expansion of CNPC’s oil interests in Sudan whilst also seeking greater regulation of its behaviour in an attempt to ensure the company operates according to China’s wider national

interests. This 'containment' approach then increasingly took the form of seeking to maintain and protect CNPC's interests and workers on the ground both in the lead up to southern secession and in a context of heightened insecurity in the post-independence context.

Crucially, this chapter also aims to provide further support to the argument that change and adaptation occurred at the tactical level of China's foreign policy approach. This will be through illustrating how not only Chinese fundamental beliefs pertaining to the sanctity of state sovereignty persisted, but also Beijing's strategic beliefs underpinning the 'Going Out' strategy.

4. 1. The CPA: Adapting to 'one country, two systems' (2005-2007)

4. 1. 1. 'Making unity attractive' and adapting to new political realities

The north-south CPA which was signed on 9th January 2005 broadly accorded with Chinese interests, not only by bringing about stability but also because it sought to maintain the status-quo of Sudanese sovereignty in asserting that all parties should make "the unity of Sudan attractive to the people of Southern Sudan" (CPA, 2005, p.4). Moreover, a core interest of the Chinese government and CNPC was the maintenance of the company's oil investments, and thus the final CPA allayed Chinese concerns as it was formally agreed to maintain "existing oil contracts" (CPA, 2005, p.4) meaning those signed with companies before the CPA would not be subject to negotiation during the six-year interim period following the signing of the agreement.

Nevertheless, the CPA also affirmed that at the end the interim period, there would be an internationally monitored referendum for the people of southern Sudan to "confirm the unity of the Sudan by voting to adopt the system of government established under the peace agreement; or to vote for secession" (CPA, 2005, p.4).

The Chinese perspective at this stage continued to be that the independence of the south and the breakup of the Sudanese state was not an inevitable outcome

of the peace agreement. Indeed, during his inauguration as First Vice President of Sudan in early 2005, John Garang stressed that the SPLM, “is a national Movement for the New Sudan” and all Sudanese should “join the SPLM and safeguard the unity of our country” (Garang, 2005).

Moreover, the political and economic inequalities alluded to in the Machakos protocol were to be redressed through a “long-term process of democratic transition”, and the choice of the South would have to be made on an assessment of how much progress had been made towards transition (Johnson, 2011, p.168). Chinese diplomats have implied that China’s assumption here was that the NCP and the Khartoum government would use the interim period to provide the necessary economic and political incentives to encourage the south to remain part of the Sudanese state, just as China has long attempted to discourage secessionist sentiment in Xinjiang and Tibet in China.⁸⁹

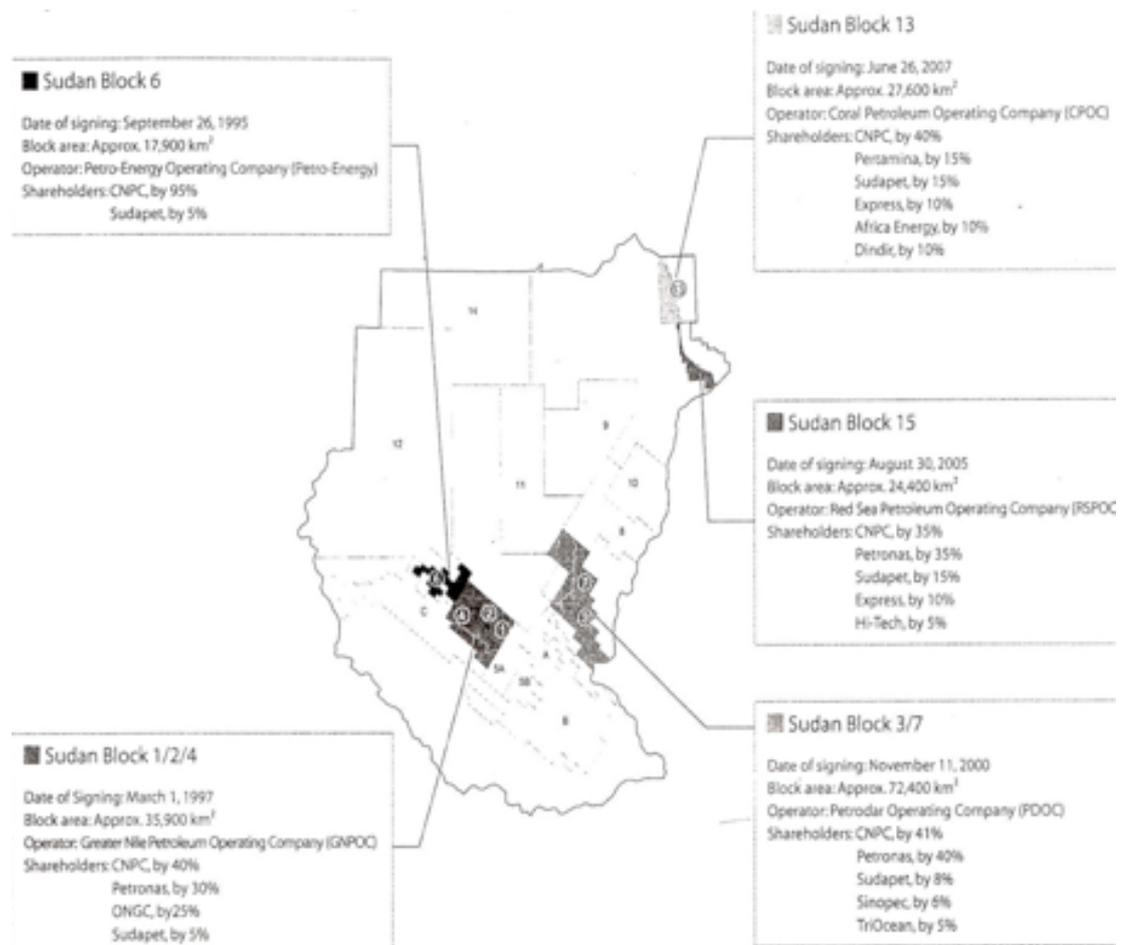
In the first instance, the end of the civil war with the signing of the CPA provided an improved security environment for the CNPC to expand its operations in Sudan; a move that was supported by top Chinese CPC and government officials (CNPC, 2009, p.4). In 2005 and 2007 CNPC gained its first offshore risk exploration concessions abroad when its Sudan branch, CNPC International (Nile) Ltd, signed production sharing agreements with the GoS to explore oil and gas in Sudan’s north coast offshore Blocks 15 and 13, respectively (see figure 4. 1., below).

However, despite the status-quo orientation of the CPA, it fundamentally introduced a number of new political and economic governance realities that both the Chinese government and CNPC began to tactically adapt to. Indeed, the most prominent new reality was the establishment of the semi-autonomous GoSS based in the new southern capital of Juba, with the CPA calling for a general election at all levels of government to be completed by the end of the third year of that period (CPA, 2005, pp.11-44).

⁸⁹ Interview, CPCID diplomat, London, 6 March 2013

Moreover, a new system of governance of wealth sharing between the GoS and the GoSS within the GoNU was established, which altered the governance of Sudan's oil industry that, on paper, would see the SPLM and the GoSS taking on an equal decision-making and management role with the old NCP elites in Khartoum. After 2% of oil revenue had been allocated to the oil-producing states themselves, 50% of the revenue derived from oil producing wells in southern Sudan would be allocated to the GoSS (CPA, 2005, p.53).

Figure. 4. 1. CNPC's oil exploration projects in Sudan, 2007



Source: CNPC, 2009, p. 6.

Within this context of Sudan's post-CPA political framework of power and wealth sharing, it is apparent that the Chinese government began to tactically adapt its hereto elite-based engagement beyond that of the traditional Beijing-Khartoum nexus. From 2005 Beijing implemented an incremental and informal "dual track process" of maintaining core bilateral ties with the NCP, whilst

reaching out to develop new, parallel relations with the SPLM-run GoSS in Juba (Large and Patey, 2011a, p.24).

While the “formal, legal incorporation of the SPLM into the GoNU rendered it politically and legally possible” for Beijing to engage the SPLM directly, without being seen to undermine its respect for Sudanese sovereignty, this outreach posed certain challenges for Beijing, which were “not just the legacy of Beijing’s wartime, political and economic and military support for Khartoum, but also NCP concerns about possible China-South Sudan links” (Large and Patey, 2010, p.15).

In March 2005, the first semi-official contact between Beijing and the SPLM occurred when a high-ranking SPLM delegation, led by Salva Kiir, at the time second-in-command to John Garang, visited to Beijing to discuss possible ‘economic cooperation’ during meetings with relatively junior Chinese officials (Large, 2011b, p.165).⁹⁰

Within this context, Chinese officials in Beijing had been reassured of the SPLM leaders’ core strategy, which was one of unity rather than southern independence, as the GoSS’s post-war external relations became premised on an attempt to attract investment and to promote John Garang’s ‘New Sudan’ vision abroad.⁹¹ Nevertheless, such links remained limited, and it was in fact private Chinese entrepreneurs that took the lead in developing independent commercial ventures in the south from 2005.⁹²

Meanwhile, CNPC began to tentatively adapt to new realities of wealth-sharing and oil governance in Sudan following the CPA, particularly where the agreement had intended to respond to concerns about the impact of the oil industry on the environment and the South Sudan communities. In contrast to the 1990s period when responsibilities for enforcing environmental legislation had not been clearly assigned, in the post-CPA environment the oil companies were required to follow “best known practices in the sustainable utilisation and control of natural resources”, and that communities in oil-bearing regions have

⁹⁰ Interview, Juba University, Juba, South Sudan, 7 March 2012

⁹¹ Interview, British development official, Juba, South Sudan, 1 June 2012

⁹² Interview, Chinese state-owned telecommunications company, Juba, South Sudan, 4 May 2012

the right to participation in compensation processes from which they had previously been excluded (Dittgen, 2012, p.208).

CNPC's local branch the CNPCI (Nile) Ltd continued to conduct Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), as it had since they became compulsory under national law in 2001 under the Environmental Protection Act. However, south Sudanese researchers have detailed how, in contrast to during the civil war, following the signing of the CPA, the company began to pay more attention to local concerns about their activities in the oil regions, and a limited number of roads, basic schools, and health care centres were constructed to address some of the concerns (Moro, 2013, p.26).

4. 1. 2. Adjusting to emerging cracks in the implementation of the CPA and regional insecurity

Meanwhile, political shifts began to take place within southern Sudan as a result of the death of SPLM/A leader John Garang in July 2005, after which Salva Kiir was quickly sworn in as the new President of the GoSS and Vice President of the GoNU, with Riek Machar assuming the position of vice-president of the GoSS. However, Kiir lacked the public vision of Garang who had focused on reconciling the overwhelming desire for the South to peacefully secede with that of giving unity a chance, and by the end of 2005, the CPA's "conceptually definitive 'making unity attractive' clause became ever more dubious as a commonly shared goal" (LeRiche and Arnold, p.117).

Additionally, with regards to oil governance, joint management of the oil industry was undermined with GoSS officials stating that in reality President al-Bashir and the ruling NCP remained in control of the oil sector.⁹³ As such, there was increasing concern among the CPA's Western brokers regarding prospects for long-term peace and security in Sudan, as the CPA was in effect "underwritten by the provisions in the Wealth Sharing Protocol, in that almost all of GoSS's income was derived from shared oil revenues" (Johnson, 2011, p.169).

⁹³ Interview, South Sudanese Parliamentary Committee on Energy, Juba, South Sudan, 13 March 2012

Despite the formal end of hostilities between north and south Sudan with the signing of the CPA, in contrast to the civil war period in which the Khartoum government had ensured a degree of protection of the oilfields, CNPC and its operating partners were in fact exposed to continued attacks in 2006 that represented “a sign of things to come” (Patey, 2014, p.194).

Such insecurity faced by companies operating along the north-south border were compounded by the worsening of the hostilities in Sudan’s north-west region of Darfur and the wider Central African region, just as the CNPC began to establish oil interests in Chad. Shortly after Chad’s move to switch its support from Taiwan back to China in August 2006 and the restoration of official Chinese government-government ties, CNPC’s oil interests were consolidated in Chad through Chinese government ‘oil diplomacy’ efforts and financial backing from China EXIM Bank.⁹⁴ In the context of the regional intensification of conflict in Sudan’s western Darfur region and its spillover into Chad from mid-2006, the risks to the CNPC’s interests on the ground in the region became much greater.

In the context of worsening regional security, the Chinese government began to further adapt its ‘separation between politics and economics’ and exclusively bilateral approach in Sudan as, in addition to its emerging involvement in UN support for the AU peacekeeping mission in Darfur (see Chapter 3),

Beijing also began to support the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), established in 2005 to support implementation of the CPA, by deploying Chinese engineering units to assist in the construction of UNMIS facilities. However, as Large states, whilst peacekeeping contributions have been comparatively straightforward for China in post-conflict Sudan, it has been political challenges that have “presented far greater difficulties” for Beijing (Large, 2012, p.9).

As emerging political and security issues regarding the implementation of the CPA had become increasingly evident, from 2007 the Chinese government attempted to step up its efforts to expand beyond the binary Beijing-NCP relationship in Khartoum. During President Hu Jintao’s highly publicised visit to

⁹⁴ For more details on CNPC’s Chad operations, see: Magrin and Maoundonodji (2012), p. 122.

Khartoum in early February, the Chinese leader also met with Salva Kiir, who was invited to Beijing to discuss how China could contribute to southern Sudan's development. Salva Kiir's first 'official' visit to Beijing in July 2007 from the South Sudanese side represented the "real beginning" of bilateral relations (ICG, 2012, p.168).

According to one of the GoSS delegates, two key interlinked messages had been delivered during Kiir's meeting with President Hu, namely, a map of Sudan's oil concessions was displayed to show that the majority of CNPC's oil investments were located in the south, and the Chinese president was reminded of the CPA's referendum clause that the people of southern Sudan would exercise their right to self-determination in 2011.⁹⁵

One study has asserted that Salva Kiir's visit to Beijing and the delivery of these messages to Chinese leaders "marked a turning point in Chinese policy on Sudan" (ICG, 2012, p.3). However, it is argued here that Beijing did not dramatically alter its Sudan policy as a result of the messages delivered during Salva Kiir's 2007 trip. According to southern Sudanese officials, China continued to believe that the Khartoum government would nevertheless maintain sovereign control of the oil sector in the long-term, and that it was not until after the establishment of a physical diplomatic presence in Juba from 2008 that Beijing began to realise the political necessity of engaging with the south with regards to potential oil issues (which will be discussed below).⁹⁶

As southern delegates on the trip claim, despite trying to convince Chinese officials that the majority of Sudanese oil was located in the south, "the Khartoum government gave the Chinese the impression up until 2009 that the oil was all in the north", and China "only began to realise that this was not the case" after

⁹⁵ Interview, Government of the Republic of South Sudan, Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, Juba, South Sudan, 20 March 2012. Also see: Large (2012), p. 168.

⁹⁶ Interview, Government of the Republic of South Sudan, Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, South Sudan, 20 March 2012.

Nevertheless, China's willingness to formally engage with the GoSS was certainly an adaptation of its policy in response to the south's emerging political role within the GoNU ahead of the national elections.

China's Sudan policy had begun adhering to the reality of 'one Sudan, two systems' in recognising and engaging both the GoNU in Khartoum and the GoSS in Juba. From the Chinese perspective, China's fundamental adherence to the principle of respect for Sudanese sovereignty was maintained within the 'one Sudan, two systems' framework because Beijing had Sudan's overall "economic development at the centre stage" rather than political interference (Zhang, 2012, p.4). As it will be revealed below, it was not until after the establishment of a Chinese consulate in Juba in 2008, and as the force for secession became unstoppable in the south after 2010, that China's policy was seen to undergo a significant shift and China-GoSS relations were stepped up in line with such political shifts on the ground.

4. 2. Containing CNPC in Sudan and adjusting to the failure to 'make unity attractive' (2007-2009)

4. 2. 1. Challenging China's national interests and heightened attacks on CNPC: regulating NOCs whilst protecting oil interests in Sudan

From mid-2007 CNPC's ongoing oil projects in Sudan in the midst of the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Darfur became increasingly consequential both financially for the company but also for the Chinese government's wider image within the international community. In April 2007 the Sudan Divestment Task Force released a report in which the NGO claimed that CNPC "plays the role of enabler" in the GoS's "genocidal campaign against its own people" (SDT, 2007, p.2).

The report documented the "symbiotic relationship" between CNPC and its majority-owned, publicly-traded subsidiary, PetroChina, with overlapping management and frequent asset transfers, and successfully pressured its US based shareholders to begin to divest from the company (SDT, 2007, p.2). Meanwhile, it became apparent in 2007 that, over the course of 2006, the

CNPC had sold much of its oil equity quota produced in Sudan to the highest bidders on the international market, particularly Japan, rather than wholly transporting it back to China, in the interests of the country's growing energy needs (McGregor, 2011, p.62).

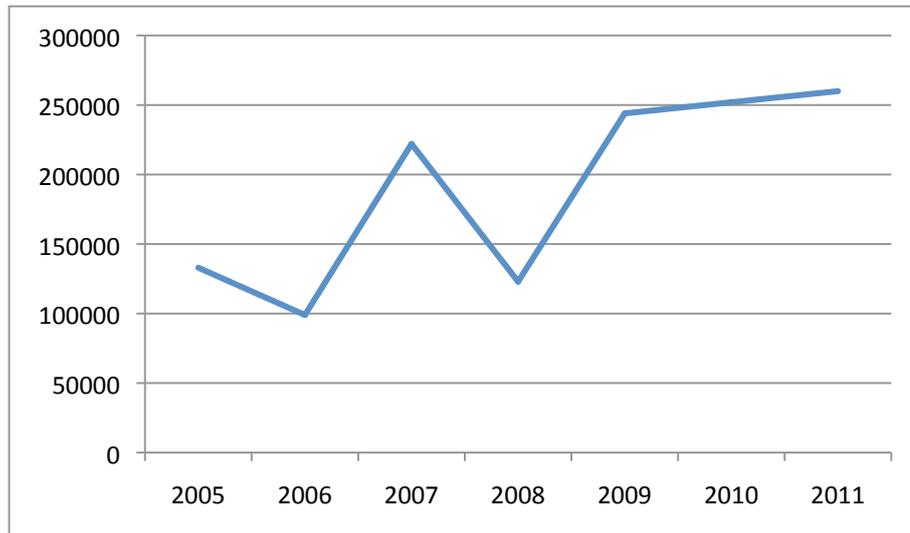
Indeed, China's imports of Sudanese oil declined from 133,000 bpd in 2005 to 99,000 b/d a year later (see figure 4. 2., below), and 39% of Sudan's oil exports went to Japan in 2006, higher than the 31% bound for China (Houser, 2008). Indeed, less than half of the amount of oil produced by Chinese NOCs in Sudan in 2006 (220,000 b/d) was actually shipped to China (100,000 b/d) (Zhou, 2008, p.115).

Although Sudanese oil imports to China rose again in 2007, reaching 222,000 b/d (see figure 4. 2., below), this was largely due to the lack of international buyers for the high-acid, heavy paraffin 'Dar Blend' crude produced by CNPC and the Petrodar consortium in blocks 3 and 7 in Upper Nile state after 2006, and so CNPC had begun building a refinery in China to process it, making China the sole buyer of the Dar crude in the first two months of its production (ECOS, 2007, p.16).

This indicated not only that the profit interests and commercial calculations of the company itself increasingly determine the volume of China's imports the company's operations in Sudan, but that these decisions might not always be to the benefit of the Chinese government's energy security interests. As one senior manager of CNPC's operations in Sudan stated, the company "will choose to sell Sudanese oil on the international market if we can sell for a higher price".⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Interview, CNPC, Juba, Sudan Sudan, 1 June 2012

Figure 4. 2. China's Imports of Sudanese oil (b/d), 2005-2011



Source: Yearbooks of China's Economic Foreign Relations and Trade, 2005-2009; US Energy Information Administration (EIA) Statistics 2010-2011.

Meanwhile, Chinese citizens began to face heightened threats on the ground in the context of the conflict in Darfur, as following the dispatch of an advanced party engineers to Darfur, as part of a contingency of 315 engineers in support of the hybrid peacekeeping force on 24 November 2006, the Darfur rebel group JEM demanded their withdrawal, warning “we opposed them because China is not interested in human rights...it is interested in Sudan's resources” (Cited in: Huang, 2007, p.840). In addition, from 2007 CNPC itself began to experience challenges in Sudan and the wider region in the form of physical threats to workers and investments, not seen on such a scale since CNPC's initial entrance into the Sudanese oil industry in the 1990s during the country's civil war.

In October 2007, the JEM attacked the CNPC-run Diffra oilfield in Sudan and, in a move that highlighted how Darfur's rebel groups were now seeking to intentionally target Sudan's main Chinese investors in an attempt to influence the Khartoum government, the JEM released a statement threatening that Chinese companies had one week to leave Sudan.⁹⁸ In addition, on 12 December 2007, JEM attacked another CNPC-operated oilfield southern Kordofan and vowed to continue attacks until CNPC left Sudan (*Sudan Tribune*, 2007a).

⁹⁸ Interview, Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), Paris, 21 July 2008

In early 2008, CNPC began to face heightened insecurity in the region as a result of Sudan-Chad tensions and the conflict waging in Darfur. Between 28 January and 3 February, Khartoum conducted its latest effort to overthrow Chad's government and prevent deployment of a European Union (EU) protection force in eastern Chad when armed opposition attacks on N'Djaména by a coalition of Khartoum-backed rebel groups took place for the second time since April 2006. The vulnerability of CNPC's recently established interests in Chad were displayed with the company's evacuation of over 700 staff (CNPC, 2008, p.12).

However, the most serious attack on CNPC until this point in Sudan occurred on 18 October 2008, dubbed by Patey as the '10.18 Incident', when nine CNPC employees were kidnapped by a group of Misseriya while working at Blocks 1/2/4 in South Kordofan, near the disputed Abyei region (Patey, 2014, p.197). CNPC launched an emergency plan in cooperation with the Khartoum government and sent a rescue team headed by CNPC's vice-president, and although four of the employees were rescued, five Chinese citizens were killed (CNPC, 2008, p.66). The very proximity of South Kordofan to both Darfur and southern Sudan indicated to that Sudan's conflicts were widening and intensifying, with CNPC increasingly at the centre of such spreading instability.

It is argued here that, in the context of the emerging challenges outlined above, the Chinese government began to adopt the tactic of 'containing' its NOCs interests in Sudan, in contrast to the relative autonomy enjoyed by CNPC in Sudan during the 1990s. Indeed, on the one hand, Beijing sought to both regulate NOC activities so that they were better in line with China's national image and energy security interests. However, it also simultaneously sought to protect Chinese oil interests and citizens in Sudan as they increasingly came under attack after 2007.

Indeed, Beijing sought to regulate its NOCs overseas behaviour in line with China's emerging 'new energy security concept' outlined by Hu Jintao in July 2006 that, as Beijing attempted to mitigate the unintended political consequences of Chinese NOCs rapid overseas expansion, emphasised that

China would seek its energy security through a framework of international cooperation (Bo, 2010, p.136).

During President Hu Jintao's Africa tour in February 2007, when the Chinese leader openly called on Chinese companies to "conscientiously assume corporate social responsibility" when operating abroad (Cited in: *Xinhua*, 2007a). Following this, the State Council, China EXIM Bank, and SASAC issued their own sets of CSR guidelines that Chinese SOEs were expected to follow in order to preserve China's "good image and good corporate reputation" abroad (Cited in: *Xinhua*, 2006; State Council, 2007a; State Council, 2007b; State Council, 2007c).

In the specific context of Sudan, in response to the wider repercussions for China's image abroad and the potentially negative impact of CNPC's profit-driven decisions on Chinese energy security, in March 2007, China's MFA, the NDRC and MOFCOM removed Sudan from its recommended list of destinations for Chinese companies to seek to invest and where Chinese ODI would receive the central government's support (McGregor, 2007).

At the same time, however, it became apparent that Beijing took initial steps towards better protection of both Chinese citizens and CNPC's oil interests in Sudan. Although it had been evident in 2006 that China's energy security interests might not always drive the operating decisions of CNPC in Sudan, the maintenance of Sino-Sudanese oil cooperation and CNPC's oil projects on the ground in Sudan continued to be in the broad interests of China's senior leadership.⁹⁹

The rise in Sudanese oil exports to China in 2007, as stated previously, was also reflected in overall trade figures of that year, when Sudan's exports to China peaked at 81.9% of Sudan's total exports during the 2005-2010 period (see table 4. 1., below).

⁹⁹ Interview, China Institute for International Studies (CIIS), Department for Developing Countries, Beijing, China, 6 January 2011.

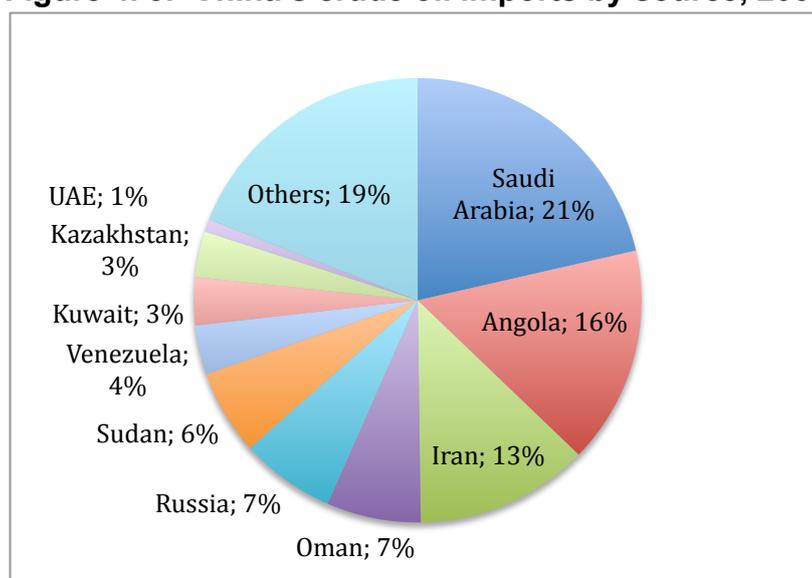
Moreover, although China's imports of Sudanese oil declined again briefly in 2008 to 123,000 b/d (see figure 4. 2., p.190), Sudan still provided 6% of China's total oil imports that year and was its sixth main oil importer globally (see figure 4. 3., below). This certainly illustrates how Beijing's strategic beliefs regarding the importance of CNPC's equity oil stakes for China's broader energy security persisted and, moreover, pushed China to seek to better protect CNPC's interests in the Sudanese context.

Table. 4. 1. Sudan's exports to China by value (\$ million) and percentage of Sudan's total trade, 2005-2010

Year	China		Total
	Value	%	Value
2005	3,427.1	71.0	4,824.3
2006	4,244.0	75.0	5,656.6
2007	7,276.9	81.9	8,879.2
2008	8,755.2	75.0	11,670
2009	6,257.3	75.8	8,257.1
2010	8,265.3	72.6	11,404.3

Source: Large, 2012, p. 6.

Figure 4. 3. China's crude oil imports by source, 2008



Source: Downs, 2010, p. 89.

Although the attacks against CNPC oil infrastructure in December 2007 again had little impact on actual oil production, in response to the attacks the Chinese foreign ministry issued a rare public statement, in comparison to its silence in

response to attacks in 2004, that, “any threats or attacks on Chinese organisations or people in Sudan are unacceptable...the safety of Chinese personnel in Sudan must be effectively guaranteed” (Cited in: *Sudan Tribune*, 2007b).

As security issues in Sudan and the vulnerability of Chinese workers became most apparent after the '10.18 Incident' in 2008, Chinese statements even contained a rare dose of criticism of the Sudanese government's lack of protection of Chinese, highlighted in the assertion that, “we hope that Sudan will provide good conditions for the people-to-people relations between the two countries” (Cited in: Patey, 2014, p.200).

As detailed in Chapter 3, it was in this context of heightened regional insecurity, combined with regional diplomatic pressure that Chinese MFA diplomats began to conduct a new form of Chinese crisis engagement that has been termed its 'shuttle diplomacy' between Chad and Sudan and also between the Darfur rebel groups and the Khartoum government. From 2009 China's MOFCOM began to issue its own annual *Guide to Countries (Regions) for Overseas Investments*, which assessed the political and security environment in Sudan and some other 164 countries abroad in which Chinese companies now invested (MOFCOM of the PRC, 2013).

Moreover, CNPC itself began to adjust its business tactics in response to heightened insecurity in Sudan and, in contrast with its initial entrance in the context of civil war in the 1990s, the company's continued presence in Sudan became increasingly conditional on enhanced security and stability of its operations. Indeed, following the 10.18 Incident in 2008, CNPC Chairman Jiang Jiemin in Beijing stated that, “CNPC can promise that as long as Sudan can provide a secure environment, CNPC will never give up our cooperation in oil exploration” (Cited in: Patey, 2014, p.200). Meanwhile, after 2007 CNPC had made efforts to improve its emergency response plan and strengthened its safety evaluation, enabling it to solve many safety issues and reduce risks to its overseas projects and staff (CNPC, 2008, p.32).

Such adjustments also began to include further efforts to engage with local communities in the oil regions from where such insecurity was increasingly emanating, and further adapting its traditional approach of engaging exclusively with the central government to protect its interests. In 2007, Sudan was one of eight countries in which a Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) agency was set up (CNPC, 2007, p.32), and CNCPI (Nile) Ltd enhanced contributions to “community development” donating US\$1million to improve local living conditions (CNPC, 2007, p.53). Meanwhile, during 2008 the Chinese government and its oil company’s relations with the GoSS, and CPC cooperation with its ruling SPLM party, set to deepen, as detailed below.

4. 2. 2. CNPC’s ‘corporate diplomacy’ and China establishes a consulate in Juba

Despite CNPC’s earlier efforts detailed above, negative perceptions underlined by mutual suspicion and concern both within the GoSS and CNPC continued. CNPC, like other foreign oil companies operating in Sudan at the time, believed that the GoSS lacked experience in the realm of governance,¹⁰⁰ while GoSS officials continued to be suspicious of CNPC due to its prior wartime role and ties with the north.¹⁰¹

It was in this context that, prior to the establishment of the Chinese consulate in Juba in September 2008, it was senior managers of the CNPC based in Khartoum who initially began to attempt to develop a form of quiet ‘corporate diplomacy’ and cultivate closer ties with the GoSS, and began to strengthen its efforts to engage at the local community level. In May 2008, CNPC’s Sudan president, Zhu Junfeng, visited Juba to meet with GoSS officials and announced plans to donate US\$700,000 to Juba University.

Moreover, in the context of ongoing southern criticism regarding the CNPC’s CSR record following the CPA,¹⁰² and in line with a broader trend to improve environmental and social image both in China and abroad, CNPC produced its second ever single country CSR report, after Kazakhstan, on Sudan. The report

¹⁰⁰ Interview, CNPC, Juba, South Sudan, 1 June 2012

¹⁰¹ Interview, Government of the Republic of South Sudan Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Investment, Juba, South Sudan, 28 May 2012

¹⁰² Interview, South Sudanese Parliamentary Committee on Energy, Juba, South Sudan, 13 March 2012

states that “as a responsible petroleum company” in Sudan, CNPC has sought to contribute further to local communities in order to operate its projects in Sudan in accordance with international CSR standards (CNPC, 2009, pp.13-14).

Additionally, from 2008 CNPC began to actively engage with UN Global Compact¹⁰³ initiatives in Sudan; a move that has been hailed as “hugely significant” as CNPC cooperation with UNGC Local Networks “provides a platform upon which [CNPC] can interact with local stakeholders in Sudan”.¹⁰⁴

Amid CNPC’s ongoing efforts from 2008, the key moment in the evolution of the Chinese government’s ties with the GoSS took place in early September 2008 when, in the presence of GoSS Vice-President Riek Machar, China’s Assistant Foreign Minister Zhai Jun inaugurated the new Chinese consulate in Juba, which in practice established ‘quasi-diplomatic ties’ between China and the GoSS (Large and Patey, 2010, p.6).

Following Salva Kiir’s trip to Khartoum in 2007, the formalisation of ties and initial discussions regarding the extension of Chinese development assistance to the south meant that there was “practical benefit” to having diplomatic representation on the ground to facilitate contact between the GoSS and Beijing regarding aid, whilst assisting with the facilitation of business opportunities for Chinese companies.¹⁰⁵

As much as the opening of the consulate was a ‘symbolic’ move on behalf of the Chinese government, it is important to state that serious forms of engagement with the GoSS remained limited at this stage (*Africa-Asia Confidential*, 2010). Nevertheless, with a diplomatic presence on the ground, Chinese foreign policy implementers were now in a position to directly observe evolving political shifts in Juba, as the south increasingly navigated a path towards independence, and Beijing’s officials and diplomats would begin to

¹⁰³ The UN Global Compact provides an international framework for businesses that are committed to aligning their operations and strategies with ten universally accepted principles in areas of human rights, labor, the environment and anti-corruption. See: *UN Global Compact website*, “Overview of the UN Global Compact”, available online at: <http://www.unglobalcompact.org/AboutTheGC/index.html> (accessed 20 May 2012)

¹⁰⁴ Interview, United Nations Global Compact, New York, US, 9 November 2011

¹⁰⁵ Interview, Chinese Embassy in the Republic of South Sudan, Juba, South Sudan, 3 December 2012

more actively engage with the GoSS in line with the imperative of oil investment protection in the south.

In 2009, a comparison between government reports and annual reports of the CNPC revealed that Khartoum's figures for oil production in the southern-based oilfields were between 9% and 26% less than those reported by CNPC, and an independent estimate placed the shortfall in revenue owed the GoSS at US\$180 million (Johnson, 2011, p.169). The south's distrust of the north was further compounded by the fact that data for the only block in the north not subject to revenue sharing, Block 6, did not display the same discrepancies as those in the south (*Global Witness*, 2009).

Although CNPC representatives and consulate diplomats attested that issues pertaining to the allocation of oil revenues were seen to be the internal responsibility of the Sudanese state rather than the company,¹⁰⁶ worsening north-south ties as a result would have significant implications for the CNPC in Sudan. With diplomatic representation on the ground in Juba, Beijing's diplomats and CNPC representatives began to hear not only the viewpoints of northern NCP officials but also southern complaints regarding the north's failure to "make unity attractive" through democratic reform and wealth sharing.

It is argued that, through its interactions with the GoSS in Juba, the Chinese government and CNPC began to realise not only that "the force of secession in the south was unstoppable",¹⁰⁷ but also it began to accept the southern argument that approximately 75% of Sudan's known oil reserves of 6.3 billion barrels was located in the south and would come under south Sudanese jurisdiction should it secede.¹⁰⁸ CNPC was the majority stakeholder in both the GNPOC consortium, which straddles the border region between Heglig in the north and Bentiu to the south, and the Petrodar consortium, which operates in the highly productive concession blocks 3 and 7 south of Renk Town, which are clearly located in southern territory (see figure 4. 4, p.200).

¹⁰⁶ Interview, Government of the Republic of South Sudan, Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Investment, Juba, South Sudan, 28 May 2012

¹⁰⁷ Interview, Government of the Republic of South Sudan, Ministry of Defence, Juba, South Sudan, 23 December 2011

¹⁰⁸ Interview, China Institute for International Studies (CIIS), Department for Developing Countries Studies, Beijing, China, 6 January 2011; Interview, Peking University, School for International Studies (SIS), Beijing, 23 December 2010; Interview, Juba University, Juba, South Sudan, 7 March 2012.

The force of secession increasingly took hold in the south during the lead up to and following the delayed national elections that finally took place in April 2010. The elections to be held across the country were meant to be the Sudan's 'transformational' event, leading to a reformed, secular democracy and, ultimately, continued unity (LeRiche and Arnold, 2012, p.130).

Focused primarily on the maintenance of stability and Sudanese unity, China's preference for 'free and fair' elections was expressed, and in a considerable adaptation of its non-interference policy and political 'non-involvement' stance in practice, Beijing even deployed Chinese observers to the elections (Large and Patey, 2011b, p.18). However, Salva Kiir's neglect of the national stage, through his decision not to contest the national presidency and only the GoSS presidency, effectively put an end to the SPLM's New Sudan project (Johnson, 2011, p.176).

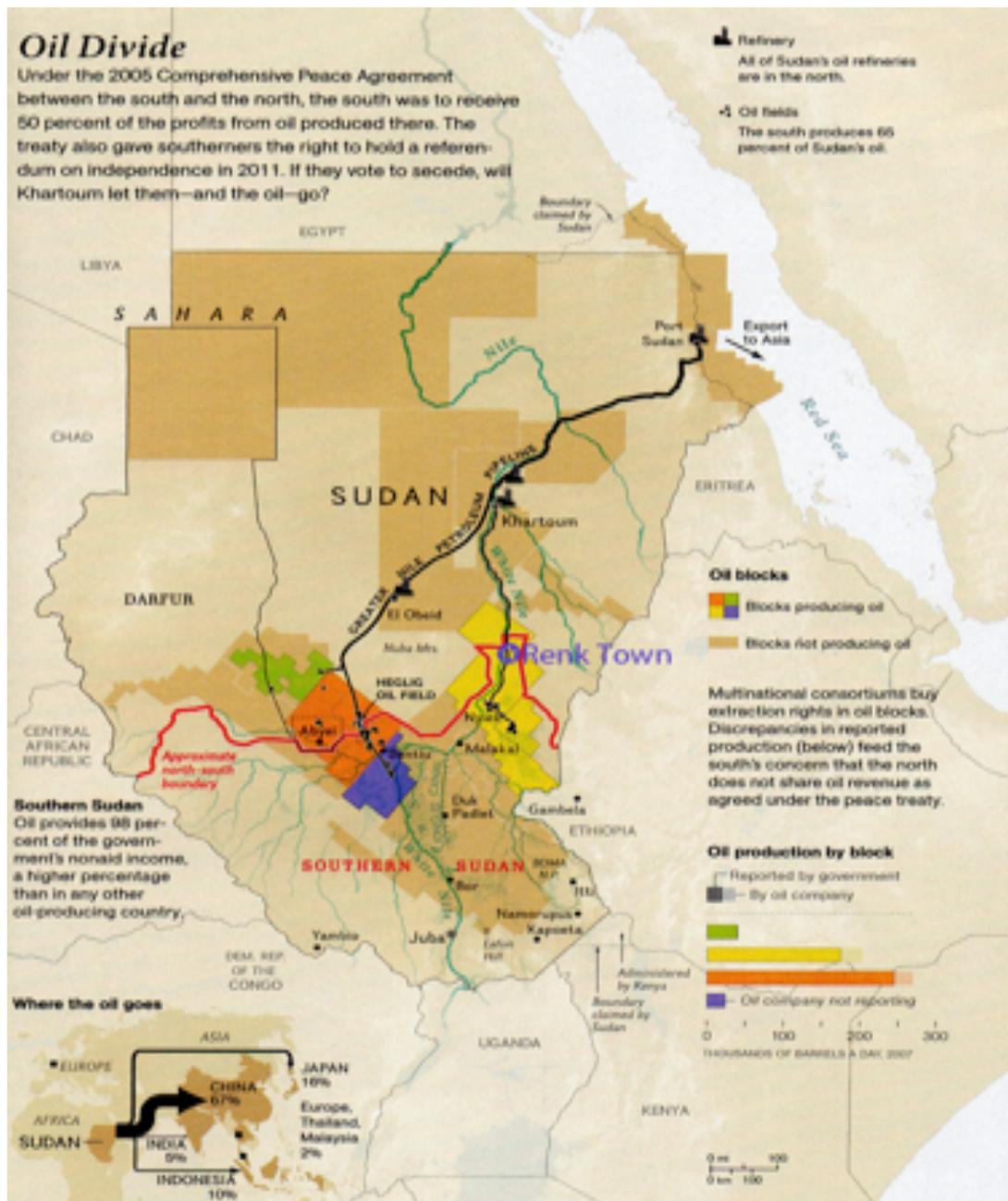
Despite such emerging uncertainties regarding the long-term maintenance of CNPC's oil investments in the Sudanese context, China's policies reflected continuity of the Chinese government's strategic goal of expanding its companies equity stakes in Sudan and abroad more generally. In September 2009, China Development Bank (CDB) extended CNPC US\$30 billion to assist the company's ongoing going out campaign (Bo, 2010, p.69), and with such expanded state support, in January 2010 CNPC looked ready to finalise a deal which would expand Sudan's Khartoum oil refinery by 50, 000 b/d (*International Oil Daily*, 2010).

However, at the same time, the Chinese government also sought to further reach out to the GoSS in Juba in the interests of maintaining CNPC's investments in southern Sudan in the long-term. Indeed, this led to the ongoing tactical adaptation of China's traditional ties predominantly with the ruling NCP elites in Khartoum.

Diplomatic links between the Chinese party-state and the GoSS concerning China's potential future development in an independent South Sudan were stepped up from August 2010 (see table 4. 2., below). At the governmental

level, one indication of the “forward-looking elevation” of the south in China’s engagement came in October, with the upgrading of diplomatic relations and the appointment of Ambassador Li Zhiguo to be China’s new Consul General in Juba (Large, 2012, p.18).

Figure 4. 4. Sudan’s oil concession blocks and the north south boundary, 2010



Source: National Geographic, 2010

Table 4. 2. Key events in the evolution of China-GoSS relations, 2005-2010

Date	Meeting
21/03/2005	SPLM delegation led by Deputy Salva Kiir Mayardit visits Beijing. Kiir meets with Chinese officials including He Luli, vice-chairwoman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC).
02/02/2007	SPLM leader and Sudanese First Vice president Salva Kiir Mayardit meets with President Hu Jintao in Khartoum, where he is invited to visit Beijing.
19/07/2007	SPLM leader and Sudanese First Vice president Salva Kiir Mayardit meets with President Hu Jintao in Beijing
23/08/2008	Governor of oil-rich Upper Nile state visits China and meets with government officials and the General Manager of CNPC
01/09/2008	China's Assistant Foreign Minister Zhai Jun inaugurates the new Chinese consulate in Juba. Zhang Qingyang become the Consul-General.
02/2010	Chinese consulate in Juba holds a workshop on economic cooperation with China for South Sudanese officials
28/07/2010	Inauguration of the CNPC-donated computer laboratory at Juba University.
08/2010	GoSS minister of Agriculture and SPLM Deputy Secretary General Ann Itto visited China in to participate in the China-Africa Agriculture Cooperation Forum
08/2010	Governor of oil-rich Unity state, Taban Deng, visits Beijing
09/2010	GoSS delegation led by the GoSS minister of labour and public service, including officials from five ministries and three elected state governors, visit Beijing
10/2010	The CPC sends its first delegation to Juba, led by the Director General of the CPC Central Committee's International Department, Du Yanling
10/2010	Beijing upgrades diplomatic relations with Southern Sudan and appoints Ambassador Li Zhiguo to be China's new Consul-General in Juba.

Source: Elaborated by the candidate utilising media reports in the *Sudan Tribune*

In this context, the CNPC also began to step up its own emergent corporate diplomacy in southern Sudan (see table 4. 2. above), for example, in July 2010 the CNPC-donated computer laboratory was officially inaugurated at Juba University. Chinese scholars have asserted that the Chinese Consul General's attendance at the ceremony, in contrast with CNPC's relative autonomy from the government during the 1990s, demonstrated the direct diplomatic support that the Chinese government now extended to CNPC in its attempt to improve perceptions of the company in the south.¹⁰⁹

As the final stages of the CPA approached, Sudan's relations with China began to take a triangular form between Khartoum, Beijing and Juba, with China engaging with Sudan on a "dual-track basis" in dealing with the ruling parties and governments in both Khartoum and Juba (Large, 2011b, p.170). In July

¹⁰⁹ Interview, Peking University, School for International Studies (SIS), Beijing, China, 4 January 2011.

2010, China's Special Envoy Liu Guijin reaffirmed China's official policy of continued support for the CPA's principle of 'making unity attractive', stating that China would be "delighted" to see Sudan remain united following the referendum (Cited in: *Sudan Tribune*, 2010). However, marking an evolving pragmatism within China's Sudan policy to adjust to emerging political realities on the ground, Liu also noted that Beijing would nonetheless respect choices made by Southerners (Cited in: *Sudan Tribune*, 2010).

There also appeared to be a rhetoric shift in Chinese statements, with its focus increasingly on peace and stability, and the transparency of the upcoming referendum, rather than on unity and territorial sovereignty (*Sudan Tribune*, 2010). Speaking in November, China's UN Ambassador Li Baodong stated that China "hopes that the referendum will be held in a peaceful, free, transparent and fair manner" stressing that, "whatever the outcome of the referendum, it is necessary to ensure the overall peace and stability of Sudan and the whole region" (Cited in: *Xinhua*, 2010).

Indeed, the bottom line for China appeared to be stability of any legitimate outcome, to avoid instability leading to political fragmentation, as while Beijing may harbour an inherent preference for unity, and keeps close relations with NCP, "any outcome best supporting this goal according to the terms of the CPA appears to be most palatable" (Large and Patey, 2011a, p.17).

Nevertheless, despite an inherent pragmatism in accepting the outcome of the southern referendum on secession, China's preference for national integration and the maintenance of Sudanese sovereignty remained unchanged, and prior to the referendum, Chinese diplomats and company representatives expressed their private misgivings.¹¹⁰ They reaffirmed Beijing's inherent belief that secession would only bring about long-term instability, and expressed concern that southern secession may set an international precedent with negative implications for China's core interests at home, namely the status of Taiwan, Tibet and Hong Kong. Thus, from the Chinese perspective "the principle of state sovereignty and national integration remain very important".¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Interview, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, China, 18 November 2010; Interview, CNPC, Beijing, China, 13 December 2010.

¹¹¹ Interview, Chinese Embassy in South Sudan, Juba, South Sudan, 1 December 2012

Moreover, despite the considerable expansion of China's ties with the GoSS in the lead up to the referendum, it is important to note that the GoSS continued to prioritise its 'special relationship' with the US, despite the development opportunities for the south's post-independence that China presented.

Indeed, in contrast to the absence of a deep US engagement on the ground that had enabled the successful entrance of Chinese investment and Beijing's 'special' political ties with Khartoum in the 1990s, China's evolving, yet still limited, engagement with the south was occurring in a different political context in which the US and Juba's other external partners had long-established ties and were set to increase their presence in an independent South Sudan.

4. 3. Responding to challenges before and after independence (2011-2013)

4. 3. 1. Between the referendum and independence: CNPC takes the lead

Beijing publicly accepted the result of the southern referendum on secession in which an overwhelming 98.83% of Southerners voted in favour of independence. Chinese scholars assert that, in contrast with China's public expressions of concern regarding Kosovo's 'unilateral' declaration of independence in 2008, which was viewed to undermine peace and stability in the Balkan region and undermine basic norms of sovereignty in international relations, China's inherent pragmatism in accepting southern secession reflected Beijing capacity to adapt its position when all parties, including the Khartoum government, allowed such an outcome, and Chinese key oil interests were at stake.¹¹²

According to one Chinese diplomat, "the situation with South Sudan was something very special" because "even the Khartoum government said it would accept the outcome of the referendum" and, as such, rather than representing a fundamental change in China's position on state sovereignty, southern Sudan's

¹¹² Interview, Renmin University, Department for International Relations, Beijing, China, 4 January 2011

secession represented “a special case” in that the majority of Sudanese people in the north and south accepted the referendum’s outcome and thus Beijing had “no choice” but to support it also.¹¹³

Confirmation of the referendum result meant that the Chinese government then proceeded to more actively look ahead to its future relations with and role in an independent South Sudan (Large, 2011b, p.172). Moreover, in adapting to China’s concerns regarding stability in the Sudans following southern independence, in March 2011 Beijing deployed a contingent of Chinese engineering and medical service peacekeepers to participate in the UN’s newly established mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

According to Large (2012), China’s more involved role in Juba “placed its policy engagement more within a multilateral context, enabling Beijing to minimise its past Khartoum orientated role there, at the same time as continuing close bilateral ties with Khartoum” (p.17). Fundamentally, however, as with its engagement with the north, Beijing continued to prioritise its bilateral ties with Juba, and as independence approached, both parties were in the process of negotiating a substantial Chinese loan (Large, 2012, p.17).

China also continued to ‘balance’ its evolving ties with the south with its old ally in the north, and was keen to reassure both Sudan and a wider audience of African ruling elites, that China’s adherence to the fundamental principle of state sovereignty remained intact. Indeed, President al-Bashir visited China in June 2011 despite the ongoing indictment by the ICC for crimes against humanity in Darfur.

In just under two months before the south was due to gain formal independence, the security situation along the disputed north-south border deteriorated dramatically, following the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) invasion and occupation of the contested town of Abyei on 21 May. However, as detailed in Chapter 3, China was largely absent in the resolution of the politically sensitive north-south border conflict, which meant that it was CNPC rather than

¹¹³ Interview, Chinese embassy in South Sudan, Juba, South Sudan, 1 December 2012

the Chinese government that stepped up its quiet corporate diplomacy with the GoSS as independence approached.

During the interim period between the referendum and independence, there were indications that CNPC may face difficulties in both maintaining and expanding its oil interests in a new state of South Sudan. According to south Sudanese officials, it was Indian and Malaysian oil companies that had actively begun to shift their operations south after the referendum through establishing a presence in Juba; a move that CNPC, not wishing to undermine its ties with Khartoum, was reluctant to make prior to the formal independence of the south.¹¹⁴

In the context of such imminent challenges in the lead up to the southern independence, and particularly with the uncertainty as to whether oil contracts with foreign contracts on oil projects now located in the south would be maintained with the new government of South Sudan, the CNPC began to widen its corporate diplomacy with the southern government, and increasingly responded to criticism by reaching out beyond and below the central ministry and state levels to reassure wider public concerns about the company's future role in an independent South Sudan.

In April 2011, CNPC executives in Beijing had chartered a plane to Juba for an exploratory discussion with GoSS officials. A critical voice during the visit had been the head of the southern parliament's energy committee, who stated that CNPC had to "change their ways" and compensate the local people in the southern oil regions in order to gain the support of the southern Sudanese people for a continued Chinese presence in the oil sector.¹¹⁵ In response, CNPC invited ten Members of Parliament to Beijing; a move which was viewed by the south Sudanese delegation as an attempt to improve the company's image among south Sudanese and to shift its engagement beyond "just backing the ruling elites".¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Interview, Government of the Republic of South Sudan, Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Investment, Juba, South Sudan, 28 May 2012

¹¹⁵ Interview, South Sudanese Parliamentary Committee on Energy, Juba, South Sudan, 13 March 2012

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

4. 3. 2. After independence: a delicate balancing act and the protection of Chinese interests in South Sudan

a) Negotiating new oil contracts in South Sudan and emergent US competition

Shortly after gaining its independence on 9 July 2011, the Republic of South Sudan (RSS)¹¹⁷ was admitted as the 193rd member state of the UN. On 19 July the RSS successfully exported its first shipment of oil from Port Sudan, heralding its first appearance on the oil market ten days after gaining independence. Marking newly established energy ties between Chinese commercial actors and South Sudan, the buyer of the estimated one million barrels was China National United Oil Corporation (ChinaOil), the trading arm of CNPC.

Yang Jiechi's trip importantly marked the emergence of China's new 'dual Sudans' policy with the intention of balancing its relations equally between the two sovereign states, which China hoped would recognise that working together to achieve stability would be in both their long-term interests of economic development. Chinese scholars stressed continuity within China's dual 'two Sudans' policy by stressing that, China's policy had adapted to the shift to 'two countries, one system' with its policy goals of respecting formal state sovereignty and promoting economic development in Sudan and South Sudan remaining at the core of China's policy. Moreover, the term 'one system' was used to imply that China had not changed its goal of "helping both parties to find a way for development through resolving their disputes" (Zhang, 2012, p.5).

China's core post-independence role was articulated in practice as one of supporting the governments of both states to develop their economies within a framework of interdependence, although at this early stage focusing on smaller grant aid projects in South Sudan compared with China's larger ongoing infrastructure investments in Sudan (*Sudan Tribune*, 2011a).¹¹⁸

However, according to a former Sudanese Ambassador in Beijing, the Chinese government and its NOCs balancing act of equal ties was difficult to implement

¹¹⁷ Hereby referred to as 'South Sudan' or 'Juba'

¹¹⁸ For example, in October, China's Ambassador to South Sudan, Li Zhiguo, announced a Chinese grant of US\$31.5 million to support agriculture, education, health and water supply projects.

in practice after southern independence as 75% of Sudanese oil reserves were now located in South Sudan (Alsharif, 2013).

In August 2011 the South Sudanese Minister of Energy and Mining at the time had announced that his government would re-evaluate all oil contracts signed with foreign companies before the 2005 signing of the CPA. As such, China's diplomatic overtures to Juba was focused on an effort to smooth the tense process in which the CNPC had begun to hold talks with Juba to renegotiate existing oil contracts, or Exploration and Production Sharing Arrangements (EPSA), for its oil concessions that were now located in South Sudan (Blocks 3 and 7) or split between both of the Sudan's (Blocks 1, 2, and 4), and a set of challenges that came with this process (see figure 4. 5., p.209).

Issues emerged from the outset of the contract talks, as CNPC and its partners aimed to frame the negotiations in terms of a 'continuation' of existing EPSAs, however, although Juba had made its commitment to protecting Chinese oil sector interests clear, it approached the talks with a view to "continuity of terms, not of contract", as mere continuation was unacceptable and "denied the political reality of independence and ownership of its own oil sector" (ICG, 2012, p.22). While the renegotiated contracts were to be termed 'Transition Agreements' (TAs) in practice they amounted to new EPSAs.

Tensions particularly emerged regarding the division of the GPOC consortium, due to CNPC's initial resistance to Juba's decision to create a separate consortium for its operations south of the border,¹¹⁹ and southern frustration that the Petrodar consortium under CNPC management was seen to delay efforts to scale up its presence in Juba.¹²⁰

Moreover, from November 2011 South Sudan began to design a clause in the company's TAs with Article 19 which stated that in the event of a southern oil shutdown as a result of Khartoum continuing to confiscate its oil exports, Juba would be free of any compensatory obligations to the companies (ICG, 2012).

¹¹⁹ Interview, Government of the Republic of South Sudan, Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Investment, Juba, South Sudan, 28 May 2012

¹²⁰ Interview, Government of the Republic of South Sudan, Office of the President, Juba, South Sudan, 4 March 2012.

As the negotiations for renewed petroleum agreements continued apace, party ties between the CPC and the ruling SPLM party in Juba gathered momentum. In late October, Li Changchun, a Standing Committee member of the Politburo of the CPC Central Committee met with a delegation led by Pagan Amum, secretary-general of the SPLM in Beijing. Li reinforced China's guiding foreign policy principles as the basis of its ties with the new state: "we are willing to further enhance political trust and win-win cooperation with South Sudan on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, to promote long-term, healthy and stable growth of our relations" (Cited in: *Xinhua*, 2011a).

Meanwhile, in the tense context of ongoing oil contract negotiations between CNPC and Juba, for the first time since the 1990s, the South Sudanese oil market became open to the investment of US companies. Indeed, in early December 2011, an order from the US treasury department signaled a reinterpretation of the existing sanctions regime on Sudan. The new licenses would allow transactions in South Sudan's industry and the transfer of goods through Sudan (to or from South Sudan), insofar as they afford "maximum benefit to the south and minimum benefit to the north" (Sen, 2011).

Crucially, this move on behalf of Washington would legally enable US companies to invest in South Sudan's oil and other sectors, which would also significantly mark a new phase for China's engagement in the Sudans and concern regarding a new era of oil-based strategic competition with the US (see Chapter 5).

As South Sudan began to gain control over the south's oil industry, with the petroleum ministry creating new concession block areas and dividing up larger non-producing blocks, it became apparent that the efforts of Chinese NOCs to expand their interests into the new exploration areas was hampered by increased foreign competition. Indeed, although CNPC and Sinopec held talks with Total regarding the formation of a new joint consortium in Block B (see figure 4. 5., below), where Total has long owned the rights to the south's largest unexplored concession, both Chinese companies were to lose out to US

companies such as ExxonMobile and Halliburton who were beginning to gain a foothold in the South Sudanese energy market.¹²¹

As such, in contrast to the previous decade, in which the absence of US oil majors had enabled their successful entrance into and near dominance of Sudan's oil sector, Chinese companies now faced a new era of potential competition in the newly independent state of South Sudan.

Figure. 4. 5. Key oil infrastructure in Sudan and South Sudan



Source: US Energy Information Administration (EIA), 2013, p.2.

In this context, Chinese officials stepped up their diplomatic interventions and begin to more actively seek to protect Chinese oil interests. China's Special Envoy Liu Guijin utilised his trip to Juba in December to support the CNPC in its

¹²¹ Interview, South Sudan Oil Industry Expert, Juba, South Sudan, 3 May 2012

ongoing contract negotiations. On 8 December, Liu and the Chinese Ambassador to South Sudan requested a meeting at the Ministry of Petroleum and Mining in order to facilitate dialogue between the minister and the CNPC President of the Petrodar consortium and a Sinopec representative, who also attended the meeting.¹²²

With the pragmatic recognition by South Sudanese officials that Juba “needed continued involvement of Chinese companies” in the oil consortiums due to their experience,¹²³ and the elevated diplomacy of Beijing’s diplomats and its oil company executives, China ultimately averted potential revoking of the new oil contracts which were formally signed in Juba by South Sudan’s Petroleum Minister, Stephen Dhieu Dau, and the Chairman of CNPC, Jiang Jiemin, on 13 January 2012.

To the relief of CNPC representatives, the financial terms of the original ESPAs were maintained, and the pre-partition ownership share distribution of the CNPC within the GNPOC and Petrodar consortiums were also upheld, while the South Sudanese state-owned oil company Nilepet would replace the stakes previously owned by the Sudan’s Sudapet.

It was formally acknowledged that the GNPOC consortium in the south would operate under South Sudan’s oil sector management rather than under cross-border management with the north (South Sudan renamed GNPOC and Petrodar in the south the Greater Pioneer Operating Company and the Dar Petroleum Operating Company, respectively) (see table 4. 3., below).

¹²² Interview, Government of the Republic of South Sudan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Juba, South Sudan, 6 March 2012

¹²³ Interview, South Sudanese Embassy in the PRC diplomat, Juba, South Sudan, 5 March 2012

Table. 4. 3. South Sudan’s oil consortiums in which Chinese NOCs are stakeholders

Operating Consortium	Stakeholders
Greater Pioneer Operating Company (GPOC) (Blocks 1 and 4)	China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) (China) 40%; Petronas Carigali (Malaysia) 30%; ONGC Videsh (India) 25%; Nilepet (South Sudan) 5%
Dar Petroleum Operating Company (DPOC) (Blocks 3 and 7)	China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) (China) 41%; Petronas Carigali (Malaysia) 40%; Nilepet (South Sudan) 8% Sinpoec (China) 6%; Tri-Ocean (Egypt) 5%;

Source: US Energy Information Administration (EIA), 2013, pp. 4-5.

The most substantial changes to the new contracts were with regards to stronger environmental regulations, employment quotas for South Sudanese, social protections, and transparency, and the companies were now expected to actively support South Sudan’s capacity building in the in the oil sector and the technical training of South Sudanese oil workers by CNPC.¹²⁴

However, the new and additional clauses included in the TAs by Juba would have implications for the protection of the CNPC and its consortium partners’ investments and would expose the companies to increased risk than they had under the original EPSAs signed with Khartoum. In particular, the inclusion of Article 19 in the TAs, as discussed previously, could “expose the oil companies to the risk of losses caused by the hostile relations and disputes between the governments of Sudan and South Sudan” (ICG, 2012, p.23).

In this context, Beijing stepped up its broader economic cooperation with Juba in an effort to support the continuation of CNPC’s oil interests. Li Yuanchao, a senior CPC Politburo member, who was visiting Juba in an effort to “forge a good relationship with the SPLM” whilst attending the CNPC TA signing ceremony,¹²⁵ announced a US\$200 million aid grant from Beijing’s MOFCOM to help the newly independent South Sudan in its post-war recovery efforts. Moreover, a US\$200 million favourable interest rate loan was offered by an EXIM Bank official who was also present (ICG, 2012, p.10).

¹²⁴ Interview, Government of the Republic of South Sudan, Ministry of Petroleum and Mining, Juba, South Sudan 9 December 2011

¹²⁵ Interview, CPCID diplomat, London, 6 March 2013

Beijing also displayed the implementation of its policy of balancing equal relations with Juba and Khartoum through concurrently seeking to strengthen political party ties between the CPC and its traditional partner in Sudan, the NCP, and asserting China's continued commitment to Sudan's economic development. The day after holding talks in Juba, the CPC delegation attended the first session of a high-level dialogue with the NCP in Khartoum. Drawing on the historical nature of their inter-party cooperation, Li Yuanchao vowed to deepen the China-Sudan friendship, echoing China's core principles of "building mutual trust and win-win cooperation" (Cited in: *Xinhua*, 2012).

b) CNPC as a reluctant negotiator

When the AUHIP talks had reconvened in mid-January, the possibility of reaching an agreement was again tainted by unilateral actions taking place away from the negotiating table. Khartoum blocked oil exports and oil operators were forced to load two shipments of South Sudan's oil onto ships chartered by Khartoum and another was unlawfully diverted to its refinery (ICG, 2012, p.29). In response, Juba requested the presence of the oil companies at the AUHIP talks in Addis to confirm that transportation and processing fees were in fact being paid.

Thus, CNPC's signing of new contracts with Juba and its subsequent unwritten obligations to support South Sudan on such issues, namely the companies' uncertainty concerning the future extensions of their contracts, meant that it was the company itself rather than Chinese government diplomats that were compelled to adopt a direct role in the negotiations. Indeed, reluctantly heeding Juba's request, the long-standing representative of the CNPC in Sudan, Sun Xiansheng, led the other operating companies at the talks. According to Sun, the role of the companies at the talks was "to help these political people understand this industry" and to provide only technical advice regarding the many problems resulting from the Sudan-South Sudan impasse (Cited in: *Africa-Asia Confidential*, 2012).

It was through adopting only a 'technical' role in the negotiations that the company attempted to maintain impartiality and avoid being seen to choose sides in the dispute. The CNPC management maintained a rhetorical commitment to the principle of non-interference in the Sudan's though asserting that neither the CNPC nor the Chinese government get involved in the internal issues of any country or "tell others what to do".¹²⁶ However, in adapting to the imperatives of investment protection in South Sudan, the CNPC's role was, in practice, politicised through its entrance into the negotiations on behalf of Juba; thus pitting the company against its long-time economic partner in the north.

c) South Sudan oil production shutdown and the expulsion of CNPC's Liu Yingcai

Nevertheless, the most recent AUHIP proposal on oil transit fees was rejected by the government in Juba, which accused Khartoum of confiscating its crude oil worth the approximate amount of US\$815 million. This induced a situation in which the South Sudan felt compelled to shutdown southern oil production until an agreement on transit fees could be reached or other export alternatives sought; a move that would have a significant economic impact upon the Sudans, and the CNPC and its consortium partners operating in both countries.

On 21 January 2012, Juba officially endorsed a final decision to shutdown its oil production operations, with oil revenue accounting for nearly 98% of the government's annual budget at the time. The final decision was apparently made without full consultation with South Sudan's primary Western donors or foreign investors, including CNPC and the consortium companies in South Sudan, GNPOC and Petrodar. Chinese diplomats stated to their South Sudanese counterparts that South Sudan had the right to shutdown its own oil production, although China felt that it was not in the interests of the two countries, while reiterating CNPC's concerns regarding potential damage a hasty shutdown of production may have on the oil pipes.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Interview, CNPC, Juba, South Sudan, 1 June 2012

¹²⁷ Interview, South Sudanese Embassy in the PRC diplomat, Juba, South Sudan, 5 March 2012

Indeed, the move had direct ramifications for the CNPC and the Chinese government itself. Article 19 of the companies' new contracts stipulated that Juba would not have to compensate the companies in the event of a shutdown, and thus CNPC would see losses on their investments in South Sudan for the foreseeable future that oil production was halted. In addition to the loss in revenue and costs to regulate the technical process of the shutdown, industry sources suggest it could take up to six months to resume production as water would have to be removed from pipelines at a huge cost to the companies.¹²⁸

In this context, the CNPC Director General in Beijing, Yie Paing issued a rare public statement to the media in April 2012 that "the shutdown of oil production in South Sudan has caused serious losses to the company and the other three oil companies of Malaysia and India", and the company urged Juba and Khartoum to resolve the oil issues through peaceful dialogue (Cited in: Kenneth, 2012). In turn, China had lost access to its company's equity stakes in Sudanese oil, which in 2011 accounted for 5% of China's crude imports, with the Sudans becoming the sixth most important suppliers of China's oil imports, as previously detailed in Chapter 2.

South Sudan increasingly began to apportion blame for the stalemate on the CNPC-led consortium, Dar Petroleum, that operates Blocks 3 and 7 in the south, for intentionally enabling Khartoum to divert oil to its refinery in the north. On 20 February 2011, Juba's Petroleum Minister issued an order to expel the consortium's CNPC President, Liu Yingcai, from South Sudan. The memo issued to Dar Petroleum stated that the prime reasons for this was because of the consortium's collusion with the north to steal southern oil, its refusal to release information regarding oil wells and production in Blocks 3/7, the consortium's delay in relocating south and the CNPC's continued refusal to do so, and, finally, because Liu had "pulled his feet" when it came to shutting down oil production operations.¹²⁹

Whilst it appeared that Sino-South Sudanese ties had reached a low point with the expulsion of a senior CNPC representative, Chinese diplomats in Juba

¹²⁸ Interview, South Sudan Oil Industry Expert, Juba, South Sudan, 3 May 2013

¹²⁹ Interview, South Sudanese Parliamentary Committee on Energy, Juba, South Sudan, 13 March, 2012

affirmed to their Western counterparts that, despite the expulsion, they were not overly concerned about Sino-South Sudanese ties more broadly in the medium-term because, as South Sudan was currently seeking budgetary support and development assistance in the wake of the oil shutdown, it was in the government's interests to maintain ties with Beijing and its NOCs.¹³⁰

Nevertheless, following the shutdown of oil production in South Sudan and the expulsion of Liu Yingcai, CNPC took a number of diplomatic steps to adapt to such challenges and seek to reassure South Sudan that the company places equal emphasis on the importance of its engagement with both Khartoum and Juba. It was made clear that the CNPC office in Juba would be significantly expanded, and South Sudanese officials claim that, "in order to prove their loyalty" to Juba, the consortium agreed to conduct an investigation into the quantity of southern oil that had been diverted to the refinery in the north before the shutdown.¹³¹

d) Inter-state conflict: War by proxy and SPLA's invasion of Heglig

It was not only political and economic risks that became increasingly prevalent following southern secession, but also enhanced inter-state insecurity between Sudan and South Sudan mounted in the post independence era, with Chinese companies and CNPC interests increasingly being dragged into the epi-centre of such disputes. Indeed, ongoing Khartoum-Juba disputes regarding the latter's apparent proxy support for the SPLM-N rebels based in Sudan and its intentions to overthrow the NCP had practical implications for China on the ground when in late January 2012, the SPLM-N had kidnapped twenty-eight Chinese construction workers, killing one, of the state-owned company Sinohydro in South Kordofan.

The security situation between the two countries further deteriorated with South Sudan's invasion and occupation of the town of Heglig, an area north of the border in Sudan, and its oilfields, between 10 and 20 April 2012. The armed conflict again displayed how vulnerable the oil industry was to the two countries'

¹³⁰ Interview, US development official, Juba, South Sudan, 24 March 2012

¹³¹ Interview, South Sudanese Embassy in the PRC diplomat, Juba, South Sudan, 5 March 2012.

fragile relations, and Chinese oil companies' interests within it (see figure 4. 6., below). Indeed, the fighting inflicted severe damage to the oil infrastructure in the Block 2 Heglig oilfield which was operated by the CNPC and Petronas within the GNPOC consortium, and from where the Greater Nile Oil Pipeline carries Heglig oil to Port Sudan.

Figure 4. 6. Insecurity in Sudan and South Sudan, 2012



Source: *Africa-Asia Confidential*, 2012

While following the oil production shutdown CNPC was still able to provide salaries for the thousand or so skeleton staff that it had kept on to manage the oilfields, both the shutdown and the Heglig fighting the Greater Nile Pipeline had incurred severe damage that would result in the company suffering substantial losses; the company complained to the Chinese embassy in Juba that it was having to cover the cost of itself.¹³²

Within this context, the Chinese government's adaptation to rising insecurity in South Sudan since its independence and its impact on Chinese citizens and economic interests was most pertinently highlighted when China's first dispatch of peacekeepers to the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in Wau on 11

¹³² Interview, Chinese Embassy in the Republic of South Sudan, Juba, South Sudan, 1 December 2012

January 2012 included a 50-strong unit of People's Liberation Army (PLA) combat troops to provide force protection for the PLA engineering and medical teams participating in UNMISS (Tao, 2012).¹³³

Beijing's MFA increasingly adapted its official rhetoric in order to encourage heightened protection of Chinese companies. Shortly after the SPLA withdrew from Heglig, a rare public statement was released by the MFA, displaying China's deep concerns about the impact of the dispute on Chinese investments, which urged Sudan and South Sudan to provide "substantial protection" for the "legitimate rights and interests of Chinese oil companies and their partners" in both countries (Cited in: *Sudan Tribune*, 2012). Moreover, rather than relying solely on either the Chinese government or the host state, CNPC began developing its own internal security department to provide more thorough internal security risk analysis than was evident prior to southern independence (see Chapter 2).

Within this context of ongoing conflict and instability following southern independence, Chinese scholars began to re-iterate China's position that Sudanese unity, in line with the former SPLM leader John Garang's vision of a 'new Sudan', would have provided better development and security prospects for both the north and south (Lui, 2013). With ongoing political instability and economic stagnation threatening to render the new country a "failed state" (*shibai guojia* 失败国家), scholars stressed China's perception that the drive towards economic development was the only way in which states can strengthen their sovereign unity and avert external interference (Li, 2013). As such, far from undermining China's adherence to the principle of respect for the concept of state sovereignty, in the Sudanese case this commitment has been reinforced.

It is apparent that in reaction to the oil production shutdown and heightened insecurity with the conflict in Heglig, the Chinese government became increasingly risk averse with regards to the extension of financial assistance in South Sudan, which became increasingly conditional on both improved economic stability (the resumption of oil flows) and physical stability (the

¹³³ Interview, Chinese Embassy in the US, Washington D. C., US, 4 October 2013.

cessation of inter-state violence). Indeed, in contrast with China's oil diplomacy efforts in Sudan prior to and immediately following southern independence, in an effort to cultivate stronger ties with the south, Beijing had now adapted its economic investment approach to one that was not symbolic politically, but was economically viable.

President Salva Kiir announced the withdrawal of the SPLA troops from Heglig a few days prior to the South Sudanese President's long-awaited state visit to China in April 2012. Whilst in Beijing, Kiir sought to obtain Chinese diplomatic and economic support in the conflict with Khartoum, particularly regarding the ongoing proposal to construct an alternative pipeline that could allow it to export southern oil through Kenya to port Lamu instead of Sudan (see figure 4. 6., above). However, Kiir failed to receive backing for the project from Chinese policy banks and, not having yet fully recouped its investments for building Sudan's northern-based oil infrastructure, CNPC encouraged the continued "use of the infrastructure that we have already built".¹³⁴

In addition, Salva Kiir was unable to obtain significant agreement on financial assistance for the development projects that had been requested, reportedly reaching a total sum of US\$8 billion, and only a number of MoU's for small-scale and predominantly humanitarian-based projects were signed with China EXIM Bank, including the refurbishment of Juba airport. Like other potential foreign investors at the time, China EXIM Bank viewed economic assistance for South Sudan to be "too high a risk" whilst the oil shutdown continued, due to lack of assurances of how such loans would be repaid in lieu of oil revenue.¹³⁵ According to a World Bank report, in 2012 South Sudan was the most oil-dependent country in the world, with oil exports accounting for 70% of GDP and 99% of export revenue in 2011 (World Bank, 2012).

Meanwhile, CNPC was able to guarantee a loan of US\$1.5 billion to Khartoum's Ministry of Finance, which would be provided by the Chinese government policy bank China Development Bank (CDB), to bridge Sudan's fiscal gap and enhance its balance of payments. Fundamentally the Chinese government

¹³⁴ Interview, CNPC, Juba, South Sudan, 1 June 2012

¹³⁵ Interview, China Export-Import (EXIM) Bank, Beijing, China, 28 August 2012

approved the loan as Sudan was now able to uphold its loan repayments for the CNPCs oil infrastructure development of the 1990s.

Contrastingly, in adopting a more risk averse strategy vis-à-vis the provision of loans to the South Sudan, Beijing also developed a new discourse of conditionality within Chinese economic diplomacy linking economic assistance to peace and stability within its engagement with the south, although Beijing remained opposed to the 'political conditions' of human rights and good governance as seen to be attached to Western aid. Indeed, it was notable that whereas China's Ambassador to Sudan had not stressed any funding conditions for the recent Chinese loans to Khartoum, China's Special Envoy Zhong Jianhua notably stated in March 2013 that any major financing to South Sudan would depend on peace between Sudan and South Sudan (Blanchard, 2013).

With the signing of the security agreement on 8 March 2013, in line with the Special Envoy's stated conditions for the release of financial support to Juba, it was announced on 11 April that the preferential buyers credit of US\$150 million from EXIM Bank had finally come through for the upgrade of Juba airport, which would be repaid from future airport revenues (Wheeler, 2013).

In early September 2013, Juba publicly stated that it was negotiating a US\$1-2 billion loan from EXIM Bank for infrastructure construction. Shortly after, CNPC agreed to provide a US\$200 million oil-backed loan to the government of South Sudan, reflecting its continued interest in maintaining Chinese access to South Sudanese oil supplies.¹³⁶ However, despite this growing optimism and significant boost in Sino-South Sudanese economic cooperation in late 2013, by mid-December violent political conflict had begun to spread across South Sudan, which would have serious implications for China.

e) Intra-state insecurity: political violence in South Sudan

From mid-December 2013 it became increasingly apparent that South Sudan was rapidly descending towards civil war after a simmering political power

¹³⁶ Interview, oil company representative, London, UK, 15 January 2014

struggle within the ruling SPLM sparked widespread ethnic killings across the country (see Chapter 3). The political struggle which pitted President Salva Kiir's troops against a rebel SPLA faction and Nuer youths led by the former Vice President Riek Machar increasingly centred around a fight to control South Sudanese oil-rich states of Upper Nile and Unity. With the rebels capturing the CNPC-run oilfields in Unity, oil production was shut down in that state, resulting in overall oil output to decline by nearly a fifth to 200,000 b/d by the end of 2013 (Odera and Maasho, 2013).

At the time of writing, oil production and exports have continued in CNPC's Blocks 3 and 7 of Upper Nile, which constitute the lions share of South Sudanese production. However, as a result of the heightened violence in the oil-producing regions, CNPC was directly effected as the company was forced for the first time in the Sudanese context to evacuate more than 400 Chinese oil workers, constituting the majority of its staff across South Sudan, to neighbouring countries, particularly Sudan, with the assistance of the Khartoum government. While Chinese diplomats became increasingly involved in encouraging both sides to agree to a ceasefire (see Chapter 3), it is apparent that the protection of Chinese interests on the ground was officially now at the forefront of the Chinese government's diplomatic and peacekeeping efforts in the Sudanese context.

Indeed, Special Envoy Zhong Jianhua sought reassurance from the South Sudanese government that it would ensure the safety of Chinese citizens and firms, and publicly announced that he had met directly with the rebel side to implore them to "avoid damaging the property of Chinese firms, and ensure the safety of Chinese citizens under all circumstances" (Cited in: CCTV, 2014). After two Indian UNMISS peacekeepers were killed on 20 December, the commander of the Chinese peacekeeping contingent sought to reassure Chinese citizens at home that they were "safe and fully prepared to cope with the turbulent situation", as, while increasing Chinese armed troops on guard in preparation for defensive combat, the Chinese protection force conducted defence drills under presumed conditions of the Chinese peacekeeping camp facing armed attacks (MND of the PRC, 2013).

It also became apparent that with the outbreak of violent conflict in South Sudan, the financial assistance and recent loans agreed by the Chinese government were once again on hold, as they had following inter-state conflict in Heglig the year previously (Dixon, 2014). As such, in contrast with the early stage of CNPC's 'going out' in Sudan prior to the signing of the CPA in 2005 as civil war continued to ravage, during which Beijing displayed willingness to extend economic assistance to Sudan regardless of its internal situation, a more risk-averse Chinese approach vis-à-vis politically unstable environments was on display in the context of inter and intra state conflict in Sudan and South Sudan from 2012. The halting of Chinese government economic assistance to South Sudan as the conflict continued to escalate certainly reflected an evolving sentiment among Chinese diplomats that Beijing's "patience with high-risk environments" was being increasingly "tested" particularly within the South Sudanese context (Cited in: Dixon, 2014).

However, CNPC's long-established equity oil investments in both Sudans continued to be strategically important to both the company and China's broader energy security interests. Chinese scholars and CNPC representatives continue to affirm that the symbolic and commercial "importance of Sudan to CNPC cannot be overlooked" as the company itself had developed as a result of its experiences in Sudan since the mid-1990s, and it was perceived that "to retreat would still be a big financial loss" for the company.¹³⁷ Moreover, China's Ambassador to South Sudan reaffirmed that South Sudan's oil industry continued to be "vital to the Chinese economy" and "oil import security" (Cited in: Dixon, 2014) as once southern oil had come back online in 2013 China had imported 3.5 million tonnes of crude oil from South Sudan (Martina, 2014).

It is argued here that such continuity is reflective of the broader persistence of China's strategic beliefs pertaining to its energy security and self-sufficiency. Indeed, Beijing's senior policymakers prefer the existing approach of gaining access to African oil at the source, as "equity oil is superior to oil traded on the market because the former would give Chinese NOCs additional security in time of market turbulence and supply disruptions" (Cited in: Bo, 2010, p.93).

¹³⁷ Interview, Peking University, School for International Studies (SIS), Beijing, China, 27 August 2012

As such, within the context of the Sudans, Chinese scholars have asserted that both the company and the Chinese government needed to continue to adapt to emerging risks and “safeguard [CNPC’s] legal oil interests” in Sudan and South Sudan (Yang, 2012, p.90). Indeed, while China has displayed a growing risk aversion within the South Sudanese context, the imperative of maintaining CNPC oil interests in the long-term has caused the company and the Chinese government to more actively and assertively contribute towards the stabilisation of South Sudan; an emerging peace and security role that is commensurate with Chinese interests there.

While stepping up efforts to ensure the protection of Chinese interests on the ground, China’s enhanced mediation role within the internal South Sudanese conflict at the end of 2013 (see Chapter 3) certainly reflects the evolution of an engaged Chinese conflict mediation role in bringing about not only a more stable investment climate in the Sudans but, ultimately, an enhanced contribution towards peace and stability in the region, that had not been evident during Sudan’s civil war prior to 2005.

Moreover, CNPC’s enhanced local humanitarian efforts with the public announcement that it would be extending US\$1.6 million to fund new IDP bases in Juba in the context of the 2013 fighting displays a clear acceptance of the company’s deeply inserted role in South Sudan’s political economy and responsibility to provide a peace dividend therein. Crucially, this certainly contrasts with the company’s ‘separation of business from local politics’ approach that had defined its role during Sudan’s civil war context of the 1990s.

4. 4. Chapter conclusions

This chapter has drawn out the adaptations to China’s foreign policy approach in the context of emerging challenges within the Sudanese context. Beijing’s foreign policy implementers adapted a traditionally elite-led engagement exclusively with the ruling NCP elites in Khartoum as new realities altered the political landscape after the CPA. In addition, the Chinese government sought to ‘contain’ CNPC’s oil interests in the Sudanese context, which contrasted with

the company's relative autonomy from the government prior to 2005. The findings presented in this chapter further support the argument made in Chapter 3 that adaptation and change in this case study is limited to the tactical level, as it has been found that both China's fundamental *and* strategic beliefs persisted throughout this era of adaptation.

In response to the emergence of the semi-autonomous GoSS in 2005, both Chinese diplomats and CNPC representatives sought to adapt their traditional tactical approach in order to engage both beyond and below the NCP elite level. While the Chinese government developed initial parallel relations with the GoSS in Juba, CNPC began to pay attention to local community development in the southern oil regions. Nevertheless, from the Chinese perspective, China's fundamental adherence to the principle of respect for Sudanese sovereignty was maintained within the 'one Sudan, two systems' framework because Beijing had Sudan's overall economic development at the centre stage rather than political interference.

Beijing also sought to more directly regulate its NOCs' behaviour abroad in line with Chinese national interests as CNPC's Sudan role became increasingly consequential on the international stage in the context of the Sudan Divestment Campaign, just as it became apparent that the majority of CNPC oil produced in Sudan had not directly contributed towards China's energy security in 2006. However, it has been highlighted how CNPC's oil operations continued to be in broad interests of China's leadership as regular imports of Sudanese oil resumed after 2007, illustrating how Beijing's strategic beliefs regarding the importance of CNPC's equity oil stakes for China's broader energy security persisted and, moreover, pushed China to seek to better protect CNPC's interests in the Sudanese context.

Indeed, as regional insecurity in Sudan worsened particularly following the '10.18 Incident' and the kidnapping of nine CNPC workers in 2008, Chinese foreign policy institutions increasingly sought to enhance Beijing's protection of Chinese interests and workers in an increasingly fragile security environment. CNPC itself developed a new form of quiet 'corporate diplomacy' in engaging

more frequently with the GoSS and deepened its local CSR efforts within the southern communities from which such insecurity emanated.

It has been argued in this chapter that China's Sudan policy was adapted incrementally in tandem with initial political shifts after the CPA and in line with southern Sudan's gradual linear path towards independence, with the adaptation of China's policy towards a deepening embrace the south being increasingly premised on the imperatives of investment protection. Despite emerging uncertainties regarding the long-term maintenance of CNPC's oil investments in the Sudanese context during the lead up to the referendum, China's policies reflected continuity of the Chinese government's strategic goal of expanding its companies equity stakes in Sudan and abroad more generally.

By the time of the 2011 referendum, China's rhetoric had shifted from one of supporting unity and territorial integrity to a focus on peace and stability in the first instance, and Beijing publicly and pragmatically accepted the result of the referendum. Beijing displayed an inherent pragmatism in adapting its prior focus on supporting the 'unity' project in Sudan to accept secession of South Sudan in the interests of long-term investment protection. Nevertheless, China's preference for national integration and the maintenance of Sudanese sovereignty remained unchanged.

Rather than representing a fundamental change in China's position on state sovereignty, southern Sudan's secession was 'a special case' for China in that local and international acceptance of the referendum's outcome pushed Beijing to support this emerging political reality of Sudan's separation. Moreover, China also continued to 'balance' its evolving ties with the south with its old ally in the north, and was keen to reassure both Sudan and a wider audience of African ruling elites with which it has established strong ties, that China's adherence to the fundamental principle of state sovereignty remained intact.

Within a context of ongoing conflict and instability following southern independence, as Beijing sought to both balance its continued ties with Khartoum whilst securing CNPC's long-term oil investment in South Sudan, Chinese scholars began to re-iterate China's position that Sudanese unity

would have provided better development and security prospects for both the north and south. With ongoing political instability and economic stagnation threatening to render the new country a failed state, scholars stressed China's perception that the drive towards economic development was the only way in which states can strengthen their sovereignty unity and avert external interference.

An emerging Chinese aversion to security and political risks in Sudan was compounded in the context of South Sudan's slide towards civil war in late 2013, when it became apparent that investment protection and the safety of Chinese citizens was at the forefront of China's response. In contrast with China's early forays under the 'Going Out' strategy in Sudan when CNPC and the Chinese government were willing to invest despite the ongoing civil war during the 1990s, the Chinese state was now reluctant to extend development assistance and investment in the fragile context of an emerging civil war in Africa's newest petro-state.

Nevertheless, it has been asserted here that CNPC's long-established equity oil investments in both Sudans continued to be 'strategically important' to both the company and China's broader energy security interests. This was reflective of the broader persistence of China's strategic beliefs regarding Chinese energy self-sufficiency and an ongoing preference for acquiring equity oil stakes abroad rather than relying on international energy markets. The imperative of maintaining CNPC's oil interests in the long-term has pushed CNPC and the Chinese government to more actively contribute towards the stabilisation of South Sudan. Such enhanced efforts to more assertively ensure the protection Chinese interests on the ground certainly reflects the evolution of an engaged Chinese conflict mediation role seeking to bringing about not only a more stable investment climate but, ultimately, long-term peace and stability in the region.

The following two chapters seek to illuminate the lesson learning process that China's foreign policy implementers have undergone along the trajectory of adapting its Sudan policy, as detailed here and in the previous chapter.

CHAPTER 5. SPECIFIC LESSON LEARNING IN CHINA'S SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN RELATIONS

*We are learning from doing,
rather than learning first and acting later.*¹³⁸

This chapter seeks to draw out the lessons that have been learnt by Chinese foreign policy implementing institutions along the trajectory of adaptations to China's Sudan policy within the Sudanese context, as detailed in the previous two chapters. As highlighted in the above quote by one Chinese scholar with regards to Chinese learning within its broader Africa ties, it is argued here that China has been learning lessons during the *process* of adapting to challenges, which has in turn led to further tactical adaptations as a result.

As stated in Chapter 1, governments are most likely to undergo foreign policy lesson learning when particularly shocking or galvanising events highlight the urgency of a problem and generate a specific challenge to the status quo in foreign policy. In the case of China's foreign policy towards Sudan until the mid-2000's, the status quo of Beijing's policy approach was defined by the assumption that internal political or conflict dynamics within the Sudanese state did not have an impact on China itself.

This thesis asserts that a series of negative 'crisis points', or galvanising events, that occurred in Sudan from 2005 presented a *specific* challenge to China's previous assumptions regarding the impact of such internal events. As such, it is argued that the specific lesson learnt by Chinese foreign policy institutions has been that evolving local conflict and political dynamics within Sudan could substantially affect China itself, and subsequently Beijing's relationship with the Sudanese government.

¹³⁸ China-Africa researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) referring to learning in China-Africa relations, cited in: Raine, (2009), p. 134.

Chinese International Relations scholars assert that as a direct result of evolving experiences in Sudan, China's foreign policy making establishment has learnt specifically that "local situations in other countries such as Sudan could impact negatively on China interests".¹³⁹ Moreover, it has been stated that the two prominent sources of lesson learning and subsequent changes in China's Sudanese policies have been firstly the realisation of the impact that its Sudan relationship could have upon China's "broader political image interests abroad" and, secondly, in the context of local instability in Sudan, China has learnt the lesson that it "now has considerable overseas interests that need protecting".¹⁴⁰

The following sections of this chapter seek to draw out these specific lessons learnt by Chinese foreign policy institutions, which presented themselves in the form of 'negative feedback' or 'crisis points' within the exogenous Sudanese context, along the trajectory of China's adaptation process. It is asserted that these crisis points sparked internal debates as lessons regarding the negative impact on Chinese interests were learnt and, in debating China's response to protect these interests, Chinese foreign policy implementers also learnt a negative lesson regarding the limitations of a 'non-interference' policy in practice. These lessons were then translated back into the adaptation process in the form of the continued adaptations to China's foreign policy in practice. This lesson learning process will be assessed regarding, firstly, the impact of the local Sudanese context on China's broader political image interests and, secondly, on Chinese interests on the ground in Sudan.

5. 1. Specific lesson: The impact of domestic instability in Sudan on China's interests

5.1.1. Wider political interests: improving China's international image

a) Crisis point 1: Calling on China to become a 'responsible stakeholder' (September 2005)

¹³⁹ Interview, Peking University, School for International Studies (SIS), Beijing, China, 23 December 2010.

¹⁴⁰ Interview, Tsinghua University, Department of International Relations, Beijing, China, 27 September 2011.

As it was detailed in Chapter 3, China had begun to adapt its approach from confrontation with the West vis-à-vis the Darfur conflict to limited co-ordination and support for the AU peacekeeping force in Darfur between January and March 2005 as it became increasingly apparent the situation was not being contained at the local level by the Khartoum government.

However, it is argued here that China's foreign policy making institutions first began to learn the lesson that the local situation in Sudan could impact upon its wider foreign policy interests when the conflict in Darfur and China's relationship with the Khartoum government began to intersect with Beijing's US ties towards the end of 2005. This lesson presented itself in the form of 'negative feedback' from the US government regarding China's ties with 'pariah regimes' such as Sudan. Although China's Sudan relationship in the context of Darfur was just one case among many cited by Robert Zoellick in September 2005 as instances in which Beijing could act as a 'responsible stakeholder', it was this example that illicited the strongest reaction from Chinese scholars and state-owned media outlets.

Indeed, following the 'responsible stakeholder' call, the response within China's state-owned media initially focused on the fact that the US was utilising the Darfur issue as a means to criticise China, arguing that "the situation [in Darfur] has worsened since some Western countries are eager to 'internationalise' what had been a pure internal affair of Sudan...the Darfur issue wouldn't have escalated so fast...without intervention from external powers driven by their own interests [sic]" (*People's Daily*, 2006).

Such statements were framed by both a persistent view within China that the US "posed a major threat to their nation's security and domestic stability" (Wang, J., 2005, p.39), and ongoing concerns regarding perceived geo-economic competition in Sudan, not only the US but also other emerging powers such as India and Malaysia at the time (Holslag, 2007, p.4).

However, it is apparent that the 'responsible stakeholder' call began to feed into broader foreign policy debates in China that had already been pushing towards

a shift within Chinese foreign policy from mid-2004, as detailed in Chapter 1. By 2005 'peaceful development' (*heping fazhan* 和平发展) had been given official leadership backing as the slogan to reassure the international system of China's peaceful intentions, as Hu Jintao and the ruling CPC elites focused on addressing domestic social, economic and environmental issues that had arisen as a result of China's rapid economic development. Wang Jisi (2005), a leading international Relations scholar with close personal ties with Hu Jintao, wrote at the time that the US was the one country that could "exert the greatest strategic pressure" on China which must, therefore "maintain a close relationship with the United States if its modernisation efforts are to succeed" (p.39).

In this context, the week prior to Robert Zoellick's speech on China, President Hu Jintao stated at the UN that, according to the goal of attaining a 'harmonious world', China would seek to "fulfill its international obligations" through cooperation within the international community (Hu, 2005). However, following the US 'responsible stakeholder' call in late September, China began to learn the lesson that "its bilateral relations with countries like the US cannot be disentangled from certain difficult third-country issues" such as the Darfur conflict in Sudan (Evans and Steinberg, 2007).

According to a prominent Chinese scholar, it was such "international pressure" and China's perceptions of "changes in the international environment" vis-à-vis Sino-US tensions that led China to begin to learn this lesson and to change its approach towards the Darfur crisis in order to better display China's responsible role in the Sudanese context.¹⁴¹ Indeed, it has been asserted that it was in late 2005, after the 'responsible stakeholder' call in September, that the issue of China's global image and the Darfur crisis first came to top the agenda for Beijing's MFA and became a topic of discussion within China's Foreign Affairs Small Leading Group (FASLG) meetings.¹⁴²

Such feedback proved at the time that, put to the test, China feels that stable, positive ties with the US and Europe are more important for its economic growth

¹⁴¹ Interview, Tsinghua University, Department of International Relations, Beijing, China, 27 September 2011.

¹⁴² Interview, Renmin University, Department for International Relations, Beijing, China, 4 January 2011.

and security than protecting states such as Sudan at any cost (ICG, 2008b, p.26, Note, 205).

Indeed, according to Chinese scholars of both Sino-US and Sino-Africa relations, domestic discussions at the time reflected that China's foreign policy establishment had not only learnt that Chinese ties with governments such as Sudan could negatively impact upon its wider foreign policy interests, but it was also forced to acknowledge the relative "importance of Beijing's ties with the US over those with Sudan" within the wider context of China's international relations, and that its foreign policy approach would require adjustment in this context.¹⁴³

It is argued here that it was the initial learning of this lesson that led to the adaptations in China's Darfur policy from mid-2006, such as the role of its MFA diplomats in delivering messages behind the scenes to Khartoum urging its cooperation with the AU and the UN, Beijing's new focus on improving 'peace and stability' in Darfur through emerging support for a UN peacekeeping force, and its UN representatives' rare public criticism of Khartoum concerning its lack of improvement of the humanitarian and security situation in Darfur (see Chapter 3).

b) Crisis point 2: Questioning ties with 'pariah regimes' and the role of China's NOCs in Sudan (March 2006)

The lesson previously presented to Beijing's foreign policy-making establishment that China's Sudan ties could have a negative impact on its wider political interests was further compounded in the context from mid-2006 of growing frustration among many sub-Saharan African states regarding Khartoum's lack of sincerity to follow through with its commitments to alleviating conflict in Darfur (see Chapter 3). Indeed, as the security situation on the ground in Darfur worsened and rapidly spread across Sudan's borders into Chad, whilst Khartoum rejected the deployment of an AU-UN Hybrid peacekeeping force in Darfur, it became increasingly apparent to Beijing's

¹⁴³ Interview, China Institute for International Studies (CIIS), Department for Developing Countries Studies, Beijing, China, 6 January 2011; Interview, Fudan University, School of American Studies, Shanghai, China, 30 August 2012.

foreign policy establishment that the Khartoum government lacked either the capacity or the political will to end the fighting in Darfur.

As a consensus between both sub-Saharan African and Western states regarding the need for a more robust UN force on the ground in Darfur emerged, China's Sudan role was further 'internationalised' as it also came under the scrutiny of African states and, in this context, Chinese foreign policy elites would learn that its Sudan engagement could prove consequential for its wider political interests in Africa itself. Indeed, China's ongoing support for Khartoum left China increasingly "vulnerable to being called to account within Africa for enabling Khartoum's intransigence and impeding the AU's efforts" (Huang, 2007, p.836). China's traditional policy of non-interference was viewed to be "contrary to the expectation of other African nations that Beijing would contribute to the stabilisation of Darfur" (Holslag, 2009, p.28).

Within this context, from mid-2006 a considerable debate was sparked among China's foreign policy elites regarding Beijing's ties with 'hardline regimes' in Africa. China's foreign policy institutions and research centres expressed anxiety over the outcome of Chinese policies towards Sudan, and those closer to its borders such as Iran, North Korea, and Myanmar, which sparked closer analysis and debate on the issue in China (Kleine-Ahlbrandt and Small, 2009, p.46).¹⁴⁴

Such new thinking caught the attention of China's leadership in Beijing, particularly the argument that in an effort to "burnish China's image and international reputation", China should not maintain an uncritical embrace of the Sudanese government, which had proven involvement in the ongoing atrocities against civilians in Darfur, and appeared unwilling and unable to contain the fighting at the host-state level (Robinson, 2006). In this context, such foreign policy research institutions also called for an enhanced degree of co-operation with the West and stronger UN support for the AU mission in Darfur (Ahmed, 2010, p.6).

¹⁴⁴ Interview, China Institute for International Studies (CIIS), Department for Developing Countries Studies, Beijing, China, 6 January 2011.

According to a senior Chinese diplomat in China's MFA, the primary reason for China's policy shift towards 'strong engagement' with the West in Darfur from mid-2006 to mid-2007 was fundamentally because it had been the "request of the international community, including the UN and the AU and other stakeholders and regional communities such as IGAD, which all wanted China to play a more active role, and China took heed to that request".¹⁴⁵ It was also articulated that, as one of the permanent five members of the UNSC, "we felt we had the obligation, the responsibility to do something, to use the leverage we have".¹⁴⁶

This gradual shift in thinking began to be translated into concrete actions by both Beijing's MFA diplomats and China's leadership itself to exert additional pressure on Khartoum from late 2006 (Huang, 2007, p.836). As detailed in Chapter 3, China's UN ambassador became increasingly active and was widely credited with securing Khartoum's acceptance for the Annan Plan in November 2006. In addition, China's leadership became directly involved when, in February 2007, President Hu Jintao articulated China's four-point plan on the resolution of the Darfur conflict (see Chapter 3).

It is also apparent that, an emergent debate within China focused on an increasing 'principal-agent' dilemma regarding the government's encouragement of Chinese state-owned and private companies to 'go out' and seek investments and new markets abroad, whilst at the same time such companies were sometimes perceived to act against China's national interests, including both its wider international image and its energy security. In the context of growing criticism of the role of Chinese companies in Sudan, there was increasing disquiet in official circles about the impact of China's overseas investments on its wider international image in the context of Darfur (McGregor, 2008).

As detailed in Chapter 3, scrutiny of both the Chinese government and its state-owned oil companies as a result of their close ties with the Sudanese government began to accelerate from March 2006, particularly after the Sudan

¹⁴⁵ Interview, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, China, 25 June 2011.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Divestment Task Force produced reports highlighting the extensive economic, and particularly oil-based, ties between Sudan and China, and as part of their divestment plan targeted US assets that included investments in Chinese companies doing business with Sudan.

Certainly, in this context, conservatives within China's academic circles and foreign policy elites continued to argue that the US and other Western countries were merely attempting to crowd China out of Sudan in line with geo-economic competition for access to oil reserves in Africa. Moreover, such critics are also quick to point out that the US was just as likely to engage in an uncritical embrace of autocratic and corrupt regimes in Africa when it suited American oil interests (Huang, 2007, p.836).

However, with the dramatic decline of Chinese imports of Sudanese oil in 2006, as it emerged that the CNPC had sold much of its oil produced in Sudan to the highest bidders on the international market (see Chapter 3), amid the increasing internationalisation of China's ties with the Khartoum government and the Darfur crisis, concerns were triggered within Beijing's foreign policy institutions over whether lending support to NOCs overseas was in the country's national interest, particularly if the NOCs are not always seen to improve China's energy security (Houser, 2008, p.165).

Highlighting that the lesson that the behaviour of Chinese companies in Sudan could have wider negative impacts on China's interests had been collectively learnt, and that efforts to better regulate their behaviour abroad was required, China's foreign economic policy implementing institutions, MFA, MOFCOM and the NDRC had removed Sudan from its list of destinations for Chinese companies to seek to invest and where Chinese ODI would receive the central government's support in March 2007 (see Chapter 3).

The learning of this lesson by Beijing's implementing institutions within the Sudan relationship increasingly began to inform wider 'macro-level' attempts to curb the negative impact of Chinese NOCs investments abroad within China's broader international relations. At the multilateral level, in July 2006, President Hu Jintao for the first time publicly put forward China's 'new energy security

concept' that emphasised energy security through international cooperation (Bo, 2010, p.49).

c) Crisis point 3: The 'Genocide Olympics' as a 'tipping point' (May 2007)

It is argued here that the process whereby China's foreign policy establishment learnt that China's wider political interests could be damaged as a result of its ties with Sudan, where conflict in Darfur continued unabated, reached its zenith in mid-2007. As detailed in Chapter 3, from May 2007, US-based activists increasingly began to dub the Beijing Olympics the 'Genocide Olympics' in reference to the Darfur conflict and its links to Chinese resource and military ties with the Khartoum government. In this context, China's Sudan ties became increasingly 'internationalised' and consequential for China's core image interests through threatening to taint the Beijing Olympics to a degree that initially caught China's leadership and foreign policy institutions off-guard.

Indeed, it was observed at the time that the linking between the conflict in Sudan and China's hosting of the Olympics took China's foreign policy elite by surprise, despite claims by Western commentators that they had been warning Chinese officials that Darfur and the Olympics could collide (Cooper, 2007). That Beijing found such a linkage to be both unexpected and unwelcome was displayed within its immediate reaction to the 'Genocide Olympics' campaign. Facing such increasing criticism from the Western press and NGOs, and the 'humiliating' protests regarding China's up-coming Olympics, some Chinese policy-makers and academics continued to argue that the international criticism of China's Sudan policy was no more than trying to use human rights issues to contain China's presence in Africa (Jiang, 2009, p.65). Moreover, some international relations scholars cautioned the negative impact of China appeasing the US and joining "the chorus of sanctions" against Sudan, could have on its relationship with Khartoum (Wang, 2008a, p.14).

In addition, it is evident that the 'Genocide Olympics' campaign fed into the re-emergence of the debate concerning the 'responsible stakeholder' call of 2005 within China among its MFA officials and leading foreign policy scholars. Indeed, the Deputy Director of the Department of Policy Planning in the MFA

argued that the underlying assumption of the ‘responsibility theory’ “is still that China might ‘irresponsibly’ use its national strength; hence whether China is a responsible country should be defined and judged by other countries” (Li, 2007). The former President of the MFA think tank CIIS and Ambassador to U.K., Ma Zhenggang, reaffirmed the common view that, “in emphasising ‘China’s responsibility’ toward the international system, the US is attempting to request China to coordinate with the US and other Western countries and act according to US wishes as well as transform itself according to US criteria” (Ma, 2007, pp.8-9).

However, conversely, the ‘Genocide Olympics’ campaign also began to spark considerable discussion within Chinese foreign policy institutions and academics as to how China could nevertheless effectively respond to the crisis in the Darfur region. Mainstream arguments with the MFA continued to voice the opinion that it was not worth risking China’s international reputation in Sudan through non-action and that some more pro-active measures in Darfur from Beijing will serve to exemplify China’s credentials as a responsible power (Jiang, 2009, p.65).

Significantly, there also emerged a considerable debate regarding the limited utility of China’s strict adherence to the non-interference policy in practice if it prevented Beijing from becoming involved in the resolution of the Darfur crisis and to protect its international image interests. Indeed, Chinese Africa scholars and MFA diplomats argued with reference to China’s Sudan role that, whilst China did not need to ‘abandon’ (*fang qi* 放弃) the non-interference principle, China’s rising global power and image interests means that a policy of non-interference in practice was increasingly not seen to be synonymous with that of ‘non-involvement’ (*bu jieru* 不介入) or inaction (Wang, 2008).¹⁴⁷

It is argued by informed Chinese academics that such rearticulating of China’s non-interference policy did begin to inform the thinking of China’s leadership, which would translate into the concrete policy actions taken from mid-2007 in the context of Darfur.¹⁴⁸ However, they also assert that, as China’s foreign

¹⁴⁷ Interview, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, China, 18 November 2010.

¹⁴⁸ Interview, Peking University, School for International Studies (SIS), Beijing, China, 23 December 2010.

policy was still predicated on state-to-state relations, such changes in policy did not occur in direct response to the activism of the non-governmental civil society groups and celebrities that were driving the ‘Genocide Olympics’ campaign in the US, which Chinese policy-makers felt could be largely ignored.¹⁴⁹ Rather, according to a leading Africa scholar at CASS, it was the letters delivered to China’s top level leadership from US government officials in April and May 2007 endorsing the position of the ‘Genocide Olympics’ campaigners that provided a catalyst for further change in China’s diplomatic behaviour.¹⁵⁰ Thus, it was the endorsement of the campaign by US legislators and the American state apparatus that provided a “tipping point” for the Chinese government to seek to counter US criticism of its role in Sudan.¹⁵¹

Indeed, it was from this point that the campaign had “caught the attention” of China’s foreign policy community more broadly and, coupled with emerging concerns about the protection of Chinese economic interests in Sudan and Africa more broadly at the time (see section 5.1.2), the assertion that China’s leadership had to do something to counter such criticism began to shape the domestic debate in China (Houser, 2008, p.165). One Chinese scholar of international relations argued that, “if China completely ignores the Western pressure and continues to do nothing on the Darfur crisis, some significant damage could be inflicted on Chinese interests and national image worldwide” (Wang, 2008a, p.14).

As such, in the context of the boycott of the Beijing Olympics, regarded by both the government and the people of China as “a symbol of national pride and a display of economic prosperity”, it was argued that by mid-2007, China’s foreign policy making establishment and leadership as a whole, “realised that China has been dragged into a dilemma, which has compelled it to respond to the Darfur crisis much more zealously and aggressively than before”.¹⁵² The most visible representation of this shift in policy in response to the learning of this lesson came in May 2007 with a change in the MFA’s institutional structures and actors through which China dealt with the Darfur issue, and the creation of

¹⁴⁹ Interview, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), Institute for West Asian and African Studies (IWAAS), Beijing, China, 15 March 2011.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid

the position of Special Envoy for African Affairs (see Chapter 3). Indeed, Chinese scholars reaffirmed the significance of this move as the first of its kind in Chinese foreign policy more broadly.¹⁵³

As detailed in Chapter 3, Beijing's first appointee to this position, Liu Guijin, took China's activism on Darfur beyond a 'behind the scenes' role of encouraging Khartoum to cooperate with the AU and the UN, which was viewed to have not succeeded in diffusing international pressure and criticism of China, to a more public engagement infused with a more vocally assertive pressure on Khartoum to accept the AU-UN peacekeeping mission in Darfur. Indeed, China's 'diplomatic victory' came on 12 June 2007, when Sudan declared that it had explicitly accepted the third and final phase of the Annan proposal to deploy a UN-AU Hybrid peacekeeping mission in Darfur without reservation (Holslag, 2007).

Moreover, it is apparent that the 'Genocide Olympics' campaign also heightened China's awareness of the complexity of influences on US foreign policy, including NGOs and lobbyists and Beijing subsequently "learnt that the best way to deal with them is to reach out to them directly" (ICG, 2008a, p.27, Note, 216). Indeed, Special Envoy Liu Guijin met with the leaders of the Save Darfur Coalition, some of whom were former US diplomats or ambassadors, after which it was stated that the Special Envoy came to believe that that the link between Darfur and China's Olympics was due to a lack of understanding of China's approach to engaging with Khartoum, as "just because China does not publicly criticise [the Khartoum government] as this cannot solve the real problems on the ground", did "not mean that Beijing was not actively engaged in pressuring Sudan".¹⁵⁴

From this point China's Special Envoy began to attempt to better communicate China's role to a Western non-state audience through 'briefings' with Western media and engaging in public discussions at Western think tanks such as Chatham House. The Special Envoy also sought to convey such specific lessons that had been learnt in the context of Darfur across Chinese foreign

¹⁵³ Interview, Peking University, School for International Studies (SIS), Beijing, China, 4 January 2011

¹⁵⁴ Interview, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, China, 25 June 2011.

policy implementing institutions in Beijing, for example through relaying his experiences within meetings at the CPC's International Department headquarters.¹⁵⁵

By mid-2007 Chinese state-owned companies, particularly CNPC, had become increasingly targeted by the 'Genocide Olympics' campaign which was to consolidate the lesson learning, particularly within Beijing's MFA and state-affiliated think-tanks, regarding the negative impact of China's overseas investments on its wider international image. It is apparent that Beijing's MFA and Chinese government-affiliated think tanks were becoming increasingly concerned about the high diplomatic and soft power costs resulting from the overseas investments of China's NOCs in unstable states such as Sudan and Beijing's close military ties with regimes such as the al-Bashir's NCP party in Khartoum. (ICG, 2008a, p.31).¹⁵⁶ In response, the MFA increasingly encouraged government-run foreign policy think tanks and universities to research the impact of Chinese investments in Sudan on China's broader interests (McGregor, 2008). Sudan scholars at the Institute for West Asian and African Studies at Zhejiang Normal University highlighted the potential damage that the Chinese companies' presence in Sudan in the context of Darfur was causing for China's international image in Africa (Jiang and Luo, 2008).

A vocal academic on this issue was Professor Zhu Feng at Peking University's Centre for International and Strategic Studies who argued that in the context of escalating international pressure on the Chinese government to cut economic support for Sudan amid the crisis in Darfur, these increasingly profit-driven oil companies, though state-owned, had sometimes pursued profit at the expense of the broader national interest. Zhu argued that, "these state-owned companies have become very powerful interest groups...they even hijacked China's foreign policy in Sudan" (Cited in: McGregor, 2008). In early 2008, Zhang Yunling, of the CASS, dispatched international relations specialists to Sudan to prepare a report on China's conduct there (McGregor, 2008). Zhai Kun, of the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) in Beijing, said that large state companies such as CNPC inevitably "now stand for economic

¹⁵⁵ Interview, CPCID diplomat, London, 6 March 2013

¹⁵⁶ Interview, Deputy Director of Dept for Developing Countries, China Institute for International Studies (CIIS), Beijing, 6 January 2011.

considerations”, however, “more and more regulations should now be created by the government to constrain their behaviour overseas” (Cited in: McGregor, 2008).

However, it is notable that, despite such increasing awareness in Beijing regarding the need to better regulate Chinese NOCs operating in unstable states such as Sudan, CNPC’s expansion into the Sudanese oil sector continued unabated. As it was detailed in Chapter 3, the maintenance of CNPC’s oil projects continued to be in the broad interests not only of company executives, but also senior CPC members and the Chinese government. Although China saw a decrease in Sudanese oil imports in 2006, steady Sudanese oil flows to China were resumed after 2007.

As such, although the CNPC’s dominant position in Sudan had resulted in an international backlash against Beijing’s ties with Khartoum, the maintenance of Sino-Sudanese oil cooperation continued to be in the broad interests of China’s senior leadership and foreign policy establishment as a whole.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, in the words of one senior Africa researcher at an MFA think tank, “sometimes state-owned companies hijack China’s policies, but if the company really was acting against China’s interests the government would not have hesitated to shut them down” in Sudan.¹⁵⁸

Moreover, it was in this context of invested Chinese interests in CNPC’s Sudanese oil operations that Chinese implementing institutions and oil executives would steadily begin to learn the negative impact that socio-political instability and domestic violence within Sudan would have upon the maintenance of those very interests, which the Chinese foreign policy establishment increasingly sought to protect.

¹⁵⁷ Interview, China Institute for International Studies (CIIS), Department for Developing Countries Studies, Beijing, China, 6 January 2011

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

5.1.2 Chinese interests on the ground: the primacy of investment protection

a) Crisis point 1: Local insecurity and the lack of host-state protection of Chinese interests (October 2007-October 2008)

In the context of the regional intensification of conflict in Darfur and its spillover into Chad from mid-2006, where CNPC had recently established oil investments, the security risks facing the company on the ground in Sudan and broader region became much greater than during the pre-CPA civil war period. It is apparent that this development began to spark concerns among China's foreign policy institutions regarding the potential impact of the intensification of the Darfur conflict on stability in Chad and southern Sudan where peace had only just been achieved and where CNPC had established investments (Wang, 2006). Indeed, with a belt of energy interests stretching from Sudan and Chad to Libya and Ethiopia, the regional stability of northern and eastern Africa had at this time become of vital importance to China's energy security (Holslag, 2009, p.23).

In this context, from mid-2006, Chinese diplomats and officials learnt that such a regional intensification of the conflict heightened the risk that Chinese investments could be negatively affected, and there was a need for more effective security provision on the ground. As such, senior Chinese Ministry of National Defence (MND) officials and scholars within the MFA's think tank, CIIS, cited China's extensive economic interests in Sudan as a key motivating factor behind Beijing's support for the AU peacekeeping force in Darfur during this period.¹⁵⁹ According to a senior MFA diplomat, in addition to international pressure during this period (as detailed previously), it was China's increasing interests in stability on the ground that actually brought China into closer coordination with Western states and the UN vis-à-vis Darfur in order "to find a resolution on the ground".¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Interview, Chinese Embassy in the US, Washington D. C., US, 4 October 2013; Interview, China Institute for International Studies (CIIS), Department for Developing Countries Studies, Beijing, China, 6 January 2011.

¹⁶⁰ Interview, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, China, 25 June 2011.

Domestic disquiet within China was growing after a spate of attacks on Chinese NOCs in 2006 and 2007 in Sudan. In this context, China's state-run newspaper, *China Daily*, published an article arguing, "China needs to consider new channels to protect overseas interests", suggesting a new realisation that China's reliance on host-state protection was insufficient (Cited in: Holslag, 2009, p.27). The article stressed that China "must break through traditional diplomatic thinking...the principle of self-restraint is insufficient to protect ourselves or to safeguard overseas economic interests and development" (Cited in: Holslag, 2009, p.27), indicating a change in thinking within China regarding the need to accept and address the myriad of threats that the CNPC and other Chinese companies were increasingly facing in Sudan and in the wider region.

It is argued here that it was not until late 2007, when such attacks became steadily more frequent and deadly in this new era of instability in Sudan, that Chinese diplomats and CNPC representatives began to learn the extent to which local insecurity was beginning to have upon Chinese economic interests and citizens in Sudan and, moreover, the limited capacity of the Khartoum government to protect those interests. As with the attacks on oil targets before, the attacks on Chinese-run oilfields by Darfur rebel groups in October and December 2007, there was a limited impact on oil production, however, concern was growing in Beijing, as Chinese policy-makers began to learn that CNPC was being deliberately targeted. In recognition of this new development, in response to the attacks the China's MFA had released a rare public statement expressing elevated concern and asserted public pressure on Khartoum to protect Chinese interests: "the safety of Chinese personnel in Sudan must be effectively guaranteed" (Cited in: Patey, 2014, p.196). Indeed, in adapting China's non-interference policy to directly comment on Sudan's 'internal affairs' and their impact on Chinese interests, China's MFA had learnt that domestic violence "reduces China's ability to maintain the policy of non-interference" in practice that had facilitated the initial entrance of Chinese NOCs into Sudan (Holslag, 2009, p.28).

Fundamentally, the attacks by Darfur rebel groups on Chinese oil installations had begun to challenge Beijing's "assumption that its partnership with Khartoum was sufficient to ensure the safety of its operations" (ICG, 2008a, p.26). According to a senior MFA diplomat, following initial international and regional pressure on China to participate in the resolution of the conflict, an additional reason for China's increasingly "strong engagement" vis-à-vis Darfur was because "it is in China's interests as Chinese NOCs have a lot of projects there on the ground", and an emerging concern within the MFA related to the issue of "how to protect those interests", which increasingly also led Chinese diplomats to seek "a durable resolution" in Darfur.¹⁶¹ Senior Chinese officials within the MFA and the Ministry of National Defence (MND), and renowned academics in Beijing re-affirmed that concerns relating to the security of China's extensive economic interests and proliferation of Chinese nationals on the ground in both Sudan and Chad was one of the key motivations from 2007 for China to begin to deepen its support for a more robust UN peacekeeping force in partnership with the AU in Darfur.¹⁶²

In addition to Beijing's contributions to the UN Peacekeeping missions in Sudan and elsewhere in Africa, Chinese government implementing institutions attempted to enhance their capacity to better respond to security challenges that had increased during 2007, and CNPC made efforts to improve its emergency response plans and safety evaluations, as detailed in Chapter 4. In early 2008, CASS dispatched international relations specialists to Sudan to prepare a report on China's conduct there, which found that "the companies feel great pressure as a result of being linked to politics", and although they did not "care a lot about politics" they were aware that it "could not be avoided" (Cited in: McGregor, 2008). Indeed, as detailed in Chapter 4, CNPC increasingly adapted its investment approach to develop a form of political 'corporate diplomacy' vis-à-vis Southern Sudan after 2008 in the interests of investment protection.

It is argued here that the learning process that Chinese officials, academics and company managers had been undergoing since 2007 regarding the impact of

¹⁶¹ Interview, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, China, 25 June 2011

¹⁶² Interview, Tsinghua University, Department of International Relations, Beijing, China, 27 September 2011; Interview, Chinese Embassy in the US, Washington D. C., US, 4 October 2013.

local insecurity on Chinese interests, and that Sudanese government was no longer capable of protecting Chinese interests, culminated in October 2008 with kidnapping of nine Chinese oil workers and the death of one that had been caught in the crossfire of a botched rescue attempt launched by the Sudanese security forces. As the Chinese diplomats and oilmen who had been trying to put an end to the kidnappings peacefully were “stunned by the violent outcome”, the incident presented the reality that the Sudanese government’s capacity to protect CNPC was, at best, “wearing thin” (Patey, 2014, p.179, 200).

In this context, Patey has observed that both CNPC and the government had learnt the important lesson that while the Sudanese government had been capable of providing security during wartime when it could manipulate southern rebel divisions, it was “hardly a reliable partner in protecting the company’s interests during peacetime, when governing, not violence, was necessary” (Patey, 2014, p.205). That this lesson had been learnt was evident initially within the public statements issued by the Chinese MFA after the incident that revealed a direct note of criticism of Khartoum, and CNPC issued statements indicating that its continued oil cooperation was increasingly becoming dependent on an improved security environment in Sudan (see Chapter 4).

It is apparent that as the kidnappings and killings of CNPC workers had occurred in Sudan, the “heart and soul of CNPC’s ‘go global’ campaign”, had a markedly different impact compared with other attacks on Chinese NOCs abroad, as it “galvanised strategic thinking at CNPC on overseas security”, which became a significant priority for the company from 2008 (Patey, 2014, p.204). Indeed, according to CNPC researchers in Beijing, it was CNPC’s experiences on the ground in Sudan during this period that directly contributed towards a series of top-down procedural changes in the way the company dealt with insecurity overseas, including the security training of employees and enhanced evacuation procedures.¹⁶³

In response to a recognition of the declining capacity of the central government in Sudan to protect its interests and heightened local criticism of the company’s role at the local and national levels in Sudan, CNPC increasingly began to

¹⁶³ Interview, CNPC, Beijing, 13 December 2010.

attempt to improve its image through enhanced CSR activities within the local communities that could harm the company's operations from 2008 (see Chapter 4).¹⁶⁴ As such, it is argued here that CNPC had learnt specifically through its experiences in Sudan that it "can do well by doing good", and that, fundamentally, the more it was able to develop "sustainable and trusting relationships at both national and local levels, the more secure its investments will be" (Downs, 2008, p.31).

With the CNPC's former executive, Zhou Yongkang's, visit to Khartoum in November 2009 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Sino-Sudanese diplomatic ties and the tenth anniversary of Sudan's position as an oil exporter, one Chinese energy scholar at the Party School under the Central Committee of the CPC argued that Sudan continued to represent a successful model of China's NOCs' implementation of the 'Going Out' strategy in Africa (Deng, 2011). However, the continued hailing of symbolic energy ties at this time belied a significant learning process that had been underway for the past few years of the engagement.

With the realisation that CNPC's "glory days" in Sudan were over particularly with the October 2008 kidnapping incident "driving a wedge" between the company and the host-state, company executives and Chinese diplomats had in fact been increasingly "questioning their long-standing relationship" with the Sudanese government (Patey, 2014, pp.201-3). Indeed, it was a growing mistrust on both sides in this context that in part contributed towards the deterioration in relations when the ICC issue re-emerged, just as Beijing was attempting to distance itself from the Darfur conflict in the lead up to the Olympic Games, as detailed previously.

However, it was not only in the context of China's evolving Khartoum relations that a learning process vis-à-vis the impact of local dynamics on China's economic interests would become apparent. The shifting political landscape associated with southern Sudan's referendum on secession and the resurging instability and domestic violence emerging in the independence era would

¹⁶⁴ Certainly, this process had also emerged in tandem with broader domestic developments within China since 2005. See: Zhao (2012), p. 163.

introduce a new set of risks, and negative lessons, from which Chinese diplomatic and economic actors in Sudan would increasingly begin to learn.

b) Crisis point 2: Southern referendum on secession and South Sudan's oil production shutdown (January 2011-January 2012)

As it was detailed in Chapter 4, following the SPLM leader Salva Kiir's pivotal trip to Beijing in July 2007 and, particularly after the 2010 national elections in which Kiir declined to run for President of a united Sudan, both the Chinese government and CNPC had begun to pragmatically adapt their Sudan engagement in response to shifting local dynamics as southern secession became an emerging political reality. However, it was also stated that during 2010 CNPC continued to assume that in context of secession, the company's oil concessions would be maintained across two separate sovereign states and, as such, on the eve of the referendum in 2011 both the company and the Chinese government remained highly reactive to political and security dynamics as the emerged and maintained a "wait and see" attitude vis-à-vis southern independence.¹⁶⁵

It is argued here that it was not until the confirmation of the referendum result in January 2011, and the emerging challenges to the continuity and stability of CNPC's oil investments thereafter, that China's business and foreign policy actors in Sudan began to learn the specific impact that the politics of southern secession would have upon Chinese economic interests. Indeed, confirmation of the reality that the majority of CNPC oil operations would be relocated south, where perceptions of CNPC have historically been negatively tainted by their role in wartime Sudan, presented the negative lesson that backing one side during the war could lead the company to lose out once the political landscape of Sudan's oil leadership changed.

This was apparent when the new government of South Sudan announced at independence that all oil contracts signed with foreign companies before the 2005 signing of the CPA would be re-evaluated. The ruling SPLM's historic links with the US government introduced a new phase in China's engagement in

¹⁶⁵ Interview, Peking University, School for International Studies (SIS), Beijing, China, 27 August 2012.

Sudan following southern independence, as the South Sudanese oil market became open to the investment of US multinational oil companies in a way that it had not been since Chevron left in 1984. Moreover, six months into independence South Sudan had shutdown its oil production in the context of the on-going oil infrastructure-sharing dispute with Sudan; a move that had a notable negative impact on both CNPC and the Chinese government's economic interests.

Southern Sudan's referendum on secession sparked a debate among Chinese IR academics as to the cause of the south's vote for independence from the north. Some area specialists within the field of African studies focused on the internal religious and ethnic factors that brought about historical conflict between the majority animist south and Muslim north and the eventual breakup of the country, which Yang and Zhai claimed were issues "very typical in Africa": the "contradictions resulting from racial and ethnic diversity and the conflicts caused by religious and cultural difference" (Yang and Zhai, 2011, p.14).

Those from the more nationalist and anti-US schools of thought within Chinese IR related the cause of southern secession with ongoing neo-colonialism practiced by the US in Sudan since the British laid the foundation for the break-up of north and south Sudan (Ma and Yang, 2012). Moreover, it was argued by some that Washington's policy of support for the Christian south in its journey towards independence was driven by a considerable Christian lobby in the US that has resulted in a US diplomacy that is infused with a religious and 'exceptionalist' "mission to change the world" in line with US liberal beliefs (Wang, 2009, p.77).

Despite such debate regarding the nature of the southern vote to secede, there appeared to be a broad consensus among China's foreign policy academic and corporate actors that such a development could have a negative impact upon Chinese economic interests. Indeed, the potential implications of southern independence fed into broader concerns in the context of the Arab revolutions springing up across North Africa and the Middle East since 2010 that the return of a US policy aimed at promoting local democratisation and pursuing US oil interests in the region could have a destabilising effect on Sino-US relations

and Chinese economic investments on the ground (Shi, 211). In this context, the imminent reality of a separate state of South Sudan struck a chord among certain Chinese scholars who began focusing on China's energy security in the south where the majority of CNPC's oil projects were located.

It was argued that a key interest of the US to encourage southern independence was in order to gain strategic access to southern oil reserves and push Chinese oil companies out of the south in the process (Li, 2011).¹⁶⁶ Such scholars asserted that a succession of US administrations had attempted to weaken the north through sanctions, and failed to keep its promise to remove Sudan from its list of terrorist states should al-Bashir implement the CPA and accept the outcome of the southern referendum.¹⁶⁷

Although in practice it was smaller European oil firms such as the fledgling UK-based White Nile Ltd that had been actively seeking oil concessions in southern Sudan prior to independence (Patey, 2012, p.202), rather than US firms, it was a common perception among Chinese analysts that "for years US companies have been itching to return to Sudan for oil development" (Cited in: Wang, X., 2011). Such views stoked fears within China regarding the on-set of heightened competition between Chinese and American oil companies in southern Sudan and it was believed that with the South's independence "a reshuffle of oil interests in the new nation is expected" (Cited in: Wang, X., 2011).

In this context, Chinese academics and policy advisors had begun to articulate the need for an evolved Chinese role in the post-referendum period leading to the emergence of two separate sovereign states; one which would "focus on economic reconstruction in north and south Sudan" and that China will have to "be careful to maintain good relations with both" and not work with one "against the interests of the other", as the future of Chinese company oil contracts following formal secession remained unclear at this stage.¹⁶⁸ Indeed, the tentative adaptations to Beijing's policy of reaching out to the GoSS prior to independence, as detailed in Chapter 4, were the result of such concerns.

¹⁶⁶ Interview, CPCID diplomat, London, 6 March 2013.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid; Interview, Peking University, School for International Studies, Beijing, 4 January 2011.

¹⁶⁸ Interview, China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), Institute for West Asian and African Studies, Beijing, China, 12 April 2011.

In addition to the potential geo-economic competition arising from southern independence, in the context of the recent 'Arab spring' and civil war in Libya where the Chinese government was forced to evacuate 35,860 Chinese citizens in February 2011, there was growing concern in China regarding possible instability resulting from southern secession and its impact on the safety of Chinese citizens on the ground.¹⁶⁹ In this context, it was asserted that should the transition prove to be unstable with both sides resorting to a return to "all out war", the Chinese government would be prepared to evacuate all Chinese workers from Sudan.¹⁷⁰

Moreover, Chinese analysts stated Beijing's intention to act as a behind-the-scenes "advisor for a peaceful separation" because "stability is China's key interest, as it does not want to see another situation like Eritrea and Ethiopia" in terms of "border and regional instability".¹⁷¹ This was stated to be in line with China's broader interest of stabilising the restive Horn of Africa region due to its proximity to the Gulf of Aden; a strategic sea route for African energy supplies bound for China.¹⁷²

As South Sudan formally gained its independence in July 2011, in a context in which the long-term interests of a Chinese NOC appeared to be increasingly under question, mainstream domestic debates within China had clearly shifted from that of claiming that they had 'hijacked' Chinese foreign policy, as during 2007, to stressing the significance of CNPCs investments in Sudan as one of the company's first oil projects abroad and its importance to China's broader national energy security strategy to safeguard oil supply (Yang, 2011). It was stressed that Sudanese oil became China's sixth main source of crude imports in 2010, and as such "the country's split has caused considerable uncertainty for China's oil interests" (Li, 2011).

Chinese scholars argue that this shift in China's approach under the 'Going Out' strategy increasingly towards focusing on the protection of Chinese interests on

¹⁶⁹ Interview, Peking University, School for International Studies (SIS), Beijing, China, 5 May 2011.

¹⁷⁰ Interview, Peking University, School for International Studies (SIS), Beijing, China, 23 December 2010

¹⁷¹ Interview, China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), Institute for West Asian and African Studies, Beijing, China, 12 April 2011.

¹⁷² Ibid.

the ground in Sudan has occurred in tandem with China's broader growth and confidence on the global stage since 2008. It is argued that the protection of China's economic interests and citizens abroad have increased in significance, in contrast with Beijing's focus on its image interests vis-à-vis the West prior to the global financial crisis of 2008.¹⁷³

With the announcement by the South Sudanese authorities that all oil contracts signed with foreign companies would be renegotiated with South Sudan, Chinese analysts stressed the potentially negative impact on CNPC's interests within a new environment of weak economic governance, as South Sudan "has not established its oil industry management system at present", with the new state "lacking consistency in its oil industry" with regards to its legal framework (Yang, 2012, p.90).

Despite such concerns, however, Chinese analysts expressed optimism regarding China's ability to "safeguard Chinese oil interests in the region" (Li, 2011). It was asserted that South Sudan "needs Chinese cooperation to help develop its economy and help in the negotiations with Sudan" and, ultimately, stability would be in the interests of both Sudans because with the oil infrastructure located in the north and the active oil wells in the south, Sudan and South Sudan "must cooperate if they want to exploit their oil wealth" (Li, 2011).

It was stated that, the Chinese government had already begun to adapt its Sudan policy through "attaching equal importance to its relationships with north and south Sudan" (Yang, 2012, p.90). However, going further, Chinese scholars argued that whilst maintaining its overall strategy of implementing 'energy diplomacy' vis-à-vis the South Sudanese government as Beijing had with the Khartoum government previously, the scope of such diplomacy should be more 'flexible' (*linghuo* 灵活) towards establishing a wider array of relationships within the South Sudanese political space (Yang, 2012, p.31). It was argued that the key to ensuring China's ability to secure its oil interests in South Sudan was for China to win the 'trust' (*xinren* 信任) and 'support' (*zhichi* 支持) not only of the

¹⁷³ Interview, Shanghai Institutes for International Affairs (SIIA), Centre for West Asian and African Studies, 14 January 2013

ruling party and central government, but also of the South Sudanese people more broadly (Yang, 2012, p.31). Moreover, it was argued there was a need to establish mechanisms that would enable both CNPC and the Chinese government to “work together and solve diplomatic issues” in order to better protect Chinese oil interests in Sudan and South Sudan (Yang, 2012, p.31).

It is evident that such specific lesson learning was increasingly feeding directly into policy changes, as detailed in Chapter 4. CNPC had learnt the lesson regarding the problematic nature of a past engagement that had been conducted exclusively with the ruling NCP elites at the formal central state level in Khartoum. Not only did the company step up its engagement with South Sudan’s SPLM-led government following the announcement of the referendum results, but it also extended its ‘corporate diplomacy’ below the ruling elite level for the first time through courting the support of South Sudanese parliamentary groups representing local civil society in the lead up to independence.

Moreover, it is apparent that both the company and the Chinese government learnt the negative impact on Chinese long-term interests in Sudan as a result of an unquestioning support of the NCP during wartime Sudan as, for the first time within their South Sudan engagement, following the referendum CNPC and Chinese MFA representatives in Juba admitted to senior SPLM officials that “there had been mistakes in the past” in this regard.¹⁷⁴

The specific lesson that Southern secession and the new political environment within the new state could negatively impact on CNPC’s interests and the need for both the company and the Chinese government to more coherently and actively seek to safeguard those interests led to changes in policy practice. The enhanced diplomatic efforts of Liu Guijin, who was deployed by the Chinese government in December 2011 to both mediate in the ongoing oil impasse and assist CNPC in re-negotiating its contracts with the GoSS, gained the support of senior CPC Central Committee member Li Yuanchao who attended the signing ceremony of the new contracts in January 2012. According to one of the member of the CPC delegation, the witnessing of the contract signing by senior

¹⁷⁴ Interview, Government of the Republic of South Sudan, Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, Juba, South Sudan, 20 March 2012; Interview, Government of the Republic of South Sudan, Office of the President, Juba, South Sudan, 30 November 2011.

Chinese party members, government and CNPC officials indeed displayed a unified interest in investment protection in an increasingly unstable environment.¹⁷⁵

However, despite the eventual signing of new oil contracts between CNPC and the GoSS and the enhanced efforts of Chinese diplomats to encourage Juba and Khartoum to reach an oil agreement, Khartoum's continued confiscating of southern crude oil led the GoSS to shutdown its oil production operations in late January 2012, without consultation with the CNPC or its consortium companies in South Sudan. In contrast with the senior CPC delegations' positive perspective on the future development of Sino-South Sudanese relations upon returning to Beijing from Juba earlier in January, the CPC and the Chinese government more generally were said to be "shocked" at the way in which the situation deteriorated from mid-January leading to the shutdown of oil production, and ultimately Li Yuanchao was said to have "learnt we couldn't do anything" to prevent its eventuality.¹⁷⁶

In private, China's South Sudan Ambassador bemoaned the fact that despite two senior diplomatic trips to Juba, by the government's Special Envoy and the CPC delegation in November and January, respectively, South Sudan had still decided to shutdown its oil production.¹⁷⁷ Within this context, according to an informed Western official, Chinese diplomats had learnt that "they could now not operate in isolation" in the Sudans.¹⁷⁸ Indeed, it had been this realisation that led China's Special Envoy Liu Guijin to privately press for stronger efforts in the framework of a "division of labour" between the West and China to encourage a swift end to the current north-south impasse, with China's focus now being on pressuring Khartoum because "that is of course where [China] has more leverage".¹⁷⁹ As such, although Beijing's diplomatic efforts had failed to prevent the shutdown, its increased engagement in partnership with the West in support of the AU-led negotiations between the Sudans illustrated how China had begun to "redefine its role in the international community as a partner in helping to find a solution to outstanding oil issues" (Patey, 2014, p.232).

¹⁷⁵ Interview, Chinese Communist Party International Department (CPCID), London, 6 March 2013.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Interview, Dutch diplomat, Juba, South Sudan, 13 March 2012

¹⁷⁸ Interview, British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), London, UK, 2 February 2012.

¹⁷⁹ Interview, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, China, 25 June 2011

China's MFA diplomats were similarly unable to prevent the expulsion of the Petrodar consortium's CNPC head Liu Yingcai in February 2011. According to South Sudanese officials, the Chinese Ambassador and the Chinese political counsellor at the embassy in Juba insisted to South Sudan's Minister of Foreign Affairs that accusations against the CNPC manager were incorrect and registered complaints regarding Juba's public announcements criticising Chinese companies before conducting a thorough investigation to obtain evidence.¹⁸⁰ Although it is apparent that both Chinese diplomats and South Sudanese officials were able to "smoothen out bilateral ties" following the event,¹⁸¹ Liu's expulsion following the oil shutdown was certainly "a wakeup call" for both CNPC and the Chinese government, with both learning a lesson regarding the "abrupt and unpredictable pace" of South Sudanese politics and its specific impact on Chinese interests (Patey, 2014, p.232).

c) Crisis point 3: Inter-state conflict between the Sudans and the descent into civil war in South Sudan (January 2012-December 2013)

An enhanced phase of insecurity and heightened inter-state tensions between Sudan and South Sudan emerged from early 2012 that had a specific impact upon Chinese citizens and oil interests, firstly as a result of proxy-conflict with the kidnapping of 29 Sinohydro workers by the GoSS-supported SPLM-N rebels in Sudan in January and, secondly, with the SPLA's invasion of Heglig and the damage wrought on the CNPC-run oilfields there in April. These incidents also compounded concerns among Chinese embassy diplomats based in Juba regarding the stability of China's state-owned companies' investments and the safety of Chinese citizens operating in an increasingly fragile inter-state political environment.¹⁸² It was not only diplomats in Juba, but also diplomats in Chinese embassies in the broader region, such as those in Nairobi who increasingly sought to learn lessons from events in the Sudans in an effort to better seek to protect Chinese interests in Kenya.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Interview, South Sudanese Embassy in the PRC diplomat, Juba, South Sudan, 5 March 2012

¹⁸¹ Interview, Chinese Embassy in the Republic of South Sudan, Juba, South Sudan, 1 December 2012.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Interview, Chinese Embassy in Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya, 28 February 2012

Both incidents added to a growing anxiety among CNPC managers in Juba regarding the protection of the company's operations along the north-south border (Saferworld, 2012, p.7). Following the significant damage inflicted upon the CNPC-constructed oil infrastructure in Heglig that appeared to have been targeted during the fighting between the SAF and the SPLA, CNPC managers learnt that the company "was in a different situation" to the decade previously when, although in the midst of civil war, united Sudan was considered to generally have been "a friendly country towards Chinese investors and CNPC had been assisted by the [Sudanese] government".¹⁸⁴

Chinese scholars who had previously conducted research on behalf of the company in Sudan stated that, despite the fact that CNPC had commissioned reports into the potential security situation following southern secession, the company was "seriously shocked" by the deteriorating border instability and that, crucially, it "had not met such a large challenge before" in its overseas operations.¹⁸⁵ It was in this context that, as detailed in Chapter 4, CNPC increasingly began to adapt its prior investment approach vis-à-vis risk and a reliance on developing 'guanxi' 关系 ('relations') with ruling elites to protect its interests, for example through increasingly seeking protection for its operations from private security companies in South Sudan.¹⁸⁶

Within Chinese academic debates, it was suggested that the independence of South Sudan "hasn't effectively resolved the contradiction between Sudan and South Sudan" and the heightened tensions in the region had "brought new challenges to our country's overseas interests, which should be seriously considered in the implementation of our 'Going Out' strategy and the maintaining of China's overseas national interests" (Liu and Zhang, 2012).

There was growing evidence that China was learning, with the negative impact upon Chinese oil interests and citizens with South Sudan's oil production shutdown and heightened inter-state conflict during 2012, that deep investments within insecure and politically unstable environments were not

¹⁸⁴ Interview, Peking University, School for International Studies (SIS), Beijing, China, 27 August 2012

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Interview, Veteran Security Services (VSS), Juba, South Sudan, 11 May 2012

necessarily 'win-win', particularly on the Chinese side.¹⁸⁷ Chinese Africa scholars and diplomats within China's embassy in South Sudan argued that as a result of recent experience in the Sudans, China's foreign policy elite was in the thinking process of how to "upgrade its investment strategy" in emulation of Western multinationals, such as encouraging NOCs to invest in less unstable situations and to more effectively carry out investment environment assessments before committing to projects.¹⁸⁸

CNPC itself was also beginning to see that such environments were negatively impacting upon its profits as, following the oil shutdown in South Sudan and the attack on the Heglig oilfields, one senior CNPC manager suggested that, while the company was keen to maintain its interests in the Sudans, rather than seeking to further expand beyond its current investments in South Sudan, the company's sights were casting further towards either more profitable or more stable environments in Africa and other developing regions such as Central Asia.¹⁸⁹

Moreover, it was apparent that China's state-owned policy banks, particularly EXIM, were becoming increasingly risk averse where it came to the extension of substantial financial assistance within insecure and politically unstable environments. According to a researcher at the CPC's Party School in Beijing who conducted research in South Sudan following the shutdown and the Heglig invasion, Chinese investor confidence had been affected as the turbulent situation forced a reduction in the scale of investments to avoid high risks (Qian, 2013, p.32). Indeed, EXIM officials in Beijing contended that they "needed to know that security was in place" because it was "pointless to invest if the north and south were back at war".¹⁹⁰

As detailed in Chapter 4, in adopting a more risk averse strategy vis-à-vis the provision of loans to South Sudan, Beijing also developed a new discourse of conditionality within Chinese economic diplomacy linking economic assistance

¹⁸⁷ Interview, Zhejiang Normal University, Institute for West Asian and African Studies (IWAAS) researcher, Juba, South Sudan, 1 June 2012.

¹⁸⁸ Interview, Interview, Shanghai Institutes for International Affairs (SIIA), Centre for West Asian and African Studies, 14 January 2013.

¹⁸⁹ Interview, CNPC, Juba, South Sudan, 1 June 2012

¹⁹⁰ Interview, China EXIM Bank, Beijing, 28 August 2012

to stability within its engagement with the south. Indeed, regarding South Sudan's failed attempts to garner substantial economic assistance from China, particularly for an alternative oil pipeline, during Salva Kiir's trip to Beijing in April 2012, China's Special Envoy later recounted that, "we told President Kiir, we are very willing to help...but our experience tells us that if there is not a peaceful environment it will be very difficult to do" (Cited in: Martina, 2012).

Nevertheless, despite this evolving aversion to risk as evident in the behaviour of both CNPC and the Chinese government, as stated in Chapter 4, CNPC's long-established oil investments in both Sudans continued to be "strategically important" to China's broader energy security interests (Yang, 2012). In this context, it was increasingly argued within internal Chinese foreign policy discussions that China needed to further upgrade its 'Going Out' strategy in light of such challenges.

Indeed, it was argued that China needed to establish more effective "links between companies and the government's diplomatic programmes" and to develop deeper relations with African societies through the promotion of Chinese culture at the local level within host-countries (Lin, 2011). Moreover, Chinese scholars asserted that Chinese NOCs need to further seek the 'localisation' of their investment risk tactics, particularly through CSR initiatives and working more closely with local NGOs and civil society organisations on the ground in Africa (Lin, 2011). Some even argue that China might continue to "build its capacity for projecting military power" not in order to threaten the outside world, but to enable the Chinese government to better protect Chinese nationals overseas (Tao, J., 2012).

In the specific context of Sudan and South Sudan, it was perceived that enhanced mediation efforts within Chinese oil diplomacy with regards to the resolution of inter-state tensions would arguably provide "an invaluable experience" for China, "since most of China's overseas oil cooperation projects are located in turbulent countries or regions" (Tao, J., 2012).

As detailed in Chapter 3, from May 2012 Chinese government officials had stepped up Beijing's Sudan-South Sudan mediation efforts both at the AU and

the UN levels in closer cooperation with Western diplomats to support the final resolution of outstanding resource and territorial issues just as CNPC representatives became increasingly involved in providing technical advice that would lead to the oil fee agreement between Juba and Khartoum in August 2012. According to a senior CNPC manager in Juba, such enhanced efforts reflected a growing convergence of interests between the CNPC, the Chinese government and the international community regarding stability in the Sudans and averting economic collapse in both countries through a peace agreement.¹⁹¹

Chinese scholars assert that this specific lesson learning process in the Sudan case reflects a much broader trajectory of China's rise towards a global power status whereby, "as the largest trade and investment partner for many African countries", and in the context of globalisation and inter-dependence, China is subsequently increasingly affected by the local situations within those countries. As such, it is asserted that China's foreign policy making institutions have broadly learnt that China must now "have a closer eye on local developments" within African countries that could negatively effect its interests.¹⁹²

This lesson learning process was further compounded in the context of intra-state political violence that began to rapidly spread across South Sudan from mid-2013, when both Chinese company and foreign policy actors became increasingly concerned about the impact of protracted local violence on Chinese interests as the CNPC-run oilfields became the epicenter of the conflict between government troops and rebel factions.

This concern grew not only regarding the damage inflicted upon CNPC-run oil infrastructure, its effect on oil exports and, most importantly, Chinese workers in South Sudan, but additionally the potential reverberations and spillover effects that a descent into civil war in South Sudan may have throughout the broader region in northern and eastern Africa in which there is both established Chinese economic interests and citizens operating on the ground (He, 2014).

¹⁹¹ Interview, CNPC, Juba, South Sudan, 1 June 2012

¹⁹² Interview, Peking University, School for International Studies (SIS), Beijing, China, 27 August 2012.

As such, the deepened engagement of Chinese diplomats in seeking a ceasefire and long-term resolution to the current intra-state conflict, even after CNPC's oil workers and all but non-essential Chinese diplomatic staff had been evacuated from South Sudan, as detailed previously, reflects China's enhanced efforts to more assertively support the process of bringing about long-term peace and stability in the new nation in which China maintains vital economic interests.

5. 2. Towards an assertive foreign policy approach

The shift from China's 'non-involvement' regarding Sudanese conflicts in 2004 to an actively constructive conflict mediation diplomacy vis-à-vis the Darfur issue and Sudan-South Sudan tensions evolved in tandem with the progression of China's emergence on the global stage as the world's fastest growing economy. It was China's emerging self-perception as a growing global power in practice with expanding interests abroad that has resulted in many of the shifts that have been evident within China's Sudanese engagement.

In the context of the Darfur crisis, the international pressure on China that sparked debates regarding China's 'international responsibilities', as detailed previously, in many respects reflected wider domestic discussions regarding Chinese awareness of a conflicting global identity that was increasingly associating not just with the "developing country club" but also that of the "advanced countries"; with some arguing privately that China increasingly associating itself with the latter (ICG, 2008a, p.26, Note, 205).

However, it is argued here that throughout the period of change in China's foreign policy vis-à-vis the Darfur conflict and increasingly Sudan-South Sudan tensions between 2005-2011, China's diplomatic activism in resolving these conflicts was constrained throughout this period by two factors. Firstly, China sought to balance its emerging rise towards great power status with its preference for continuing to identify itself as a leading 'developing country'. Secondly, because the main goals of China's expansion and use of power resources continued to serve the narrow 'core interests' of protecting China's

national security and territorial integrity, the country's foreign strategy continued to be fundamentally defensive in nature (Chen and Cheng, 2013, p.23).

In this context, despite the significant adaptations to China's Sudanese diplomacy and efforts to enhance Beijing's involvement in the resolution of Sudan's multiple conflicts between 2005-2011, China's diplomacy remained predominantly reactive and defensive rather than proactive and assertive.

Indeed, in Sudan Beijing faced the challenge of continuing to deliver Chinese 'difference' in the African context. The notion of 'exceptionalism' is a term "distilling a normative modality of engagement" through which China has sought to structure its contemporary African relations such that although "they may remain asymmetrical in economic content, they should remain equal in terms of recognition of economic gains and political standing ('mutual respect' and 'equality')" (Alden and Large, 2011, pp.21-22). According to Alden and Large (2011), Chinese exceptionalism "accentuates a basic but fundamental difference in its relationship with the continent as compared to other actors" which is largely based on a historically informed shared identity with African states, specifically a shared history of colonialism and experience as a developing country (pp.21-22).

In the context of the ICC indictment of President al-Bashir in 2008, although in line with a desire to project China's credentials as a 'responsible power' Beijing did not take the lead in opposing the Western initiative, China simultaneously supported the AU's position in principle, and thus refrained from assuming a clear position on either side of the debate.

In addition, prior to the secession of South Sudan, Beijing sought to 'balance its relations' between the north, in order to reassure other African ruling elites of the continuation of China's 'non-interference' in the domestic affairs, and the south, which would also serve to reassure the international community, and the US government in particular that China intended to play a constructive role in southern Sudan's post-CPA development.¹⁹³

¹⁹³ Interview, China Institute for International Studies (CIIS), Department for Developing Countries Studies, Beijing, China, 6 January 2011

In essence, as a result of its 'dual identity' issues, China continued to resist a more 'agenda-setting' leading role within the international community in line with a 'global power' status due to continuity concerns relating to China's 'exceptionalist' rhetoric that Beijing's 'difference' in Africa as underpinned by a shared developing country identity. Such concerns have been seen to produce a risk adverse culture within China's foreign policy making establishment regarding deeper forms of engagement, which has simultaneously served to undermine Chinese influence on developing countries.

As detailed previously, Chinese diplomats were unable to prevent the shutdown of South Sudan's oil production and the worsening ties between Khartoum and Juba as Beijing continued to attempt to avoid taking sides with either state. As such, senior officials within the MFA's Department for West Asia and Africa in Beijing indicated to Western diplomats that whilst visiting the Sudans in his efforts to "enhance willingness on both sides to reach an agreement", the extent of the Special Envoy's influence on both sides and capacity to ensure a deal was reached should not be overstated.¹⁹⁴

China's expanding economic global power in the international arena over the past decade in many ways was not matched by China's 'soft power', and Chinese diplomats within the MFA continued to lack experience in the resolution of crises far from its own borders. A continued reluctance to "take the lead" on the global stage and ongoing suspicion of Western-imposed solutions to African problems, meant that Beijing continued to "hide its capacity" behind its support for regional solutions.¹⁹⁵ In reference to the Sudan's crisis, one Chinese academic stated, that Beijing was "channel support through multilateralism" as it is the UN and the AU "who have experience in these matters".¹⁹⁶

In addition, it has been China's narrowly defined interests within its foreign policy more broadly, as discussed previously, that hampered more significant changes in Chinese diplomacy throughout the 2005-2011 period. Although

¹⁹⁴ Interview, British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) official, Beijing, 29 August 2012

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Interview, Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS) Shanghai, 3 August 2012

Special Envoy Liu Guijin had attended the Darfur negotiations in Sirte in October 2007, in contrast to the earlier sessions in Abuja in 2004 when no Chinese diplomats had been in attendance, one senior UNPKO official stated that Liu “did not contribute during the discussions”, and Chinese diplomats have confirmed that it was the AU and the UN that took the lead in the mediation efforts.¹⁹⁷ During the Doha peace talks that began in February 2009, UN diplomats asserted that the Chinese representative did not approach the UN delegation within the UNSC at all with any initiatives with regards to the talks, and they opined that it was “surprising for a P5 [UNSC] member not to voice an opinion”.¹⁹⁸

Within this framework, during the period of adaptation in China’s Darfur diplomacy it was argued that that while the Chinese government was changing its calculus in light of international pressure and security threats, Beijing has shown itself “willing to play a stepped-up diplomatic role only to the extent that its immediate energy interests are not affected” (ICG, 2008a, p.31).

Moreover, leading US diplomats such as Special Envoy Princeton Lyman, who had worked closely with his Chinese counterparts in the context of Sudan and South Sudan tensions, opined that, “China needs to move beyond a narrow focus on oil issues in South Sudan and help tackle the countries’ larger political disputes with Sudan” (Cited in: *Chicago Tribune*, 2013).

On the other hand, it is argued here that, conversely, even when Chinese interests were seen by Chinese actors to be directly under threat, the scope and depth of Beijing’s role in the resolution of Sudanese conflict continued to be limited and Chinese diplomacy was generally proven to be risk averse. For example, at the time of Khartoum’s invasion of the disputed border region of Abyei in June 2011, Western academics and policymakers assumed that having already stepped up its diplomatic pressure on Khartoum in the Darfur context, China would even more actively utilize its diplomatic leverage to encourage Sudan to curb the fighting, particularly as its oil investments in the Abyei region could have been directly affected by the fighting (see Chapter 3).

¹⁹⁷ Interview, United Nations Department for Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO), New York, U.S., 2 November 2011

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

However, as detailed in Chapter 3, during the interim period between the southern referendum and independence, the Chinese government was reluctant to become involved in the resolution of 'internal political' issues related to the border prior to the formal independence of the south. Indeed, a Sudanese Ambassador recalled that the US envoy was actively involved in the reconciliation process and solving problems, whereas "the Chinese never came up with proposals for solving the Abyei problem" and Beijing's diplomats supported outcomes reached by others and merely providing "follow up" rhetorical support for such initiatives (Alsharif, 2013).

To one British diplomat based in Khartoum, China's hands-off approach vis-à-vis evolving the dispute in Abyei indicated that China's active engagement over securing Sudan's agreement to the UN-AU Hybrid Mission in Darfur was merely "a product of its own time" in the context of the Beijing Olympics.¹⁹⁹ In addition, although Chinese diplomats again became increasingly involved through 'shuttle diplomacy' between Sudan and South Sudan in encouraging both sides to reach an agreement on outstanding differences after independence, it is apparent that Chinese actors continued to lack a deeply engaged role at the negotiations. According to a senior advisor at the AUHIP negotiations, although Chinese representatives attended the talks and were described as "discreet, straightforward, direct and helpful", they "were not exactly proactive".²⁰⁰ However, this case study analysis has revealed that from 2012, China began to chart a new direction towards an increasingly assertive foreign policy approach focused on deepening its contribution towards peace and security in the Sudans and the broader region.

This development fits within the "broader parameters of a more activist Chinese foreign policy" which has been "accentuated under the new presidency of Xi Jinping," with China's greater provision of global public goods becoming "an article of faith in the Chinese policymaking community" (Alden, 2014, p.5). In 2013 China's new President informed a meeting of African leaders in South

¹⁹⁹ Telephone interview, British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). Khartoum, Sudan, 18 January 2012

²⁰⁰ Sudan expert and advisor at the AUHIP negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan, email to author, 20 July 2012

Africa that China's 'Going Out' strategy had been officially upgraded in the sense that, whilst "continuing to encourage Chinese enterprises to expand their investments in Africa", China will also "actively participate in the mediation and solving of hotspot issues in Africa" (Cited in: Yang, 2013).

In the specific context of the Sudans, this development has been in response to the direct learning of the lesson that Chinese interests on the ground in South Sudan would continue to be negatively affected in the long-term as long as protracted violent conflict there persisted and threatened broader regional stability.²⁰¹ Chinese Africa scholars within government-associated think tanks assert that the learning of this lesson in Sudan in turn informed this broader shift in China's Africa policy when China's leadership, for the first time, included China's intention to become more involved in African peace and security initiatives at the FOCAC convention in July 2012.²⁰²

As China stepped up and deepened its mediation role in South Sudan from late 2013, an article in the state-run newspaper, the *People's Daily*, argued that Chinese diplomats were actively taking part in the negotiations to resolve an issue with regional and global implications "because China is committed to shouldering more international responsibilities and protecting its interests abroad" (Cited in: He, 2014).

China's direct mediation in the South Sudanese conflict at this time was perceived by Beijing to mark a 'new chapter' in China's foreign policy, with its Special Envoy Zhong Jianhua displaying a new diplomatic confidence and stating that "the need to expand China's foreign policy footprint and protect its interests are both driving China's more assertive presence in South Sudan" (Cited in: Martina, 2014). Western diplomats also noted a deeper level of engagement by China in the international diplomatic efforts to resolve the South Sudan conflict, stating, "it's the first time China has been so proactive in addressing a foreign crisis".²⁰³

²⁰¹ Interview, Shanghai Institutes for International Affairs (SIIA), Centre for West Asian and African Studies, 14 January 2013

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Cited in: Ibid.

It is therefore apparent that China's foreign policy elite has been learning that the protection of Chinese interests and citizens in Sudan and South Sudan could not be achieved through short-term defensive and reactive measures on the ground and reliance on limited host state capacity, only through a longer-term, deeper engagement in peace and security initiatives in the broader region.

5. 3. Chapter conclusions

This chapter has revealed the process whereby China's foreign policy implementing actors have learnt the specific lesson that local conflict and political dynamics in Sudan and South Sudan have had specific negative impacts on both China's broader political interests in terms of its international image and also the safety and security of Chinese oil interests and citizens on the ground. In turn, China learnt that its reliance on conducting relationships primarily with ruling elites in the governments of both Sudan and, latterly, South Sudan not only has failed to result in the protection of Chinese interests but moreover, could further damage them. In seeking to protect Beijing's political and economic interests over the trajectory of the engagement, Chinese foreign policy actors subsequently learnt the limitations of a 'non-interference' policy in practice.

Chinese foreign policy institutions firstly learnt the lesson that the local situation in Sudan could negatively impact on China's broader political image as China's relations with the Khartoum government began to intersect with Sino-US ties, and the lesson was represented at the 'crisis point' of Washington's call on China to become a 'responsible stakeholder' in Darfur in late 2005. In the context of initial international pressure, it is apparent within internal debates in Beijing that a lesson had been learnt that its bilateral ties with the US could not be disentangled from difficult third country issues such as Darfur and there emerged an acceptance of the relative importance of Sino-US ties over its increasingly consequential Sudan relationship.

Chinese foreign policy actors also increasingly began to question its ties with pariah regimes such as Sudan in the context of broader African frustration with

Khartoum's lack of commitment to alleviate the Darfur conflict. Whilst learning the lesson that China's Sudan engagement could have wider political implications for China's image interests in Africa itself, Chinese actors also learnt the limitations of a policy of non-interference when it undermined expectations of other African nations that Beijing could contribute to stabilisation in Darfur. It was the learning of these lessons that led to further adaptations to China's Darfur diplomacy towards greater cooperation with the international community more broadly through actively encouraging Sudan to accept an AU-UN Hybrid peacekeeping mission in Darfur between mid 2006 and mid 2007.

In the context of the 'crisis point' of a Sudan Divestment Campaign in the US during 2006 that targeted CNPC's investments in Sudan amid the emerging reality that the company had sold the majority of its Sudanese crude oil on the international market rather than ensuring its export to China, China's implementing institutions began to learn that Chinese NOCs could act against the country's broader image and energy security national interests. It was in response to learning this lesson that Beijing foreign policy-making institutions took initial steps to attempt to better regulate CNPC's behaviour abroad and improve China's international energy security cooperation.

It was found that it was the US government's official backing of the INGO 'Genocide Campaign' in mid-2007 that provided a 'tipping point' for China which learnt that the Campaign had caused severe damage to the branding of the Beijing Olympics that had become a symbol of national pride in China. Moreover, as its foreign policy elite sought to reduce the broader image costs of its role in Sudan, it also learnt the limitations of a policy of non-interference in practice if it limited China to 'non-involvement' and prevented Beijing from responding to protect its image interests. Indeed, the learning of this lesson led to further adaptations of China's Darfur diplomacy to more publicly call on Sudan to accept the AU-UN Hybrid peacekeeping mission and the creation of a Chinese Special Envoy for African Affairs in mid-2007 with Beijing's enhanced 'public diplomacy' vis-à-vis Darfur thereafter.

In the context of the regional intensification of the Darfur conflict and a spate of attacks on CNPC's oil installations and the kidnapping its workers between

2006 and 2008, domestic debates in China were sparked in response to this 'crisis point' regarding the need for China to better protect its interests abroad as it was increasingly learning that local conflict dynamics could negatively impact on Chinese investments and citizens. China's foreign policy elite and CNPC representatives learnt that its hitherto reliance on the host state to protect its interests was insufficient, and moreover, that domestic violence in Sudan further reduced China's ability to maintain a policy of non-interference in practice.

It has been argued here that these lessons were compounded by the perceived 'crisis' represented by southern secession. China became increasingly concerned that emerging US-Sino energy competition in the new state of South Sudan would negatively effect CNPC's interests. With CNPC's long-term investments in this new state being put in question, Chinese debates reflected a process of lesson learning regarding the limitations of China's hitherto exclusive ties with the NCP elites in Khartoum and an elite-level engagement in general as CNPC sought to engage below this level in South Sudan and alter local community level perceptions of the company's historical role.

Despite enhanced and successful efforts by Chinese government and party diplomats to support CNPC's efforts to maintain CNPC's investments in South Sudan, following the shutdown of southern oil production in 2012, China again learnt the lesson of a policy of non-interference as its diplomatic efforts had not been enough to prevent such an outcome damaging Chinese energy security interests, as the policy prevented Beijing assuming a more active political stance. It was in the context of learning this lesson that Chinese diplomats sought deeper cooperation with their Western counterparts through a 'division of labour' vis-à-vis the Sudans.

In addition, it was in response to the 'crisis point' represented by the deteriorating inter-state border conflict between Sudan and South Sudan during 2012, South Sudan's descent towards civil war in late 2013, and the subsequent impact on the security of Chinese investments and citizens on the ground, that has sparked heated internal debates regarding the 'upgrading' of China's 'Going Out' strategy more generally. China's foreign policy institutions

have increasingly asserted that there is a need for greater coordination between Chinese NOCs and the government in their diplomatic efforts to protect oil investments in Africa, and the further 'localisation' of NOC's investment risk mitigation tactics below the elite level.

Crucially, it was argued that there was a need for the 'Going Out' strategy to include enhanced conflict mediation efforts to contribute to the creation of stable African environments in which economic engagements can be truly 'win-win' for both Africa *and* China. This change in foreign policy behaviour has been in response to the learning of the specific lesson that Chinese interests on the ground in South Sudan would continue to be negatively affected in the long-term as long as protracted violent conflict there persisted and threatened broader regional stability.

Moreover, Chinese institutions have learnt that the protection of Chinese citizens and investments in Sudan and South Sudan can not be achieved through short-term defensive measures and relying on the host state, but only through a longer-term engagement in peace and security initiatives in the region. It has been argued here that it is the learning of this lesson which has begun to drive a more assertive foreign policy approach vis-à-vis the resolution of Sudanese conflicts from 2012, which contrasts with a more limited defensive and reactive approach between 2005-2011.

During that period, Beijing's activism was constrained by both the tension of projecting a 'dual identity' in Sudan and limitations resulting from China's narrowly defined core interests. As such, the beginning of a more assertive approach from 2012 represents a new acceptance of China's expanding interests abroad, commensurate with its role as a growing global economy. Moreover, it illustrates that this expanding global presence is increasingly leading China to have a direct interest in the peace and security of countries such as the Sudans, where protracted violent conflict poses a threat to Chinese investments and citizens on the ground.

In seeking to provide further depth to an explanation of this recent shift in the Sudanese case, the next chapter will argue that learning the need for a more

assertive approach vis-à-vis conflict resolution in the Sudans from 2012 has been underpinned by a process of 'broader' lesson learning about Sudanese conflicts that have been gradually learnt along the trajectory of China's engagement, particularly after 2005.

As will be detailed in the following chapter, China's traditional assumptions regarding African conflicts more generally have been challenged in the context of the Sudans, and driven China's foreign policy institutions to realise that a more nuanced peace and security role in the Sudans was needed.

CHAPTER 6. BROADER LESSON LEARNING AND CHINA'S EVOLVING PEACE AND SECURITY ROLE IN THE SUDANS

This chapter seeks to draw out a set of broader lessons that have been gradually learnt by Chinese foreign policy institutions along the trajectory of its deepening engagement in Sudan. While specific lesson learning was shown in the previous chapter to have occurred in response to 'crisis points' and their impact specifically on Chinese interests, it is argued that broader lesson learning is likely to occur as a result of the accumulation of experience over time.

In particular, this chapter aims to assess the process whereby China's understanding of the nature and dynamics of African conflict more broadly since the 1990s, as detailed in Chapter 1, has been challenged in the Sudanese context. Moreover, it will detail how such broader lesson learning has gradually led China to reassess the nature of its own role in fragile contexts such as the Sudans, particularly regarding Beijing's contribution towards peace and security initiatives.

It will be argued that China has learnt lessons regarding the lack of capacity or will of the central Sudanese government to prevent and resolve conflicts, that Sudanese conflicts have not been confined to the 'internal' realm in Sudan, and that China shares interests with the US and wider international community regarding stability in the Sudans and the broader region. Subsequently, it will be argued that the learning of these lessons firstly buttressed ongoing internal Chinese debates regarding the utility of the non-interference principle and position on external intervention in practice which, in turn, brought about China's tentative 'constructive mediation' role between 2005 and 2011 in the context of both the Darfur conflict and Sudan-South Sudan tensions during the early stages of southern independence.

Secondly, it is argued that these lessons regarding the nature of Sudanese conflicts were further compounded as Sudan-South Sudan disputes continued into 2012 and violent conflict escalated in South Sudan in late 2013. In this context, China has gradually learnt that a more assertive and long-term Chinese contribution to peace and security initiatives were required to assist regional and international efforts to bring about long-term stability in the Sudans and the broader region. Crucially, this has begun to involve an emerging Chinese acceptance of and support for more coercive external measures seeking to bring about stability on the ground in the Sudans.

6.1. Broader lessons: learning about Sudanese conflicts

6.1.1. The role of the Sudanese state and the issue of governance

As it has been detailed in Chapter 1, China's perception of local political conditions and conflict in Africa has traditionally been based on the assumption of a 'traditional' Weberian state form and within a state-centric foreign policy framework. Beijing has understood the internal dynamics and causes of conflict within the peripheral regions of the Sudanese state such as Darfur and southern Sudan to be rooted in ethnic and tribal differences or poverty that have been triggered by non-political and non-state factors such as environmental degradation (see Chapter 1). As such, in accordance with the doctrines of respect for state sovereignty and non-interference, the Chinese analysis of Sudanese conflict officially shuns attributing its causes to the role of weak central state governance and the political dynamics of disparity between Khartoum and its peripheral regions.

It was discussed in Chapter 1 that the Sudanese state possesses juridical statehood but in fact lacks 'empirical sovereignty' in the sense that the central state in Khartoum has suffered from an underlying weakness of central rule, including an inability to meet basic socio-economic needs of its citizenry and ensure national security. Indeed, in practice, the Sudanese state has frequently lost territorial control of its peripheries, particularly in the south and Darfur, and the central state itself has been "too weak to prevent chronic armed conflict,

posing a danger both to Chinese operations and to regional instability” (Bradbury, 2012, p.375).

Moreover, China’s commercial role had been inserted into the nexus between resource extraction and civil war in Sudan, whereby oil has been central to the entrenchment of the ruling elite in Khartoum and the state has been blamed for perpetuating human rights abuses in the oil-rich regions, leading an already conflict-prone nation to further strife (Jok, 2007, pp.185-7).

It is contended here that along the trajectory of China’s Sudan engagement, Chinese actors increasingly began to learn the role that weak governance and the lack of central state capacity or will to provide for its own citizens has played in perpetuating cycles of center-periphery conflict in Sudan, even though China’s official policy rhetoric continues to oppose the use of the term ‘good governance’ in the West as a form of ‘aid conditionality’ to impose western liberal democracy on developing states.

At a conference hosted by the China’s MFA think-tank, the CIIS, on peace and development in Darfur in Beijing in June 2007, Chinese government officials and scholars reiterated that China attributed the conflict in Darfur to poverty, resource scarcity and the effects of global warming, and urged the international community to avoid interfering in Darfur and not to overlook the Sudanese government’s efforts to address the conflict through its acceptance of UNSC Resolution 1769. However, it was argued that “all parties” must improve the security situation so that some semblance of governance can be established on the ground as, significantly, it was acknowledged that “not even a minimal level of governance” currently existed in Darfur.²⁰⁴

Due to Beijing’s non-interference policy and position that each state should follow its own path to development and that China would not impose its own development ‘model’ onto Sudan, China was prevented from directly addressing the issue of Khartoum’s economic mismanagement. Nevertheless, from 2007 Beijing started to publicly push the Sudanese government as well as

²⁰⁴ Interview, China Institute for International Studies (CIIS), Department for Developing Countries Studies, Beijing, China, 6 January 2011

the international community to work for development in the Darfur region, although refraining from proposing concrete policies or funding initiatives in this regard. Such advice reflected the Chinese perspective that economic development would address poverty and provide the key to promoting peace in Sudan (Zhang and Zhang, 2013, p.20).

China's Ambassador to Sudan, Luo Xiaoguang, stated that Chinese development and humanitarian assistance "will provide much for the local people [in Darfur] and boost their living conditions" (Cited in: *Xinhua*, 2013). As such, these official statements acknowledge the need for the "redistribution of resources away from the centre and towards the peripheries" which had hitherto to been neglected by the Sudanese central state (Regler, 2013, p.31).

The clearest representation of this shift in understanding of the role of the state in the Darfur conflict occurred during President Hu Jintao's trip to Khartoum in February 2007 where he relayed China's 'four-point plan' on the resolution of the conflict. While the Chinese leader continued to reaffirm the principle of respect for Sudanese sovereignty in the resolution of the conflict, the fourth new principle appeared to contradict the former, as Hu's use of language stressing the "imperative" to improve the lives of people at the *local* level reflected a dramatic shift from China's predominantly state-directed discourse, in a way that indicated acknowledgement of the absence of a positive state role in improving the humanitarian situation.

Certainly, in 2005 China had endorsed the principle of the 'responsibility to protect' (R2P), a term that was introduced within the UN in 2001 to provide a framework for legitimising the use of force against states to protect populations from egregious abuse, as Beijing sought to avoid some of the image costs of obstructing the UN effort to prevent and respond to atrocities (Teitt, 2008, p.303). However, as Huang argues, Hu Jintao's statement vis-à-vis Darfur "was as close as a Chinese leader has come publicly to supporting the emerging notion that governments have a responsibility to protect their citizens from harm" (Huang, 2007, p.837).

A further shift in China's position occurred in 2012 when it voted in favour of UNSC Resolution 2035, which had expressed UNSC regret that actors affiliated with the GoS continued to perpetrate violence against civilians in Darfur. As such, it can certainly be asserted that China's vote of approval for this resolution, "formally acknowledges the dimension of state sponsored violence in Darfur conflict" (Bradbury, 2012, p.382).

While at the time of South Sudan's referendum on secession and its final independence in July 2011 Chinese scholars attributed the primary cause of the division of Sudan to the role of the US (see section 6. 1. 3., below), it is apparent that in the post-independence era, the Chinese assessment did also begin to acknowledge historic role of central government policies that have induced a desire in the south to secede from the north. Indeed, it was argued, that in addition to external factors such as the role of the US, the north-south separation represented the "main symbol of the failure of Sudan's nation-state building" (Wang, 2012, p.67).

Placing an ethno-religious conflict within the broader historical Sudanese context, it was argued that since gaining independence from Anglo-Egyptian rule in 1956, successive central governments have continued patterns of "racial discrimination" and suppression of the Christian south through "forcing" upon it an alien Islamic culture whilst the economy was skewed towards the north, with development of the south constituting less than 10% of the national budget (Wang, 2012, p.75). Following the CPA in 2005, it was argued that both sides were unable to reach a compromise on a shared vision north and south on the 'peace-building process' of a unified post-conflict Sudan (Zhu, 2012, p.76).

Moreover, some even acknowledged the role of resource extraction and the distribution of oil wealth as a factor in ongoing north-south disputes, as it was asserted that, "meeting the key challenge of maintaining peace and stability depends on reasonable resource allocation to various oil interests" (Zeng, 2011).

In private, Chinese diplomats issued more direct criticism of President al-Bashir and the ruling NPC, suggesting that during the six-year interim period following

the CPA in 2005, a period when the south would decide on whether to separate depending on the extent of reform, the Khartoum government “failed to make unity attractive” to the south through truly implementing the power and wealth sharing agreements through ensuring political inclusion and economic development for the south.²⁰⁵ It is apparent that during the interim period, Chinese diplomats had begun to be concerned that the situation in Darfur would “head in the same direction as the south” as Darfur groups were similarly not being provided with the political and economic incentives to commit to peace within a unified Sudan.²⁰⁶

6.1.2. Viewing conflict holistically

It is argued here that another shift in China’s perception of Sudanese conflicts occurred from 2007, with an increasing recognition that civil unrest and protracted violence in Darfur, which spread across Sudan’s borders into Chad, had become ‘trans-national’ and threatened broader regional stability. This learning process was further compounded in the context of violent conflict that erupted in South Sudan in 2013, which threatened to destabilise the broader region. These emerging realities challenged China’s traditional understanding that Sudanese conflicts, and African conflicts more generally, represented the ‘internal affairs’ of a sovereign state.

Such concerns were reflected in the rhetoric of Beijing’s diplomats who increasingly asserted that, “the appropriate solution to the Darfur issue not only concerns the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur, but also bears on the peace process between the north and south Sudan, neighbouring Chad, and the security and stability of Central Africa and the sub-region as a whole” (Wang, 2006). According to MFA think tank researchers in Beijing, the Chinese government’s interest in stability in Sudan here did not emanate exclusively from concerns about resource security because, “although oil is important, it is not the only important thing to China”, as a “key interest is also regional stability” and the potential impact that deteriorating instability in the Sudans may

²⁰⁵ Interview, CPCID diplomat, London, 6 March 2013

²⁰⁶ Telephone interview, United Nations Special Envoy to Sudan (2006-2008), 4 October 2011; Interview, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, China, 25 June 2011

have on China's broader economic interests and political ties in east, central and north Africa more broadly.²⁰⁷

Such a realisation of the increasingly regional dynamics of the Darfur conflict translated into concrete policy actions as, in 2007 during early consultations with France, Beijing had supported a French resolution on Chad calling for the dispatch of mainly European peacekeepers under the auspices of Chapter VII, a move which Holslag highlights as significant, as China approved the "close liaising" with the Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), where earlier it had objected to the development of links between UNAMID and UN missions (Holslag, 2009, p.31). One Chinese diplomat confirmed how this had reflected Beijing's evolved understanding of the urgency to address the regional dynamics of the Darfur conflict and insecurity in Africa more generally: "our support for the resolution on Chad shows that we are prepared to cooperate to tackle security issues at a regional level and that our awareness on the increasing complexity of violent conflicts in Africa grows" (Cited in: Holslag, 2009, p.31).

In addition to Beijing's enhanced coordination with the West, it is apparent that China's position in relation to the Darfur peace negotiations became increasingly aligned with that of the AU as a result of Beijing's shared view on the need for economic development in Sudan in order to promote Sudanese unity and regional stability. In 2007, the AU Special Envoy affirmed that should Africa's largest country split, "it would send shock waves through the neighbouring countries and mean a disaster for the whole continent" (Cited in: Embassy of the PRC in Libya, 2007). According to the UN humanitarian coordinator for Sudan who worked closely with China's senior Africa diplomats, Beijing was increasingly concerned about the potential for Darfur to go in the same direction as the South in its drive towards separation and this provided a further source of inspiration for China in terms of its engagement in resolving the Darfur issue.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Interview, China Institute for International Studies (CIIS), Department for Developing Countries Studies, Beijing, China, 6 January 2011

²⁰⁸ Telephone interview, United Nations Special Envoy to Sudan (2006-2008) 4 October 2011.

Moreover, by early 2008 Chinese officials had become rapidly worried about increasing instability in Darfur and its potential to negatively effect both the fragile peace in the south and also wider stability in a region in which Chinese economic interests and citizens are embedded. As such, in this context it also was deemed beneficial to establish a diplomatic presence through a consulate on the ground in southern Sudan in 2008 in an effort to provide potential protection of Chinese interests in this context of inter-related insecurity.²⁰⁹

It is argued here that this lesson learning process was further compounded in the context of growing instability following South Sudan's independence. Indeed, Chinese scholars assert that internal perceptions in China regarding the potential implications of South Sudan's descent towards civil war in late 2013 for the broader region of East and North Africa provided a new impetus for China's deepened involvement in supporting regional attempts to bring about a ceasefire in South Sudan (He, 2014).

6.1.3. The role of the US and mutual interests with China

As stated in Chapter 1, in accordance with a Marxist historical-materialist theoretical perspective, Chinese scholars and policymakers alike have also traditionally viewed African civil unrest and instability to be caused by external factors, from the legacy of arbitrarily drawn borders of the colonial era, to US efforts to promote democracy in Africa during and after the Cold War. Chapter 2 detailed how early on in the Darfur crisis in 2004, Beijing had strongly opposed external western intervention in the conflict and preferred primarily local 'African solutions', which was in a large part based on Chinese opposition to what was viewed as a politically motivated goal of the US to utilise the vehicle of a UN force to bring about regime change or use excessive force against the government in Khartoum.

That Beijing had begun to initiate initial adaptations towards cooperation with the West vis-à-vis a UN peacekeeping force and emerging behind-the-scenes efforts to encourage Khartoum to accept the mission in support of the AU from mid-2006, notably prior to the 'crisis point' represented by the 'Genocide

²⁰⁹ Interview, Chinese Embassy in the Republic of South Sudan, Juba, South Sudan, 1 December 2012

Olympics' campaign of 2007, it is argued here was in part the result of a lesson learning process by China's foreign policy elite regarding the US and the wider international community's goals in Sudan and the perception of increasingly shared interest of respecting Sudanese sovereignty.

From mid-2006 China's position was "in line with the approaches of other permanent members of the Security Council", as the majority of the international community saw an external military intervention without political approval from the state to have the potential to cause further chaos in the region (Holslag, 2007, p.3). As revealed within the statement of the UNSC mission to Sudan in June 2006, the delegates conveyed the message that the Council unanimously wanted a "stable and prosperous Sudan" and reiterated its "respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Sudan" (UNSC, 2006b, p.9).

Moreover, it became increasingly apparent to Beijing by early 2007 that the US government was not planning military intervention to end the fighting in Darfur. Indeed, in February it was asserted during a US Senate committee hearing that while the US was pressing for progress on the Darfur crisis, it was focusing on diplomatic means. The US Assistant Secretary of Defence for African Affairs, Theresa Whelan, stated that, "we are not considering doing something militarily" and the focus of the US Special Envoy, Andrew Natsios was on "getting the parties back to the table" (Cited in: *Sudan Tribune*, 2007).

Following the ICC's issuing of an arrest warrant, Chinese diplomats again learnt that the US was not directly seeking regime change in Sudan, which accorded with China's perception that "the change of government is decided by their own people, by their own political structure", rather than imposed externally.²¹⁰ It is apparent that US diplomats reassured their Chinese counterparts that Beijing's concern that the issuance of an arrest warrant for President Bashir could have profound destabilising effects were well founded. Indeed, US diplomats agreed that combined with the end of the rainy season and renewal of rebel activity on both sides of the Chad-Sudan border, the ICC indictment "could set off a chain reaction of violence and instability" in the region (Cited in: *The Guardian*, 2010).

²¹⁰ Interview, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, China, 25 June 2011

In this context, it is apparent that China's Special Envoy Liu Guijin began to learn that Sino-US perspectives on Sudan were increasingly in line, "holding similar views on the reasons of the crisis and way for resolving the crisis... a military solution on the ground will not solve north-south issues and the same with regard to Darfur".²¹¹ China's leading diplomats on the Darfur issue asserted that it was the shared interests of China and the US in peace and stability in Sudan "that provides solid ground for us to work together", and it was on this basis that the Chinese Special Envoy was able to "established good working relations with his Western counterparts".²¹²

As detailed previously, Chinese scholars and officials had in the mainstream attributed southern secession in July 2011 to the US government's historic support for the SPLM and its interests in pursuing energy opportunities in a new southern state; interests that were seen to be inimical to China's preference for the status-quo. However, in the post-independence era and the context of ongoing Sudan-South Sudan tensions, Chinese diplomats continued to learn that Beijing and Washington shared a mutual interest in stability in the region, and it was this perception of shared interests that led to enhanced cooperation between China and the international community vis-à-vis north-south issues.

It is apparent that in July 2011, days after South Sudan gained its independence, Chinese scholars attending a workshop at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) on the broad issue of cooperation between China and the US in Africa, Sudan and South Sudan and security came out as the predominant areas in which cooperation would be sought (He, 2014). Indeed, this was the result of growing coordination of perspectives on security issues in the Sudans.

As President al-Bashir began to face internal threats to his rule both within the ruling NCP elite and the wider population in 2011 as the loss of southern oil began to impact on the Sudanese economy, Chinese diplomats and their US counterparts concurred that the overthrow of the relatively moderate al-Bashir by the more radical Islamist wing of the NCP would be more destabilising for the

²¹¹ Interview, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, China, 25 June 2011

²¹² Ibid.

region.²¹³ Moreover, Chinese diplomats within the Chinese embassy in South Sudan began to assert that, rather than upholding an ‘all-weather’ friendship with the GoSS, Washington was prepared to resort to strong criticism of ruling SPLM in Juba when it pursued more bellicose tactics, as with its army’s occupation of Heglig in April 2012, as such acts of retaliation against the north threatened to undermine regional stability.²¹⁴

6. 2. New contours of the ‘going out’ strategy: China’s evolving peace and security role in the Sudans

It is argued here that China’s broader lesson learning about the nature of Sudanese conflicts along the trajectory of its deepening engagement after 2005, as detailed above, has contributed to the gradual evolution of China’s peace and security role in the Sudans. The learning of these lessons firstly buttressed ongoing internal Chinese debates regarding the utility of the non-interference principle and position on external intervention in practice, which, in turn, brought about China’s tentative ‘constructive mediation’ role between 2005 and 2011 in the context of both the Darfur conflict and Sudan-South Sudan tensions during the early stages of southern independence.

These lessons regarding the protracted nature of Sudanese conflicts, their broader regional implications, and China’s mutual interests with the international community in seeking their long-term resolution were compounded as Sudan-South Sudan disputes continued into 2012 and violent conflict escalated in South Sudan in late 2013. In this context, China has gradually learnt that a more assertive and long-term Chinese contribution to peace and security initiatives were required in assisting regional and international efforts to bring about long-term stability in the Sudans and the broader region. Crucially, this has begun to involve an emerging Chinese acceptance of and support for more coercive external measures seeking to bring about stability on the ground in the Sudans.

²¹³ Interview, Chinese Embassy in the Republic of South Sudan, Juba, South Sudan, 28 May 2012

²¹⁴ Ibid.

6. 2. 1. Intervention with Chinese characteristics and China's 'constructive mediation' role (2005-2011)

It is certainly important to frame China's evolving role in Sudanese peace and security within a broader framework of change in Beijing's position towards international intervention and peacekeeping, which has been underway since the 1990s. Indeed, Carlson (2004) has documented how a subtle yet significant shift in the Chinese stance on these issues has been taking place over the past fifteen years whereby, in the context of grave humanitarian crises, Beijing has acquiesced to various "Western"-sponsored UN operations in accordance with an evolving set of four official guidelines that assert that legitimate intervention must proceed with respect for sovereignty, UN authorisation, the invitation of the target state, and force is only to be used when all other options have proven ineffective (p.10).

However, a notable distinction in China's evolving role in UN peacekeeping in the Darfur context was Beijing's active efforts to convince the Khartoum government to accept a hybrid AU-UN peacekeeping force. Indeed, although China abstained and did not vote directly in favour of UNSC Resolution 1706 in August 2006 as Khartoum had rejected the notion as "violating its sovereignty", from this point Beijing's diplomats increasingly utilised China's influence to persuade Khartoum to shift its position vis-à-vis the UN. It is argued here that it was not only international pressure on China to influence Sudan in this manner from 2005, but also Chinese learning about the nature of the conflict and evolving perceptions regarding China's role therein that drove Beijing to take on a more direct role.

It has been argued elsewhere that "long before the Darfur-related heat became anything like scorching" as in the context of the 'Genocide Olympics', China had "become convinced of the need to pressure Khartoum for a solution to the Darfur crisis" (Evans and Steinburg, 2007). Indeed, this had been in response to a realisation among China's foreign policy institutions that the central government in Khartoum lacked the capacity or will to resolve a conflict that was increasingly spilling over into neighbouring countries and threatening to undercut the CPA that ended decades of war in southern Sudan, and that

Beijing shared its interests with the international community in stability in the region, as detailed previously.

Recognising the need for a more involved Chinese role in the resolution of Sudanese conflicts during this period buttressed ongoing internal debates within among China's foreign policy elite, which were outlined throughout Chapter 5, regarding the limitations a policy of non-interference and China's traditional position on external intervention in practice.

According to China's interpretation, the traditional meaning of non-interference has been "reciprocal non-intervention in each others' internal affairs" (Wang, 2008a, p.13). However, not only did Chinese scholars begin to acknowledge that 'non-interference' should not be seen as synonymous with 'non-involvement', as detailed in Chapter 5, they also began to assert a conceptual distinction between two terms that could be used for 'interference' or 'intervention' in China: *ganshe* (干涉) which strictly means 'to meddle' and *ganyu* (干预) which has more positive connotations with becoming involved in a 'constructive' (*jianshexing* 建设性) way.²¹⁵ Within this framework, it was argued that, in the case of Darfur, China was intervening to use its 'influence' *ganyu* (干预) without 'interfering' *ganshe* (干涉) in Sudanese domestic affairs, as dialogue provided the basis for Beijing's diplomatic attempt to assist in finding a solution that was "agreeable to all parties" (Li, 2007, p.77).

In 2008 it was argued by Wang Suolao (2008) that China's new diplomacy in relation to the Darfur issue suggested that a new global content had been added to the non-interference principle *in practice*, which meant that it had become a "dynamic, holistic, flexible and active" principle (p.255). In light of Beijing's support for external humanitarian intervention in Sudan, and wider global crises requiring Chinese involvement, 'globalists' or liberal internationalists within Chinese academia began promoting the construction of a new concept to capture the adaptations to China's non-interference principle in practice, whilst maintaining Chinese difference from Western approaches to resolving humanitarian crises.

²¹⁵ Interview, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, China, 18 November 2010; Interview, Peking University, School for International Studies, Beijing, China, 5 May 2011.

Wang Yizhou (2008) proposed the concept of “creative intervention” (*chuangzaoxing jieru* 创造性介入), in contrast to the Western “humanitarian intervention” approach, which was more akin to “supervising” or facilitating, and creating opportunities for conflict resolution, such as bringing conflicting parties to the negotiating table, through diplomatic means (p.20). However, Pang Zhongying suggested a more cautionary interpretation through proposing the concept of “conditional intervention”.²¹⁶ Indeed, by 2011, senior Chinese diplomats involved in the Darfur crisis continued to argue that, from the Chinese perspective, Beijing’s involvement in the Darfur issue was characterised by the use of “soft” dialogue and encouragement vis-à-vis the Khartoum government, rather than the non-consensual coercive measures that surmise the Western approach.²¹⁷

In addition to China’s evolving position on external intervention, in the context of the increasingly protracted and trans-national character that the conflict in Darfur was assuming, China’s Assistant Foreign Minister Zhai Jun argued in 2007 that actors within China’s foreign policy institutions began to learn that “the issue cannot be solved unless talks and negotiations take place among all parties” to the conflict (Zhai, 2007, p.63).

Indeed, senior MFA diplomats asserted that Special Envoy Liu Guijin’s evolving “constructive mediation” in the Darfur by 2008 began to involve ad-hoc informal meetings with Darfur rebel leaders because in learning about the increasingly transnational dynamics of the conflict, the Special Envoy learnt the need for a more nuanced Chinese diplomacy of establishing “dialogue with all the stakeholders, including the Khartoum government and the armed movements”.²¹⁸ Although China had not actively “invited any of the rebel leaders to come to Beijing or to host them”, these “small steps” towards engagement with such non-state actors “was something new” within China’s foreign policy that had occurred because, “we think that in order to get involved, in order to find a solution, we need to engage all the stakeholders”.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ Interview, Renmin University, Department for International Relations, Beijing, China, 4 January 2011

²¹⁷ Interview, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, China, 25 June 2011

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

Moreover, within this framework, it was asserted that, as Chinese diplomats also began to learn that Beijing and Washington had established that stability in Sudan and respect for Sudanese sovereignty was a commonly shared goal, Special Envoy Liu simultaneously utilised its access to the government in Khartoum to play a “bridging role” between Sudan and the US as he sought to encourage al-Bashir to cooperate with the UN.²²⁰

In addition, it is apparent that in the context of heightened pressure on China from both the West and African states to actively utilise its influence in both Sudan and Chad to curb the regional intensification of the Darfur conflict, Special Envoy Liu Guijin increasingly began to conduct a subtle form of ‘shuttle diplomacy’ between N’Djamena and Khartoum to urge both sides to improve ties (see Chapter 3). It is argued here that this shift in China’s Darfur diplomacy to expand its conflict resolution efforts into a more regional framework was not simply the result of international pressure, but also the result of lesson learning regarding the nature of the conflict.

Indeed, one senior MFA diplomat argued that such efforts occurred as the situation of both the governments of Chad and Sudan in supporting each others’ rebel movements to further destabilise each others’ countries was “one of the major obstacles to peace” in the region. As such, it is apparent that Special Envoy Liu urged both Presidents that China was prepared to play a “neutral role” of facilitating peace between the two as Beijing’s goal was simply “to bring both sides together”.²²¹

In this context of learning and change as highlighted above, by 2009 it was argued by Chinese analysts that China’s conflict resolution diplomacy in response to the “major challenges” represented by conflict in Darfur was “incrementally moving towards maturity” (*zhubu zouxiang chengshu* 逐步走向成熟) (Wang, 2012, p.14).

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

It is argued here that the learning processes and evolution of Chinese ‘constructive mediation’ efforts articulated above were further consolidated within the context of north-south and south-south tensions in the early period of Southern independence in 2011. Indeed, China’s Special Envoy Liu Guijin and his successor, Zhong Jianhua, continued to employ the use of ‘shuttle diplomacy’ between Sudan and the new state of South Sudan as the dispute between both states over oil infrastructure sharing further threatened to destabilise the region (see Chapter 5).

According to one leading Chinese scholar, such ongoing efforts to “constructively participate” in resolving north-south tensions was an extension of change in China’s principle of non-interference in recent years as Beijing sought to adjust the principle “to suit the new environment” and challenges emerging in the context of two separate states of Sudan and South Sudan.²²²

6. 2. 2. Coercion with Chinese characteristics? (2012-2013)

It is argued here that China’s peace and security role in the Sudans did not begin to chart a new assertive direction until 2012. This shift occurred when the broader set of lessons detailed previously were compounded as Sudan-South Sudan disputes continued into 2012 and violent conflict escalated in South Sudan in late 2013.

Throughout the period of change in China’s mediation diplomacy until 2011, Beijing had continued to staunchly oppose coercive sanctions and pursue only ‘political solutions’ through dialogue in line with ongoing skepticism within China over the efficacy of sanctions.²²³ Indeed, China’s Special Envoy Liu Guijin argued that China had consistently tried “to convince Western colleagues that toughness is not the only way out, that economic sanctions will only complicate the matter further by raising the Sudanese government’s resistance” (Cited in: Saferworld, 2011, p.63).

²²² Comments made during: Saferworld workshop, “Partnerships for Peace and Development: South Sudan and China,” Juba, South Sudan, 15 April 2013.

²²³ Interview, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, China, 25 June 2011

However, by 2012 Chinese scholars among China's foreign policy elite began to argue for a degree of 'flexibility' (*tanxing* 弹性) regarding more assertive measures such as sanctions, albeit within a framework acceptable to China with notable 'Chinese characteristics'. This shift in thinking translated into change in Chinese foreign policy behaviour in practice in the Sudans case, and was particularly apparent when coercive tools were seen to provide an incentive for fragile African states to end protracted violent conflict in the short term.

In order to develop this argument below, this thesis assesses shifts in scholarly debates within China regarding coercive modes of intervention and academic assessments of the changing foreign policy practices of the Chinese government. As previously detailed in Chapter 1 (section 1.5.2), due to the opaque nature of policy decision-making in China, assessing the academic debates and discourse of think tank and university scholars can provide insights into changing perceptions among China's foreign policy elite. Indeed, due to the close relationship between prominent Chinese think tanks and universities and the party-state (see section 1.5.2), studying prominent scholars' recommendations and policy papers can enable observers to "at the very least identify...the impulses acting on Chinese decision makers" (Abb, 2013, p.30).

This section will assess the publicly available texts written by scholars representing the shifting centre-ground of debates regarding China's approach to intervention that are based within the most prominent academic institutions. These include the work of leading international relations scholars at large organisations such as Tsinghua University (Yan Xuetong) and Renmin University (Pang Zhongying), academics based in research centers that enjoy special prestige such as Fudan University's Centre for American Studies and Centre for European Studies (Pan Yaling and Chen Zhimin, respectively) and Africa experts within Peking University (Li Anshan) and the semi-official research institute CASS (He Wenping).²²⁴

Analysis of Chinese academic discourse reveals that the lesson that China's foreign policy principle of non-interference requires flexibility when its interests

²²⁴ As Pascal Abb notes, the fact that almost all of the institutes listed here publish top ranked "core" journals in China attests to their influence in scholarly policy analysis. See: Abb, 2013, p.9.

are at stake has been further compounded since 2011. Indeed, beyond arguing that China needs to “intervene in the internal affairs” of other states to protect its interests in fragile contexts (Pang, 2009: 247), Chinese scholars have begun to advocate specific coercive tools through which China can more assertively intervene in conflict-affected states.

In 2012 Pan Yaling asserted in the context of ongoing civil unrest in Sudan, South Sudan and Libya that China has “gradually begun to realise” that such ‘internal affairs’ often have a “harmful overflow” (不良外溢 *buliang waiyi*) far beyond their sovereign borders and, as such, China’s traditional policy of non-interference in others’ ‘internal affairs’ is not applicable in the context of African civil wars (Pan, 2012, p.55). Pan asserts that more assertive actions to prevent this harmful overflow of violent conflict such as “collective sanctions” (*jiti zhicai* 集体制裁) by the international community, notably including China, could be justified (Pan, 2012, p.55).

Such shifting internal perceptions regarding support for more coercive tools has been increasingly evident in changes in Chinese foreign policy practice. In the context of the intensifying civil war in Libya 2011, China voted in favour of UNSC Resolution 1970 imposing sanctions on the Libyan government. Beijing also voted in favour of UNSC Resolution 2046 in 2012 calling on Sudan and South Sudan to halt fighting on the border that, significantly, had expressed intent to take measures under Article 41 on sanctions for non-compliance. US diplomats based within the UN in New York expressed their surprise at the distinct lack of resistance to the reference to sanctions that has characterised China’s historic position with regards to UNSC initiatives with regards to Darfur.²²⁵

It is argued here that the drivers underpinning Beijing’s emerging acceptance of the imposition of sanctions by the international community are three-fold. Firstly, China is increasingly disposed to accepting sanctions in cases where there is international, and particularly regional, consensus that sanctions are an appropriate measure for external actors to adopt (Mu, 2014, p.119; Van

²²⁵ Telephone interview, US Mission to the UN, New York, 5 May 2012.

Hoeymissen, 2011, p.95). Yan Xuetong notes that this reflects China's growing acceptance of the emerging "normalisation of intervention diplomacy" in the global arena as many developing countries are now adopting the norm of intervention (Yan, 2012, pp. 113-114).

In the context of the recent upheaval in Libya and the Sudans, from the perspective of Chinese scholars and UN diplomats it was the consent of the international community, and particularly the instrumental support of the Arab League and the African Union, that provided the necessary backing of the UNSC's decisive actions and guaranteed China's affirmative votes for Resolutions 1970 and 2046, respectively (Yan, 2012, p.114; Mu 2014, p.119; United Nations Security Council 2011; United Nations Security Council 2012a).

Secondly, it is apparent that China has begun to accept in certain cases that coercive measures may be necessary to encourage an end to hostilities and an improvement in the security and humanitarian situation on the ground where Chinese interests continue to be under threat from protracted violent conflict (Pan 2012; He, 2014; Lee et al, 2012). For example, in lieu of political dialogue between the Libyan government and the rebels, internationally supported sanctions came to be viewed among China's foreign policy elite as "an appropriate method to resolve the humanitarian crisis" in the short-term (Mu, 2014, p.119). Indeed, explaining China's support for punitive measures towards the Libyan government under Resolution 1970, Beijing's UN representative Li Baodong highlighted the primacy of protecting civilians and ensuring "the safety and interests of foreign nationals" in Libya through the immediate cessation of hostilities and restoration of stability (Cited in: United Nations Security Council, 2011).

In addition, as fighting between Sudan and South Sudan escalated in 2012 while the AU-led peace negotiations stalled, Beijing also approved a UN Security Council resolution which threatened to impose sanctions in an effort to end the fighting and buttress support for the fledgling regional peace process. Indeed, China's UN representative stated that China supported UNSC Resolution 2046 as Beijing was "deeply worried about the deterioration in relations between the two countries" and hoped both sides would be

encouraged to “follow the path of peace laid out by the African Union” (Cited in: United Nations Security Council 2012a).

As such, it is apparent that Beijing’s growing concern about the broader destabilisation of the region and the coordinated position between the UN and the AU regarding the resolution of these conflicts overrode China’s traditional position of opposition to more coercive measures, particularly where the threat of sanctions could have the effect of bringing about stability on the ground.

Thirdly, it is argued here that such tentative steps towards China’s acceptance of more coercive tools to bring about peace and security in Africa are informed by growing calls since 2012 from Chinese scholars for an active projection of China’s growing power abroad through developing a more assertive foreign policy (Yan, 2012; Su, 2012; He and Feng, 2012; Chen and Cheng, 2013). Within this context, China’s evolving participation in UN-mandated international sanctions regimes reflects how the country is beginning to chart a new assertive foreign policy course in practice, whilst signaling “the emerging world power’s transition from a target of sanctions to a ‘sender’” (Pang, 2009: 251).

Chen and Chang argue that China needs to continue developing a more assertive “shaping role” of Chinese power in order to “promote peace and prosperity in the world, as well as a fairer and more just international order”, whilst maintaining its traditionally ‘defensive’ power strategy (Chen and Cheng, 2013, p.23). They argue that this can be achieved through expanding what they term as “soft hard power” and moderately developing China’s “hard soft power” tools in the economic, military and diplomatic realms (Chen and Cheng, 2013, pp.18-23).

As such, Chinese theorists are here introducing variation in their conceptualisation of the application of power resources that had originally been defined by the American scholar Joseph Nye according to distinctive realms, with ‘hard power’ as a command power that is based on threats and inducement using military or economic resources, while soft power is a cooptive power which is based on attraction and establishing preferences, and with the

use of intangible culture, ideology and institutional resources (Nye, 1990, pp.31-2).

Indeed, Chen and Chang focus on developing 'soft hard power', or the soft use of hard power, in arguing that hard power can also bring about attraction in addition to coercion, for example, through "wooing countries with wealth" or the fact that strong military power use through UN peacekeeping contributions "can also alleviate a country's international image" (Chen and Chang, 2013, pp.10-11). Moreover, 'hard soft power', or the hard use of soft power, can employ non-material, soft resources to exert diplomatic influence in a coercive way, such as through sanctions (Chen and Cheng, 2013, p.11).

It is argued here that China did indeed tentatively begin to utilise both 'hard soft' and 'soft hard' tools of its economic and diplomatic resources within the Sudanese case, particularly in the era beginning with the independence of South Sudan. Within the framework of what is characterised as a "deep intervention" in the Sudans from 2012, Sun Degang has argued that an evolving content of China's mediation efforts between Sudan and South Sudan has been the use of what can be termed as China's 'soft hard power' (Sun, 2012, p.60). Indeed, it was argued that, as a long-term economic partner with Sudan and with its growing commercial role in South Sudan, China was in a position to "leverage cutting economic aid and limiting high-level exchanges so as to pressure all parties in order to achieve a situation of negotiation between both parties in the short-term" (Sun, 2012, p.60).

Indeed, according to an informed Chinese scholar it is apparent that early on in Sudan-South Sudan tensions following independence, Special Envoy Liu Guijin did indeed begin to leverage China's potential economic aid and development assistance as a way in which to incentivise both sides to step up their negotiations under the AUHIP.²²⁶ Moreover, the emerging use of what can be termed a 'peace conditionality' with regards to the release of China EXIM bank's economic assistance to South Sudan following the oil shutdown, as detailed previously, also fits within this purview of beginning to leverage China's

²²⁶ Interview, Shanghai International Studies University, Institute for Middle East Studies, Shanghai, China, 29 May 2013

potential economic assistance to encourage the prior improvement of stability in South Sudan (see Chapter 4).

With regards to the use of China's soft military hard power, the deployment of PLA troops to South Sudan in January 2012, although in order to protect Chinese engineering peacekeepers rather than adopting a more combative Chinese role in South Sudan, is indicative of a gradual move to accept a more robust peacekeeping mandate of UN troops to bring about an improved security environment in South Sudan. Indeed, China has since enabled more assertive UN 'peace enforcement' operations in both the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Mali in the context of heightened insecurity; a move which one Chinese MND official has stated was in accordance to an emerging realisation in China of the need for more proactive UN peacekeeping efforts to actively seek to end violent conflicts threatening to destabilise the wider region.²²⁷

Moreover, China's vote in favour of UNSC Resolution 2046, which expressed intent to take measures under Article 41 to impose sanctions on the Sudans for non-compliance, can certainly be viewed within a framework of Beijing's emerging utilisation of more coercive 'hard soft' power tools to assist in bringing about stability along the north-south border. Yan Xuetong has argued that this recent departure from China's traditional reticence regarding the coercive diplomatic tool of sanctions signifies a shift in China's global role towards becoming influential international actor (Yan, 2011).

Certainly, it is apparent on the surface that the toolkit of coercive measures gradually utilised by China in assuming a more assertive role in resolving African peace and security issues, such as the imposing the threat of sanctions, is the same as that employed by Western states. However, Chinese scholars attest that China's emerging approach, and ultimately the philosophy underpinning this approach, towards *implementing* coercive measures is qualitatively different to that of the West.

²²⁷ Interview, Chinese Embassy in the United States of America, Washington D. C., US, 4 October 2013

Indeed, Chinese foreign policy elites are simultaneously beginning to reconstitute the rules regarding the implementation of coercive measures in line with specific Chinese needs, or ‘characteristics’, such as the requirement of international consensus and a focus on encouragement rather than punishment of the target state. As Pan Yaling contends, in order to ensure that sanctions are imposed fairly an objective “lead country” (*zhudao guojia* 主导国家) should be “elected” by other members of the international community and, most significantly, to ensure target country cooperation there must be a clearly stated “reward” for them doing so (Pan, 2012, p.56). One prominent scholar of African studies at Peking University has argued that, in contrast to purely coercive and punitive approach to sanctions in the West, China’s contribution to such efforts was the rewarding of good behaviour, as the absence of such encouragement would only spark further resistance to change from the target state.²²⁸

From the Chinese perspective, Beijing’s policy manifests a contrast to other external actors in Africa in its pursuit of a harmonious world, and increasingly in cultivating its own form of “harmonious intervention”, which is underpinned by China’s respect for cultural differences (Li, 2011; Shih, 2013). According to Chinese thought, Beijing’s historic call for the peaceful coexistence of different political systems – recently reinforced by contemporary rhetoric stressing mutual benefit and ‘win-win cooperation’ – symbolises China’s distinctive normative foreign policy and constitutes its soft power in Africa (Shih, 2013).

It is imperative to note that in practice Beijing has recently begun to face challenges in delivering a Chinese ‘difference’ on the ground in Africa and experienced the limitations of its ‘soft power’, as exemplified in the case of Sudan (see Section 5.2). Nevertheless, China’s position of ‘exceptionalism’, combined with discourse of a shared history of colonialism and experience as a developing country, has meant that Chinese diplomacy towards Africa has continued to operate on a different normative basis from “the more overtly hierarchical, prescriptive power relations of established external powers” (Alden and Large, 2010, pp. 21-22).

²²⁸ Interview, Peking University, School for International Studies, Beijing, China, 5 May 2011

For example, according to Li Anshan, like Western countries China makes suggestions on issues of governance and intra-state affairs during diplomatic discussions with African governments, however distinguishing China's approach is that such suggestions are delivered in a friendly manner and on a basis of equality with African states (Li, 2011, p.49).

In addition to the historical and normative underpinnings of China's 'exceptionalism' in Africa, Chinese scholars maintain that through building 'win-win' economic partnerships with African states China has exemplified its difference to the West in material ways. Indeed, Suisheng Zhao has noted that China's "holistic approach" of delivering development and financial packages to its African partners "has become an attractive alternative" to Western donors and companies "which do not have a similar integrated package of carrots to offer" (Zhao, 2008, p.212).

It is in accordance with this reputation of political solidarity and economic support that China has accrued over time in Africa that Chinese scholars are beginning to assert that China is in a unique position to act as a 'bridge' between UN approved multilateral coercive measures and desired results in the African states towards which they are targeted (Chen and Huang, 2009).

Moreover, within this historically informed 'exceptionalist' framework of ties with Africa, China's foreign policy community is increasingly viewing the continent as "a relatively benign setting for 'foreign policy experimentation'" (Alden and Large, Forthcoming, p.2). Indeed, scholars of Chinese foreign policy contend that the African continent is fast becoming a 'testing ground' for China in its evolution from a 'norm taker' to a norm maker', particularly with regards to peace and security matters (Chen and Huang, 2009; Lee, et al, 2012; Alden and Large, Forthcoming).

Despite such assertions of China's 'exceptionalism' in Africa as Beijing begins to chart a new trajectory to become a 'norms maker', it is asserted here that Sino-Western cooperation on peace and security issues in fragile African contexts has continued to be evident. Indeed, according to senior Chinese diplomats and CNPC representatives in South Sudan, China had primarily

decided to actively support more coercive UNSC action in the Sudans in 2012 due to perceptions of a “growing convergence of interests between the Chinese government and the international community in stability in both Sudan and South Sudan”.²²⁹

Moreover, as detailed in Chapter 3, coordination between China and the US continued late into 2013 in the context of heightened internal conflict in South Sudan. In December both governments worked together to ensure the rapid adoption of UNSC Resolution 2132 to temporarily increase the overall force levels of UNMISS in a mutual effort to bring about peace and stability on the ground in the fragile new nation. Joining the efforts of US and EU special envoys, China’s counterpart Zhong Jianhua also began to publicly and more assertively seek a direct mediation role between the South Sudanese government and the SPLM opposition faction (see Chapter 3).

It is evident that China’s foreign policy elites were learning that the long-term resolution of the conflict and a wider peace dividend throughout the country was required “restart the national reconstruction process” in South Sudan and contribute to peace and stability of the broader region (He, 2014). Moreover, it has been articulated that China needs to more assertively contribute to African peace and security initiatives more broadly in a manner that is commensurate with China’s long-term interests in the region.

Indeed, China’s special envoy Zhong Jianhua has stated that Beijing’s public diplomatic efforts to directly mediate in the South Sudan conflict marks a “new chapter” in Beijing’s foreign policy that “will seek to engage more in Africa’s security” (Cited in: Martina, 2014). Zhong also asserted that such a shift in policy practice emanated from an increasing acceptance within China that the country “should be engaging more in peace and security solutions for any conflict” in the African context (Cited in: Martina, 2014).

²²⁹ Interview, CNPC, Juba, South Sudan, 1 June 2012

6. 3. Chapter conclusions

China's traditional perceptions of local political conditions and the nature of conflict in the African context, and the set of state-centric assumptions underpinning these views, were increasingly challenged as a result of Beijing's foreign policy implementers' experiences along the trajectory of a deepening engagement in the Sudanese context. As a result of these experiences, Chinese foreign policy actors have learnt a set of broader lessons regarding the nature and dynamics of Sudanese conflicts.

Firstly, Beijing's foreign policy implementers have gradually learnt about how the lack of capacity or will of the central Sudanese government to prevent and resolve conflict in Sudan could impact upon long-term stability. As detailed in Chapters 1 and 2, China's perception of local political conditions and conflict in Sudan and Africa more generally during the 1990s was based on the assumption of a 'traditional' Weberian state form and within a state-centric foreign policy framework. A key assumption was that Bashir's government could be relied upon to uphold a monopoly on the use of force and that, due to the interests of regime stability, there was sufficient political will for Khartoum to maintain stability within Sudan's territorial borders. As detailed in this chapter, Chinese actors have increasingly begun to learn the role that weak governance and the lack of central state capacity or will to provide for its own citizens has played in perpetuating cycles of centre-periphery conflict in Sudan.

Secondly, there has been an increasing recognition that Sudanese conflict was no longer confined to the 'internal' realm within Sudan's territorial borders, with implications for wider regional stability. China's traditional understanding that Sudanese conflicts, and African conflicts more generally, represented the 'internal affairs' of a sovereign state were challenged as protracted violence in Darfur spread across Sudan's borders and had thus become 'trans-national'. This lesson was further compounded in the context of violent conflict that erupted in South Sudan in 2013, which threatened to destabilise the broader region.

Thirdly, Chinese foreign policy implementing actors have gradually recognised that they share interests with the US and the wider international community in bringing about peace and stability in the Sudans. As it was argued in detail in Chapter 1 (section 1.4.3), China has traditionally viewed the African continent and its propensity for civil unrest and instability from a Marxist historical-materialist perspective that attributes the causes of developing world instability to role of external 'imperialist' interference. From the 1990s the primary factor causing instability in Africa was viewed to be US efforts to promote democracy in the post-Cold War era. However, along the trajectory of engagement in Sudan and South Sudan since the mid-2000s, Beijing's foreign policy institutions increasingly learnt that it shared with the US the primary goals of respecting Sudanese sovereignty in the context of Darfur, and stability on the ground in the Sudans following southern independence.

The learning of this broader set of lessons regarding the nature of Sudanese conflicts compounded the specific lesson outlined in Chapter 5 that instability in Sudan could negatively impact on Chinese interests on the ground. Indeed, it led China's foreign policy establishment to reassess China's own role in the context such conflicts as it sought to secure Chinese assets and personnel in Sudan in the long-term. In order to protect these interests, diplomats and scholars alike learnt that China needed to play a more engaged role in conflict resolution efforts in Sudan and South Sudan. This lesson learning process buttressed ongoing internal debates regarding the utility of the non-interference principle and position on external intervention in practice, and brought about China's tentative 'constructive mediation' role between 2005 and 2011 in the context of both the Darfur conflict and Sudan-South Sudan tensions during the early stages of southern independence.

The lessons regarding the nature of Sudanese conflicts were further compounded as Sudan-South Sudan disputes continued into 2012 and violent conflict escalated in South Sudan in late 2013. In this context, China has gradually learnt that a more assertive and long-term Chinese contribution to peace and security initiatives were required to assist regional and international efforts to bring about long-term stability in the Sudans and the broader region.

Crucially, this has begun to involve an emerging Chinese acceptance of and support for more coercive external measures seeking to bring about stability on the ground in the Sudans.

Indeed, throughout the period of change in China's mediation diplomacy until 2011, Beijing had continued to staunchly oppose coercive sanctions and pursue only 'political solutions' through dialogue in line with ongoing skepticism within China over the efficacy of sanctions. However, by 2012, China's foreign policy elite began to argue for a degree of flexibility on its position regarding sanctions when political dialogue alone has failed to end protracted violent conflict or improve the security situation on the ground.

This has also been in response to a growing recognition that China's policy of non-interference in its traditional sense is not applicable in the context of African civil wars, which could no longer be viewed as being confined to the 'internal' boundaries of the state.

Such an emerging flexibility regarding the tentative use of such coercive measures is viewed to be only acceptable from the Chinese perspective should they be implemented within a framework acceptable to China and with notable 'Chinese characteristics'. Chinese scholars contend that China's approach towards implementing coercive tools such as sanctions is qualitatively different to that of the West due the reputation built up by China in Africa that it operates on a contrasting normative and material basis from the more punitive and hierarchical power relations of Western states. This position of 'exceptionalism' is argued to place China a unique position to act as a 'bridge' between UN approved multilateral coercive measures and desired results in the African states towards which they are targeted.

In the case of the Sudans and Libya, China has provided its support when there has been broad international and, crucially, regional consensus on the use of sanctions. Moreover, Chinese government diplomats and foreign policy academics assert that sanctions must allow for the rewarding of positive behaviour by the target state rather than being primarily punitive in nature. In addition, it is apparent in the case study of Sudan and South Sudan that China

is more likely to accept measures such as sanctions when it is clear that the US and the international community share China's interests in bringing about stability on the ground, rather than regime change in the target state.

Such a shift in Chinese academic thinking towards accepting more coercive tools to bring about peace and security in the Sudans and Africa more generally feeds into broader debates that have emerged in China since 2012 regarding the projection of Chinese power abroad and the application of its power resources. China's foreign policy elite is increasingly arguing that China needs to develop an assertive 'shaping' role of Chinese power in order to promote peace and prosperity abroad where Chinese economic interests and numbers of citizens have expanded.

Within this framework China tentatively began to utilise both its economic and diplomatic resources within the Sudanese case through which to encourage conflicting parties to bring about peace and stability and to protect Chinese interests on the ground. During the era beginning with the independence of South Sudan, China leveraged its prime economic position in the Sudans and potential financial assistance in order to incentivise both parties to negotiate a final agreement on outstanding oil issues. Beijing also utilised its 'soft' military hard power through the deployment PLA troops to UNMISS in January 2012.

Although this was in order to protect Chinese engineering peacekeepers rather than the sanctioning of a more combative Chinese role in South Sudan, is indicative of a gradual move to accept a more robust peacekeeping mandate of UN troops to bring about an improved security environment in South Sudan.

In the context of broader political and ethnic violence throughout South Sudan in late 2013, China's Special Envoy had begun to publicly and more assertively seek a direct mediation role between the South Sudanese government and the rebel opposition. It is evident that China's foreign policy elites were learning that peace and security in South Sudan required resolution processes that brought about more than 'political stability' in the short-term but a wider long-term peace dividend throughout the new nation.

Beijing's public diplomatic efforts to directly mediate in South Sudan has certainly ushered in a newly proactive chapter in China's foreign policy that marks an acceptance in China that it should be engaging more in peace and security solutions to conflicts in the Sudans, and Africa more generally.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

The Chinese hardly seemed to recognise the existence of any problem in the [Third World] which has not been created or sustained by foreign intervention...[and] Peking's interest in internal issues was primarily governed and motivated by international considerations.

~ Yiztak Shichor, 1977, p. 2.

In Chinese eyes, adjustments in domestic and foreign policies are only natural as long as principles and goals remain unchanged.

~ Wang Jisi, 1994, p. 489.

The first citation above, describing China's policy towards the Third World during the Cold War, captures China's perception of Africa and developing world more broadly during this period, when China viewed the African context as wholly positive for its own interests and perceived the dynamics and causes of local issues and conflicts as predominantly externalised, with domestic situations having no impact on Chinese foreign policy. Seeing the world as it did through a Marxist historical ideological framework, any challenges to Chinese foreign policy during this period were seen as the result of external factors: imperialism, the interference of foreign powers, international capitalism, etc, rather than emanating from the African context itself.

This thesis has been situated within the broader context of a shift in China's foreign policy towards the developing world, in Africa in particular, following in the post-Cold War, post-reform and 'opening up' eras where economic imperatives, particularly oil, have been increasingly driving China's foreign policy, rather than ideology as during the Cold War.

In particular, the advent of China's 'Going Out' strategy in the 21st century, underpinned by resource seeking (and particularly equity oil stakes), has

resulted in the insertion of Chinese economic interests into the socio-political and economic environments of the global south, particularly Africa, where petro-states and pariah regimes have been targeted by China for investment, in the context of growing energy insecurity at home.

Becoming a stakeholder in these environments has meant that their internal situations are increasingly affecting China's foreign policy, and China's role there has thus become more politicised – both within the local context and on the broader international stage, as a result. This in turn has challenged China's traditional assumptions of the African context and its role there. This shift in assumptions has, as a result, induced change within China's foreign policy, and this thesis has sought to assess and understand that change.

The second citation above demonstrates a common assertion in China that while there may be a propensity for adaptation within Chinese foreign policy, there is continuity in China's fundamental principles, which relates to the core argument in this thesis: that whilst adaptation and learning have occurred at the tactical level of China's foreign policy belief system, China's fundamental foreign policy beliefs have not changed.

Through providing an in-depth case study of China's Sudan engagement under a 'Going Out' strategy, this thesis has firstly sought to draw out the process whereby, as a result of the deepening oil-based interests inserted into Sudan's socio-political economy, China has adapted to challenges that have arisen from the exogenous Sudanese environment.

Secondly, it has drawn out the lesson learning process along the trajectory of adaptation in line with a theory of 'adaptive learning'. In the following section, the resultant research findings will be summarised in relation to the theoretical framework in order to assess the validity of the hypothesis that 'adaptive learning' can explain change in China's foreign policy towards Sudan and South Sudan.

7. 1. Linking Empirical Findings with Theoretical Framework

a) Tactically adapting to challenges within the exogenous Sudanese context

The case study background detailed in Chapter 2 revealed how the successful entrance of CNPC into Sudan from 1996 had been possible due to China's 'non-interference' policy and the relative autonomy of CNPC from the Chinese government and its ability to make decisions on entering a risky environment where it faced little competition. Moreover, underpinned by a position of non-interference, the deepening of Sino-Sudanese oil cooperation from this point was facilitated through China's tactical foreign policy approach of claiming to separate its business activities from local politics and the development of ties exclusively with the ruling NCP elites in Khartoum.

The research conducted uncovered that, when initial challenges to the consolidation of Chinese interests arose between 2000-2004, China responded according to a continuation of this tactical approach. Chapters 3 and 4 illustrated how it was not until 2005 that the challenges emanating from within the Sudanese context were compounded and between 2005 and 2013 China began to adapt its tactical approach vis-à-vis these challenges: namely, the growing internationalisation of the Darfur issue and China's role there; the emergence of the SPLM in South Sudan as meaningful political actors; and the subsequent secession of South Sudan.

The research findings presented in Chapters 3 and 4 have verified that China's policy approach towards Sudan and South Sudan was adapted at the 'tactical' level of its foreign policy 'belief system', as proposed in the hypothesis.

Chapter 3 detailed the adaptations to a 'separating business from politics' model that China had prioritised in the early years of its 'Going Out' strategy, as it took on a greater political role in conflict mediation, initially in Darfur. This approach was further deepened and consolidated within the context of Sudan-South Sudan tensions following southern secession, and particularly in the recent context of intra-state conflict within Africa's newest nation.

Chapter 4 described the adaptation of China's engagement exclusively with the NCP elites as the Chinese government and CNPC gradually developed parallel ties with the GoSS as it evolved from a semi-autonomous administration to the government of an independent state.

It also illuminated how, in contrast with CNPC's relative autonomy from the Chinese government in the early stages of its 'going out' in Sudan, Beijing sought to 'contain' the company, both in an attempt to ensure the company operated according to China's wider national interests, and increasingly to protect CNPC's oil interests and workers on the ground in the context of southern secession.

Throughout the course of both these chapters, the findings clearly demonstrated how change and adaptation here has been limited to the tactical level of China's foreign policy belief system, as both Chinese fundamental and strategic beliefs remained unchanged in this context.

Beijing's foreign policy implementers continued to emphasise that China's fundamental adherence to the principle of respecting state sovereignty remained sacrosanct, as China had maintained its stance on the condition of host state acceptance of a UN humanitarian intervention in Darfur. Rather than representing a fundamental change in China's position on state sovereignty, China's pragmatic adjustment to the emerging reality of southern Sudan's secession was 'a special case' for China in that local and international acceptance of the referendum's outcome left Beijing with little choice but to support what had become a widespread consensus.

China also continued to 'balance' its evolving ties with the south with its old ally in the north, and was keen to reassure both Sudan and a wider audience of African ruling elites with which it has established strong ties, that China's adherence to the fundamental principle of state sovereignty remained intact.

Despite an emerging reluctance to extend development assistance to and invest in the fragile context of an emerging civil war in South Sudan from 2012,

CNPC's long-established equity oil investments in both Sudans continued to be 'strategically important' to both the company and China's energy security interests. This was reflective of the broader persistence of China's strategic beliefs regarding Chinese energy self-sufficiency and an ongoing preference for acquiring equity oil stakes abroad rather than relying on international energy markets.

As such, these findings accord with the underlying argument that while China's foreign policies have an inherent propensity for adaptation and adjustment to new realities in practice, the fundamental principles and strategic beliefs underlying them remain consistent.

b) Specific and broader lesson learning

The analysis and conclusions drawn out in Chapter 5 further validate the hypothesis that the adaptations described in previous chapters can be explained as a result of 'institutional-governmental' collective learning of specific negative lessons. These lessons were specific in the sense that they were learnt in response to a perceived crisis, as galvanising events highlighted the negative impact of the local situation in Sudan on both China's wider international image and Chinese interests on the ground in Sudan itself. The findings verified the negative learning process that was hypothesised in Chapter 1.

Firstly, it detailed how a series of negative lessons were presented to Chinese foreign policy implementing institutions in the form of unexpected 'crisis points'. Secondly, in order to infer that learning had occurred at the collective level among Chinese foreign policy implementing institutions, the research analysis was able to clearly demonstrate the causal link between these 'crisis points' and shifting domestic debates in China. An assessment of these debates revealed collectively learnt inferences from experience regarding the negative impacts of Sudan's local situation specifically on Chinese interests. In seeking to protect Beijing's political and economic interests over the trajectory of the engagement, Chinese foreign policy actors also learnt the limitations of a 'non-interference' policy in practice.

Thirdly, the candidate was able to link these lessons and debates back to the institutional changes (tactical adaptations) that had occurred in practice, in the form of changes in both statements and actions.

The learning of these lessons revealed how China's experiences in Sudan over time challenged traditional Chinese assumptions and perceptions of the Sudanese environment as having an inherently positive impact on China. As proposed in Chapter 1, this type of negative learning did not result in response to perceived failure, but rather emanated from lessons regarding the *limitations* of China's tactical-level foreign policy approach and of China's traditional perceptions of the Sudanese context itself.

It has been widely asserted in the FPA literature on learning that issues arise when attempting to assess whether collective learning or shifts in materially based political coalitions (i.e. one group's policy position coming into favour), can explain policy changes. It is possible to conclude from the research findings and analysis that changes within this case study did occur as a result of collective learning that cut across material coalitions or conflicting bureaucratic interests. For example, while the primary concern of Beijing's MFA regarding China's international image may at times conflict with the more investment-seeking goals of MOFCOM, the research found that both government ministries learnt the lesson in the case of Sudan that the behaviour of Chinese NOCs abroad required better regulation by the Chinese authorities in Beijing.

While the focus of this research has been to draw out collective learning among China's key implementing institutions, rather than individual learning among China's senior leadership, it was asserted in Chapter 1 that evidence of changes in leadership statements or actions in line with those implementing actors that have learnt from experience, will buttress the argument that collective learning has occurred. The research findings have been able to draw out such instances where institutional lesson learning has caught the attention of and induced changes in the official statements made by China's senior leadership. Prominent examples of this has been Hu Jintao's direct involvement in mediating the Darfur crisis during his trip to Khartoum in February 2007, and

Xi Jinping's statement to African leaders in 2013 regarding the new contours of the 'Going Out' strategy, which would officially include a more engaged Chinese conflict mediation role.

It was asserted in Chapter 5 that the shift from China's 'non-involvement' regarding Sudanese conflicts in 2004 to an actively constructive mediation diplomacy vis-à-vis the Darfur issue and Sudan and South Sudan tensions evolved in tandem with the progression of China's emergence on the global stage as the world's fastest rising economy. Crucially, it also uncovers how the protection of China's economic interests and citizens abroad have since increased in significance, in contrast with Beijing's focus on its image interests vis-à-vis the West prior to the global financial crisis of 2008.

However, it was found that throughout the period of change in China's foreign policy in this context between 2005 and 2011, China's diplomatic activism was constrained by ongoing tensions regarding Beijing's perception of its conflicting global identities and, in pursuing narrow core interests, the country's foreign strategy continued to be defensive in nature.

Chinese institutions have increasingly learnt that the protection of Chinese interests in Sudan and South Sudan can not be achieved through short-term defensive measures and relying on the host state, but only through a longer-term engagement in peace and security initiatives in the region. This research has revealed that the learning of this lesson has begun to drive a more assertive foreign policy approach vis-à-vis the resolution of Sudanese conflicts from 2012, which reflects a new acceptance of China's expanding interests abroad, commensurate with its role as a growing global economy.

In seeking to provide further depth to an explanation of this recent shift in the Sudanese case, Chapter 6 was able to verify the hypothesis that a gradual process of broader lesson learning regarding the nature of Sudanese conflicts has occurred along the trajectory of China's engagement, which has been found to have underpinned this evolution towards a more assertive foreign policy approach from 2012.

The research was able to draw out causal linkages between emerging realities of protracted conflict in Sudan and shifts in internal thinking with regards to traditional Chinese understandings of African conflict. The set of state-centric assumptions underpinning these traditional views were challenged in the Sudans, as Chinese implementing institutions gradually recognised the lack of capacity or will of the central Sudanese government to prevent and resolve such conflicts, the fact that Sudanese conflict was no longer confined to the 'internal' realm within Sudan's territorial borders with implications for wider regional stability, and that China's interest in stability was shared with the US and wider international community.

A further analysis of internal discussions regarding the nature of Sudanese conflicts has revealed how Chinese foreign policy institutions have increasingly begun to reassess China's role therein. This has buttressed ongoing debates regarding the utility of the non-interference policy in practice and Beijing's traditional position on external intervention.

In turn, it was discovered that such lessons brought about China's tentative 'constructive mediation' role between 2005 and 2011 and, crucially, from 2012 this began to involve an emerging Chinese acceptance of and support for more coercive external measures seeking to bring about stability on the ground in the Sudans.

Chinese scholars assert this recent departure from China's traditional reticence regarding sanctions signifies a shift in China's global role towards becoming an influential international actor. This emerging acceptance of coercive tools traditionally associated with Western powers does not, however, imply that a 'conditional' position on sovereignty akin to the approach of the West has emerged in Chinese foreign policy.

Indeed, Chinese scholars assert that China's approach stresses that such measures should be aimed at 'rewarding' states for changes in behaviour rather than being punitive in nature. China is only willing to accept sanctions when it is perceived that the US and the broader international community are not seeking regime change, and a more assertive Chinese mediation role must be at the

request of the host state. As such, it is possible to infer that China is beginning to more actively assert that a Westphalian concept of state sovereignty must characterise the modalities of such external interventions so they conform more closely to China's fundamental principles and interests.

Indeed, this research has found that China perceives its approach towards intervention and the implementation of coercive measures to be qualitatively different to that of the West. China's foreign policy elite views this contrasting approach to be in line with China's reputation in Africa for operating on a contrasting normative and material basis from the more punitive and hierarchical power relations of Western states.

According to Chinese thought, Beijing's historic call for the peaceful coexistence of different political systems, recently reinforced by contemporary rhetoric stressing equality, mutual benefit and 'win-win' economic cooperation, symbolises China's distinctive foreign policy towards Africa and the wider developing world. This position of 'exceptionalism' is argued to place China a unique position to act as a 'bridge' between UN-sanctioned multilateral interventions and the African states towards which they are targeted.

The candidate is able to draw two conclusions from the finding presented in Chapters 5 and 6 that China's foreign policy approach and evolving peace and security role in the Sudans has taken an increasingly assertive turn since 2012. Firstly, China's hitherto 'narrow core interests' have been expanded in this setting to include an interest in the long-term peace and security of the fragile South Sudanese environment in which its companies and citizens require protection. Secondly, in accepting the need for a more assertive role in bringing about peace and security in the Sudans and the broader region that is commensurate with China's expanding interests abroad and growing economic power, China appears to be transcending the 'identity crisis' that had limited Chinese activism between 2005 and 2011.

In 2009, one China-Africa expert argued that it will take time for China's Africa diplomacy to evolve as, "for as long as only basic lessons" are still being learnt by Chinese foreign policy institutions, this diplomacy is "likely to remain more

reactive than proactive” (Raine, 2009, p.91). The research conducted here has certainly found that between 2005 and 2011, change and learning in Chinese foreign policy in the case of the Sudans appeared to be limited to a more reactive approach.

However, having accumulated a decade of experience through which occurred the learning of not only ‘basic’ specific lessons in terms of the negative impacts on Chinese interests but also more nuanced broader lessons regarding the nature of Sudanese conflicts, it can be concluded that by 2012 Chinese foreign policy appears to be now assuming an increasingly assertive and proactive role in the Sudanese and African context more generally.

Against this backdrop, it is possible to verify the argument proposed in the hypothesis that, whereas China’s tactical foreign policy approach and perceptions of the Sudanese context during the early stages of the ‘Going Out’ strategy were *endogenously* derived, adaptations to China’s policies in practice have increasingly been informed by the negative lessons that have been learnt from experience in the *exogenous* Sudanese environment.

Moving forward, as Chinese foreign policy institutions continue to learn from its experiences in Africa, China’s policies will increasingly be reformulated in response to emerging realities and challenges emanating from within the exogenous African context. Within this framework, Beijing is also bound to continue along a path towards assuming a greater and more assertive role in bringing about long-term peace and security across Africa.

c) Adaptive learning in Chinese foreign policy towards Sudan and South Sudan

Having assessed the findings of this research above, it is possible to conclude that the key question of how to understand change in China’s foreign policy towards Sudan and South Sudan has been successfully answered through utilising the theoretical explanatory concept of negative experiential ‘adaptive learning’.

It was argued in Chapter 1 that this thesis would not be conducted in terms of testing whether changes in Chinese foreign policy reflect either adaptation or fundamental learning, but rather it would seek to uncover what lessons have been learnt in the process of tactically adapting. The lessons that China has learnt throughout the adaptation process have been clearly reaffirmed above.

The concept of 'adaptive learning' was defined as a learning process in which old ways of dealing with the outside world are adapted into new ones. This thesis has clearly drawn out this process within the case study analysis, as China has evidently adapted its endogenously derived policy approach in order to better cope with challenges within the Sudanese context, and this process has been informed by the lessons that have been learnt regarding the exogenous Sudanese environment. Against this backdrop, it can be concluded that the hypothesis has been fully verified.

It is also possible to reassert the argument that this thesis would contribute towards the broader theoretical literature on change in Chinese foreign policy. As it was argued in Chapter 1, a significant contribution to the literature would be to uncover how China may be learning the limitations of a strict adherence to 'non-interference' through 'negative learning' from China's own experiences rather than 'positive' social learning, which is arguably over-emphasised in the constructivist literature on 'socialisation'.

As such, rather than assessing change in terms of China's 'positive' social learning and socialisation through its interactions with Western powers and international institutions as is common within the constructivist literature, this research has reasserted Chinese agency within its analysis of learning. Indeed, this has been through uncovering how China has been learning from its *own* negative experiences as a result of a 'Going Out' strategy that has rapidly intensified China's global integration.

While it is certainly apparent that China did adapt its policy vis-à-vis the Darfur issue after 2005 in response to US government pressure, this research focused on drawing out the internal Chinese debates that were sparked by such pressure. Moreover, this thesis has uncovered how China's publicly active

efforts to assume a mediation role in support of the AU-led peace process in Sudan and South Sudan before and after southern independence in 2011 occurred outside the realm of international pressure and in response to China's own concerns regarding the protection of its interest on the ground. The mediation efforts of China's Special Envoy increasingly intersected with those of his Troika (UK, US and Norway) counterparts, and China was broadly perceived within the international community to have played a supportive role the peace process.

This research has also directly contributed towards the limited literature on China-Sudan and South Sudan relations through presenting the challenges and negative experiences faced by China in this case holistically and along a broad trajectory. This has been in order to draw out not only the tactical adaptations in response to such challenges, but also to assess the internal debates in China that have induced lesson learning within the adaptive process.

The adaptive learning process assessed in this thesis can be characterised as inherently incremental as China tactically adjusted its policies to emerging realities and challenges over time. Nevertheless, it is possible to infer that significant shifts in Chinese foreign policy have occurred over this twenty year time period that reveal how China is now a considerably different actor to what it had been during the 1990s in Sudan.

In contrast with China's early forays under the 'Going Out' strategy in Sudan when CNPC and the Chinese government were willing to invest despite the ongoing civil war during the 1990s, as a result of its experiences in this context, by 2012 the Chinese state became increasingly reluctant to invest in the fragile context of Africa's newest petro-state, South Sudan.

This reveals the growing maturity of China's economic cooperation approach as the government has increasingly become concerned that such deals might not necessarily be 'win-win' for China, whilst it also increasingly focused on the imperatives of investment protection in conjunction with its leading NOC in Sudan.

CNPC itself also displayed a growing aversion to investing in riskier oil projects, such as the alternative South Sudan pipeline to the Kenyan coast. This is certainly reflective of the broader expansion of the company's investment profile and growing global competitiveness in recent years. Against this backdrop, CNPC's investment decisions are increasingly driven by considerations of profit and the security of return on its investments, rather than the need for experience that had driven the company to first invest in the uncompetitive Sudanese oil sector in the 1990s.

Nevertheless, as the maintenance of its existing projects in the Sudans has continued to be of significance to CNPC, the company's mode of engagement has certainly matured from that of its initial 'separation of business from politics' approach that had characterised its early forays in Sudan. Significantly, the company has developed its own form of political involvement, or 'corporate diplomacy', as it sought to protect its investments in the turbulent South Sudanese political context.

In contrast with a position of 'non-involvement' in the resolution of Sudanese conflicts through 2004, Chinese government diplomats have also deepened their political engagement over this period as Beijing sought to develop a mediation role in the Sudans.

In turn, this has had significant implications for China's non-interference policy in practice. The centre-ground of internal debates in China have evolved from that of conceptually distinguishing between 'interference' (干涉) and the use of Chinese 'influence' (干预), to arguing that China's traditional non-interference policy is inapplicable in the context of African civil wars, which are increasingly not confined to the 'internal' boundaries of the sovereign state.

There has also been a substantial shift in the traditional mechanisms of China's state-led engagement in Sudan, which until 2004 had been directed exclusively at the ruling elites in Khartoum. China's initial tentative move to provide a 'bridging' role between the central government and the Darfur rebel groups became official content of China's policy in the context of South Sudan's civil

war in 2013. This certainly marked a new chapter in China's politically engaged role in peace and security initiatives in the Sudanese context.

In the broader African framework, the FOCAC convention of July 2012 institutionalised China's commitment to become more involved in African peace and security initiatives, which crucially has ushered in a substantially new phase in China's Africa engagement. Indeed, the formalising of this pledge introduces a level of Chinese involvement in the African peace and security terrain that would have been unimaginable in the Jiang Zemin era during the 1990s.

7. 2. Wider implications, future trends and space for further research

As detailed in Chapter 1, much of the recent literature on Chinese foreign policy asserts that China's diplomatic activism continues to be limited by its narrowly defined core interests and a global identity crisis. The findings that have come out of this research is of relevance to this broader literature because it provides a case study of how China's experiences abroad in the 'Going Out' era are driving China to reformulate its foreign policy towards a more assertive approach less constrained by the issues that had limited Beijing's response to challenges abroad prior to 2012.

In following the broader trajectory of China's rise in the future, research should increasingly monitor internal debates and such 'adaptive learning' as China attempts to protect its interests in Africa, and abroad more generally. This should be with regard to assessing whether such adaptations continue this trend of supporting multilateral peace and security efforts or, in light of a more assertive Chinese foreign policy, we might see more unilateral responses and the projection of Chinese military power abroad in an effort to better protect its interests.

Such developments have broader implications for how we can understand the evolving nature and implications of China's rise on the global stage more broadly, as the African continent has increasingly become a testing ground for establishing the boundaries of both cooperation and competition between China and the West.

Future research should continue to be aware of the potential limitations to collective learning among China's foreign policy institutions. Firstly, the influence of 'factionalised bureaucratic interests' on foreign policy may of course prevent wider sets of lessons from being learnt. Scholars of China-Africa relations have increasingly detailed fissures between the interests and interpretations of China's Africa policy between Chinese implementing actors, and the 'self-preserving' behaviour of various ministries and bureaucratic institutions can be contradictory, particularly in overseeing Chinese companies' expansion overseas.

This thesis has found that, in the context of Sudan, China's MFA and MOFCOM did collectively learn the need to better regulate its NOCs abroad, whilst broadly continuing to view CNPC's investments in Sudan to be in China's energy security interests. However, along a broader trajectory, as Chinese NOCs' behaviour abroad can be seen to increasingly affect China's wider image, for example through CNOOC's assertive oil explorations in the contested zones of the East and South China Seas, future research could monitor how these divergent bureaucratic interests may increasingly prevent collective institutional learning and change, for instance if the MFA seeks to further regulate and reign in Chinese NOCs' activities abroad.

Secondly, it is possible that the geographical gap between Chinese implementing institutions based in Beijing and particular institutional actors, such as embassy staff and Special Envoys delegated to engage in the African context, which are exposed to experiences more directly, may also limit wider forms of collective learning.

This research has consistently found examples whereby the inferences from experience drawn by China's Special Envoy or MFA think tank researchers conducting research in Sudan have been fed back to Beijing's foreign policy institutions, leading to the cross-pollination of new ideas and collective lesson learning. Nevertheless, future research should continue to monitor this potential issue in the analysis of other case studies, where it may be found that such

a gap limits the breadth collective learning among China's foreign policy institutions.

The single case of China-Sudan and South Sudan relations was selected for analysis in this thesis because, in addition to Sino-Sudanese ties becoming the single most consequential African relationship within China's broader international relations, oil cooperation with Sudan was the first of its kind in Africa under the initial 'Going Out' of CNPC into Sudan in the 1990s, and thus a study of the relationship has provided a unique opportunity to assess the processes of change and learning within Chinese foreign policy *over time*.

However, over the past decade following the proclamation of an official 'Going Out' strategy in 2001, China's commercial interests have since become increasingly embedded within the political economies of a plethora of petro-states and other resource-rich African countries where China has similarly begun to face considerable challenges to consolidating and protecting its political and economic interests in host environments mired by socio-political instability.

This emerging challenge has become particularly acute in the context of the 'Arab Spring', a wave of revolutionary movements and civil wars that rippled across the Arab world in North Africa (and the Middle East) from late 2010. This emergence has sparked concern within China's foreign policy making establishment regarding the return of a US policy aimed at promoting local African democratisation and the pursuit of its own oil interests in the region could have a destabilising effect on both Sino-US relations and Chinese economic investments on the ground. Such concerns were particularly expressed after the Chinese government was forced to evacuate 35,860 Chinese citizens in the context of civil war in Libya in February 2011.

At the same time, China has become increasingly active and cooperative with the international community with regards to peace and security initiatives in the region, and displayed further changes in its approach vis-à-vis external intervention. Although in Libya in 2011 Beijing objected to the use of force and opposed Western 'regime change' agendas, in welcoming attempts to protect

civilians China abstained and thus enabled the passing of UNSC Resolution 1973 which marked the first time the Council has authorised the use of force for human protection purposes against the wishes of a functioning state.

Significantly, in 2013 China actively supported the establishment of an 'offensive' UN combat force, an assertive new step for UN peacekeeping, in the Democratic Republic of Congo where Chinese mining companies are investing and where millions of civilians have died since the 1990s as rebel groups have fought for control of eastern Congo's rich deposits of gold, diamonds, copper, cobalt and uranium.

Future research seeking to analyse the process of change and adaptation to China's foreign policy in response to challenges emerging within a variety of different contexts could certainly benefit from utilising the theoretical framework of negative experiential 'adaptive learning'. As it is stated by learning theorists, while learning theory might not be able to predict outcomes it can predict processes. It is indeed likely that 'adaptive learning' is occurring in other sites of China's Africa engagement, and an analysis of this process within other case studies will certainly further illuminate the wider sets of lessons that China may be learning as a result of its experiences in Africa.

A broad selection of case studies across the various resource sectors and politico-economic environments on the continent in which Chinese companies are increasingly investing will further contribute towards our deepening understanding of how socio-political instability within African states are increasingly impacting and changing China's foreign policy. Significantly, it should also reveal how the boundaries of China's non-interference principle in practice are being further tested and reformulated along the trajectory of a 'Going Out' strategy in Africa.

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