

Arms, oil, and Darfur

The evolution of relations between China and Sudan

In early April 2007, China dispatched Assistant Foreign Minister Zhai Jun to Sudan to discuss Khartoum's acceptance of UN peacekeeping support for Darfur, which Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir had long rejected.¹ It was an unusually direct overture from Beijing, which had steadfastly protected the sovereignty of its African trade partner. Shortly after the visit, Khartoum reversed its previous intransigence and agreed to the 'heavy support package' of more than 3,000 UN military personnel to the Darfur region. The meeting took place behind closed doors, but Chinese pressure likely played an important role in the president's change of mind.

China's role in Sudan is widely recognized as critical to Khartoum's economic development and international relations, as well as to prospects for a peaceful resolution to the Darfur conflict. For many Western commentators, Beijing's involvement in Sudan is synonymous with 'arms and oil', but while it is clear that China is both a major exporter of arms to Sudan and an importer of Sudanese oil, much about the relationship remains obscure.² It is also clear that Beijing enjoys an influential standing with Khartoum that could be of major strategic value in efforts to bring peace and security to Darfur. China seems more willing today than ever before to use that influence to engage Khartoum. Beijing's official policy nevertheless remains one of non-interference, and its engagement is unquestionably a product of complex economic and political considerations—domestic and increasingly international.

This *Issue Brief* surveys the available public information on China–Sudan relations, with particular emphasis on the arms trade, the oil economy, and the conflict in Darfur. While the primary focus is on contemporary relations, a historical perspective on the political, economic, and defence links between the two countries provides a more sophisticated assessment of current dynamics. Recognizing the opportunities and constraints presented by this 'special relationship' might enhance the international community's capacity to identify and exploit entry points for mediation with Khartoum.

Background

China has maintained comparatively long and positive relations with independent Sudan, which in 1959 became the fourth country in Africa to recognize the People's Republic of China (PRC). Beijing's support for Prime Minister Gaafar Nimeiri's suppression of a Communist coup attempt in 1971 laid the foundations for a period of good relations in the 1970s. In contrast to the Soviet Union's equivocal actions over the attempted coup, China offered to help train Sudan's armed forces and supply military equipment, reportedly

including eight MIG-17 fighter aircraft and ten modern tanks in 1972.³ Sudan benefited during this period from Chinese economic grants, interest free and soft loans, and technical assistance. China also mounted a range of aid projects following the 1972 Addis Ababa peace agreement that ended the first Sudanese civil war.

China–Sudan relations appeared to cool briefly following the widely-condemned National Islamic Front (NIF) coup of 1989, but in the wake of international isolation of the PRC for its violent suppression of student protests that same year, Beijing resumed limited arms transfers. Chinese business in Sudan continued to grow over the next few years. In 1994 the Government of Sudan (GoS) invited Chinese involvement in the development of the oil sector, and the China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) conducted a preliminary survey.⁴ President Bashir's visit to Beijing in late 1995 produced an agreement providing a favourable low-interest loan to Sudan and was followed by an agreement to finance oil development. CNPC then began operations in Block 6 (which straddles Kordofan and South Darfur states) and by late 1996, other foreign oil companies had arrived as well.

China's role in Sudan is widely recognized as critical to prospects for a peaceful resolution to the Darfur conflict.



Chinese special representative for African affairs Liu Guijin shaking hands with local merchants in al-Fashir, North Darfur, May 2007 © AP Photo/Xinhua, Shao Jie

Oil investment and production

Two main factors facilitated China's economic expansion in Sudan in the 1990s. The first was the international isolation of Khartoum due to its sponsorship of terrorism and, to a lesser degree, its tactics in the southern civil war (1983–2005). US-led efforts to contain Sudan's destabilizing role in the region, and to address ongoing human rights violations, reduced Khartoum's options for securing major oil development assistance.⁵ The second factor was Beijing's strategy of entering the Western-dominated oil market by finding unexploited opportunities.

Khartoum also considered Beijing an attractive political and economic partner. The relationship was mutually beneficial: Sudan made rapid strides in the development of its oil industry and China gained an important testing ground for the technical development

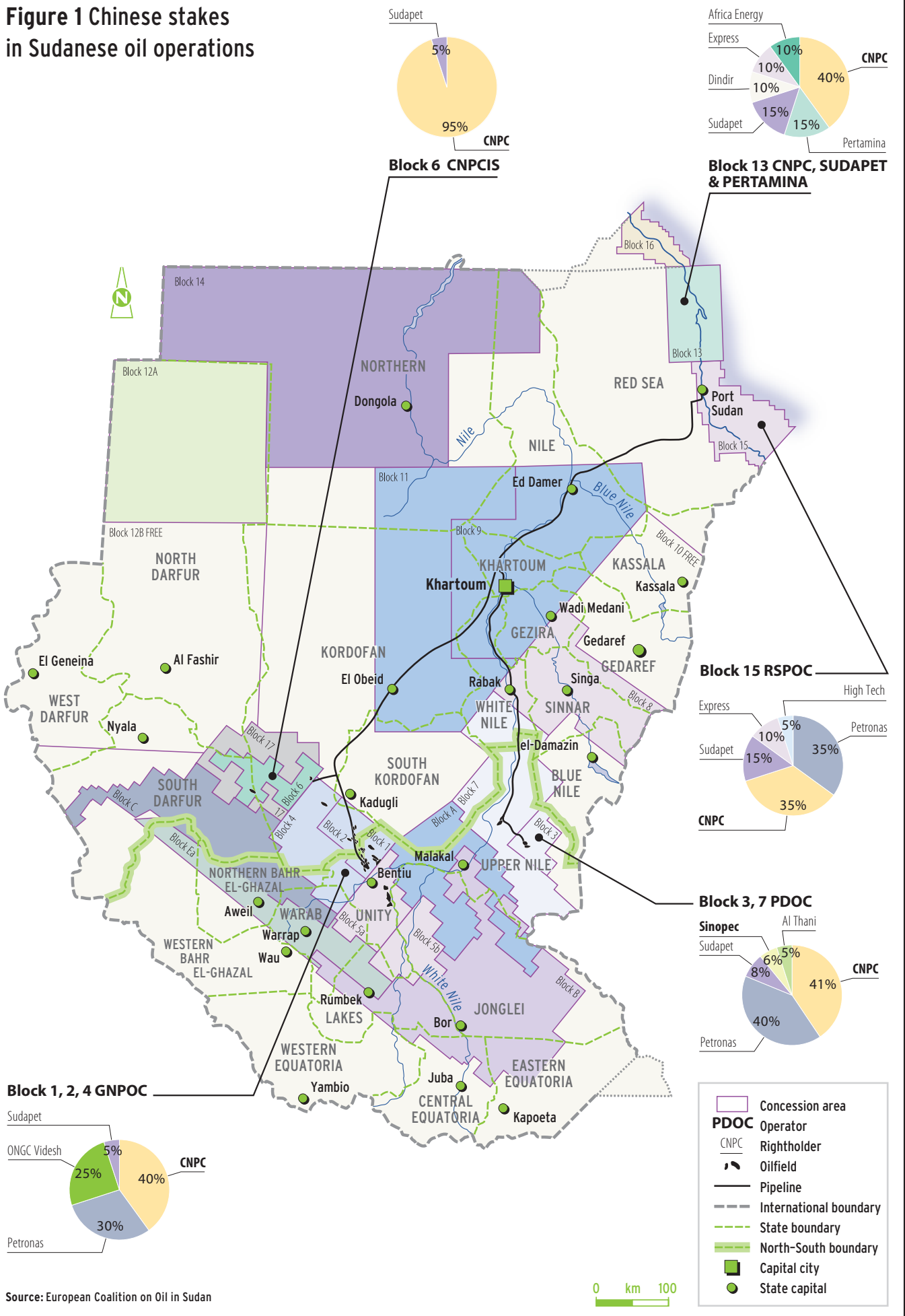
of its state-owned oil companies, whose proficiency lagged behind that of established major global oil corporations. Sudan has also served as a bridgehead for China into the African oil market, and a stepping stone for its ambitions to grow within the global oil industry. Sudan was briefly Africa's leading supplier of oil to China, providing 40 per cent of China's African oil imports in 2002 or some 9 per cent of its total imports. This declined thereafter, especially as Angolan oil exports to China increased.⁶

Today, Chinese oil companies hold the most significant stakes in its two main oil consortiums. CNPC has a 40 per cent stake in the Greater Nile

Petroleum Operation Company (GNPOC), established in 1997 to develop Blocks 1, 2, and 4.⁷ CNPC similarly owns a 41 per cent stake in the Petrodar Operating Company (PDO), set up in October 2001 to develop Blocks 3 and 7. Another of China's major oil companies, Sinopec, owns an additional 6 per cent of Petrodar.⁸ CNPC owns Block 6 almost exclusively (95 per cent) and owns 35 per cent of the Red Sea Petroleum Operating Company (RSPOC), which controls the partly off-shore Block 15 (see Figure 1). In June 2007 CNPC also signed a production-sharing agreement with the GoS to explore the offshore Block 13.

Sudan has served as a bridgehead for China into the African oil market.

Figure 1 Chinese stakes in Sudanese oil operations



Source: European Coalition on Oil in Sudan



Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, ex-President Gaafar Nimeiri, and Hassan al-Turabi stand among the dignitaries celebrating the nation's first oil flowing from the Heglig fields, South Kordofan, 31 May 1999. © AP Photo/Raouf

complained about its lack of financial and material means to wage war effectively against the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). But between 1999 and 2001, government oil revenues increased by some 875.7 per cent from 15.7 billion Sudanese dinars (USD 61 million) to an estimated 153.2 billion dinars (USD 596 million).¹² Perhaps as much as 80 per cent of this windfall went into procuring and producing weapons.¹³

Oil is an issue of fundamental importance in the wealth-sharing agreement between North and South Sudan. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed in January 2005, protects existing contracts from renegotiation and entitles the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) to 50 per cent of all oil revenues produced in southern oil-bearing regions (after the producing state receives 2 per cent).¹⁴ But the GoSS has accused Khartoum of undercounting oil revenues, delaying payments to the South, and a general lack of transparency in oil-related affairs.¹⁵ Because Khartoum controls the release of information about the extraction, refining, and export of oil, its monthly statements are impossible to verify. Thus, the extent to which wealth-sharing provisions are being honoured cannot be determined.

Arms sales and technology transfer

In addition to helping finance Khartoum's acquisition of weapons on the international arms market through oil revenues, China has also acted as a major arms seller to Sudan and assisted in the development of domestic arms production with technology transfers and technical assistance.

The first reported Chinese arms sales to Sudan involved financing by Iran under the rule of Sadiq al-Mahdi (1986–89). Then, in 1991, China delivered on an Iranian-funded contract worth an estimated USD 300 million, which included two helicopters, a hundred 1,000-pound high-altitude bombs, and a large cache of ammunition. A Chinese team was also sent at

China's oil development strategy aimed to turn Sudan into a functioning oil exporter. This entailed the construction of the required infrastructure as well as assistance with actual oil exploration and extraction. The GNPOC consortium constructed a 1,600-km pipeline with a capacity of 200,000 barrels per day from the Heglig fields (Block 2 in South Kordofan state), which previously had minimal infrastructure, effectively connecting domestic production to the international market. A Chinese-built Khartoum refinery was completed in time for the tenth anniversary of the NIF coup on 30 June 1999

and exports commenced the following month. An upgrade was introduced in June 2006, enabling the refinery to expand to 100,000 barrels per day.⁹ According to a senior oil ministry official, Sudan's production reached 500,000 barrels per day by July 2007, of which about 425,000 are exported.¹⁰

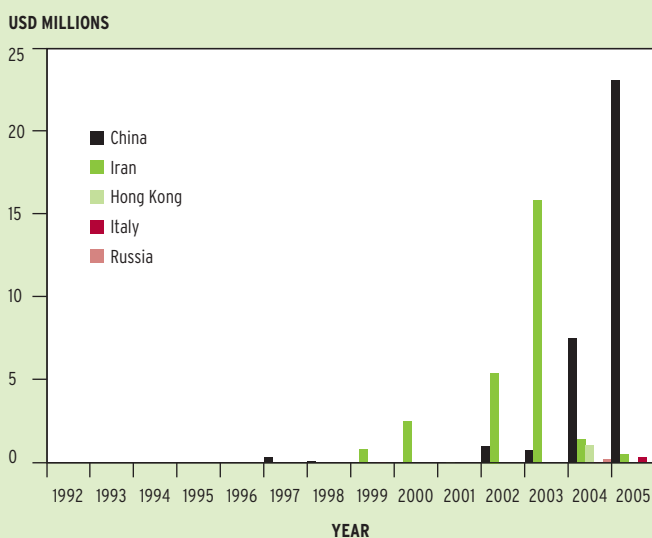
The growth of Sudan's oil sector has been deeply entwined with patterns of armed conflict in South Sudan.¹¹ Oil revenue became a key source of hard currency for GoS arms purchases. Prior to the increase in oil revenues in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) had consistently

Box 1 Unpacking Chinese arms transfers to Sudan

UN Comtrade data shows transfers of military weapons and small arms from China to Sudan valued at USD 1 million in 2002, rising to USD 23 million in 2005, the last year for which data is available. Over this period, China was the largest reported supplier of such weapons to Sudan, surpassing the second-largest supplier, Iran, by some USD 6.3 million over the period.

Prior to 2002, only two small transfers from China were publicly reported, in 1997 and 1998. Changes in reporting practices may be partly responsible for the data gap, but it is also possible that transfers were deliberately not reported for political reasons. Given that economic and military ties expanded from the mid-1990s, it is unlikely that arms transfers were not part of the cooperative arrangements. Nevertheless, available data shows that prior to 2002, Sudan's primary source of military weapons and small arms was Iran, followed by China and Greece. China appears to have become Sudan's largest seller of weapons just prior to the onset of the Darfur conflict, and has remained so ever since.

Figure 2 Reported transfers of military weapons and parts, non-military SALW, and SALW ammunition to Sudan, by year (1992-2005, in millions of USD), top five exporters



Note: Weapon types include:

Military weapons and parts: military firearms (930190), military weapons (930100), and parts/accessories of military weapons (930590 and 930591).

Non-military SALW: revolvers/pistols (930200), sporting/hunting shotguns (930320), sporting/hunting rifles (930330), parts/accessories revolvers/pistols (930510), shotgun barrels (930521), and parts/accessories of shotguns/rifles (930529).

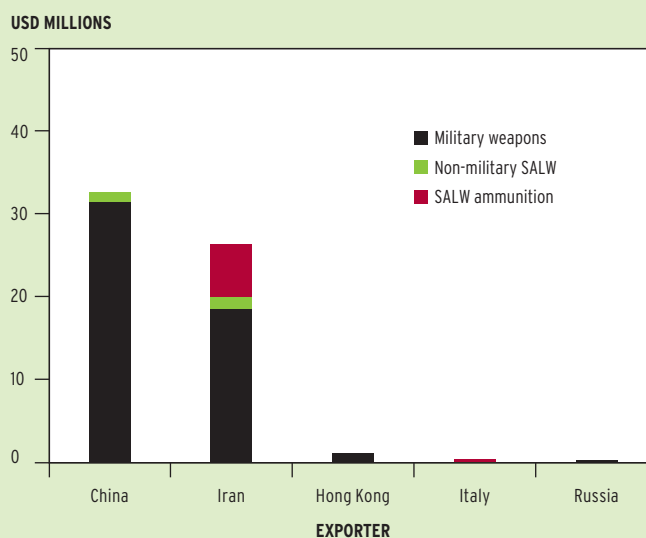
SALW ammunition: shotgun cartridges (930621) and small arms ammunition (930630). No transfers of those two categories were reported from China to Sudan during the period 1992-2005.

Sources: UN Comtrade (2007); Marsh and Jackson (2007); email correspondence from the GoS, 1 March 2006; Small Arms Survey (2006, p. 66, Box 3.1)

Figure 2 shows the comparative US dollar value of military weapons and small arms supplied by the top five exporters to Sudan from 1992-2005 by year. Figure 3 provides the aggregate value of these transfers over the entire period for the same top five exporting countries.

A number of caveats to this data are warranted. Although UN Comtrade remains the most comprehensive and publicly accessible source of comparable data on global arms, military weapons and small arms, it is far from complete. UN Comtrade relies on customs data reported by governments, which is typically provided by value (not quantity of items shipped or received), and countries tend to under-report the value of both their imports and exports. Some countries do not report on certain weapon types at all. As noted in HSBA *Issue Brief* 6, in the case of Sudan, the majority of trade data comes from import reports from the GoS, because very few countries report military weapons and small arms exports to Sudan.

Figure 3 Reported transfers of military weapons and parts, non-military SALW, and SALW ammunition to Sudan between 1992 and 2005 (in millions of USD), by top five exporters



the time to instruct Sudanese pilots and aircrews in high-altitude bombing.¹⁶ Military aircraft continued to be imported from China throughout the 1990s, including Changhe Z-6 troop-transporting helicopters in 1996,¹⁷ and at least six F-7M Airguard fighter jets valued at USD 66 million in 1997.¹⁸

There is also evidence that Sudan began importing Chinese small arms and light weapons (SALW) in quantity during this period. Arms caches uncovered in former GoS bases in South

Sudan in 1997 included large numbers of relatively new Chinese arms and ammunition.¹⁹ Hardware allegedly captured included artillery and tanks of likely Chinese origin,²⁰ anti-personnel mines, anti-tank mines, rifles, machine guns, light support weapons, anti-aircraft guns, and ammunition.²¹ In the Yei area (Central Equatoria state) alone, eight damaged 122 mm towed howitzers, five T-59 tanks, and one 37 mm anti-aircraft gun, all of Chinese origin, were recovered.²² UN Comtrade

and other public data sources begin to show evidence of increased arms sales from China from 2002 (see Box 1).

In addition to exporting weapons to Sudan, Chinese actors have helped to develop the GoS's arms manufacturing industry. In early 1999, NIF leader Hassan al-Turabi indicated that Sudan was building factories as part of plans to 'manufacture tanks and missiles'.²³ According to General Mohamed Osman Yassin, Khartoum was by then manufacturing ammunitions, mortars, tanks,

Chinese actors have helped to develop the GoS's arms manufacturing industry.

and armoured personnel carriers (APCs) and would reach 'self-sufficiency in light, medium and heavy weapons from its local production' by the end of 2000.²⁴ This boast has not been verified. A recent HSBA report indicated that independent researchers have yet to positively identify Sudanese-made small arms in the field.²⁵

Similarly, the exact nature and extent of Chinese technical assistance for domestic arms production is unknown, but the indications are that the Chinese have supervised arms assembly processes and assisted the construction of weapons factories near Khartoum. These include the Military Manufacturing Complex on the Khartoum–Medani highway, which reportedly specializes in light weapons, machine guns, and ammunition. Another industrial complex, known as GIAD, was opened by President Bashir in October 1999. Peter Gadet, a commander who had fought for the government, reported having 'seen military vehicles and tanks, rocket-propelled grenades, and heavy

machine guns being assembled under the supervision of Chinese engineers.'²⁶ The same Christian Aid report that quotes Gadet also suggests that 'PG-9 lightweight anti-tank weapons were among those being made in Khartoum under the supervision of Chinese engineers.' On 7 January 2002, the GoS paraded the hardware produced in its military complex in Khartoum's Green Square, with President Bashir and all available government officials in attendance. Tanks based on the T-55—dubbed the Bashir 1, Zubeir 1, Digna 1, and the Abu-Fatima 1—were showcased, as well as a 16-tonne amphibious armoured infantry fighting vehicle and a 10-tonne armoured mortar vehicle. Domestically produced small arms and light weapons were also reportedly displayed.²⁷

China-Sudan relations today Military

Since 2002, military relations between China and Sudan have gradually been stepped up. Following an exploratory

trip to Beijing by SAF Chief of Staff Abbas Arabi Abdalla in March of that year, a full-fledged military meeting took place in June. Abdalla and Sudanese Defence Minister Bekri Hasan Salih met separately with a high-level Chinese military delegation led by Du Tiehuan, political commissar of the Beijing Military Region.³³ This was the beginning of a wave of such high-level meetings in Beijing and Khartoum in December 2003, October, November, and December 2005, and April 2007. Participants included the highest ranking members of the SAF, China's Central Military Commission (CMC), and the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

These developments came as Khartoum was attempting to crush the Darfur uprising while simultaneously negotiating with the SPLM/A to end the long-standing war with the South. Faced with mounting international criticism and financial shortfalls, Chinese assistance during this period became ever more vital. During the October 2005 visit of 19 Chinese military commanders, the Sudanese minister of national defence, Lieutenant-General Eng Abd-al-Rahim Muhammad Husayn, suggested that Sudan and China had discussed a 'plan to develop and improve the [Sudanese] armed forces according to the demands of the peace agreement'.³⁴ It is not yet known what this proposal has produced, if anything. In April 2007, Haj Ahmed El Gaili, the SAF chief of staff, made a week-long visit to China, invited by Liang Guanglie, chief of general staff of the PLA. Further pledges to strengthen cooperation were made.³⁵

Trade and investment

Today, northern Sudan's oil-fuelled economic growth is primarily benefiting the country's riverine elite. Chinese investment is significant, and is joined by commercial investors from Malaysia, India, Korea, as well as Middle Eastern states. Sudanese foreign direct investment increased from USD 128 million in 2000 to 2.3 billion in 2006,³⁶ and China is now northern Sudan's most important trade partner. Bilateral trade, according to the Chinese Ministry

Box 2 China and the UN arms embargo on Darfur

UN Security Council Resolution 1556 (2004) prohibited all states from engaging in the 'sale or supply' of arms to Darfur. It is important to note that state-to-state transfers from foreign governments to Khartoum are not prohibited by the embargo, only acts that bring weapons to the Darfur region (North, South, and West Darfur states). Thus, it is extremely difficult to demonstrate violations.

A report of the UN Panel of Experts established under Resolution 1591 (2006) found that 'shell casings collected from various sites in Darfur suggest that most ammunition currently used by parties to the conflict in Darfur is manufactured either in the Sudan or in China'.²⁸ It also found that 222 military vehicles were procured from Dongfeng Automobile Import and Export Limited in China. The consignee was Sudan's Ministry of Finance and National Economy, apparently on behalf of the Ministry of Defence.²⁹ Norinco arms, including QLZ87 35 mm automatic grenade launchers, have also been identified on fighters for the United Front for Democratic Change outside El Geneina, West Darfur.³⁰

None of these reports proves that China has been or is violating the UN arms embargo. It is possible that China authorized the export of these weapons to Khartoum, and that Sudanese government actors arranged to bring them to the conflict region. According to Teng Jianqun of the China Arms Control and Disarmament Association, 'China strictly follows relevant international agreements and codes involving the transfer of military hardware and technology'.³¹ China has nevertheless recognized that it has a responsibility to prevent its weapons from reaching Darfur. In 2007 Liu Guijin, China's special envoy to Sudan, said: 'We will do our best to prevent the weapons from finding their way into the wrong hands and from doing the wrong things', though he denied that China was a major exporter of military weapons to Sudan.³²

Beyond oil, China has diversified into the mining and construction sectors in northern Sudan.

of Commerce, increased from USD 2.56 billion in 2004 to USD 3.91 billion in 2005.³⁷ According to the Bank of Sudan, China contributed 20.8 per cent of Sudan's total imports and took a 75 per cent share of Sudan's exports in 2006.³⁸

China's business profile in Sudan continues to be dominated by oil and energy interests. While statistics vary, it appears that the amount of oil imported by China from Sudan has declined in terms of volume from some 6.4 million tonnes in 2002 to 4.8 million tonnes in 2006. This represented just over half of CNPC's total production in 2006 (with Japan appearing to be 'the nation's single biggest customer').³⁹ The amount of Sudanese oil as a percentage of China's total oil imports has also declined from 4.7 per cent in 2004 to some 3.3 per cent in 2006.

Beyond oil, there has been some diversification into the mining and construction sectors in northern Sudan. Chinese participation in energy projects is notable, including work on the el-Gaili power plant and most prominently the controversial Meroe (Hamdab) dam at the fourth cataract of the Nile River.⁴⁰ There are signs, then, that investment is expanding, even after Sudan's removal from the list of countries that Chinese businesses are encouraged to invest in through special incentives from Beijing.⁴¹ Two Chinese companies are set to build a USD 1.15 billion railway linking Port Sudan and Khartoum. But despite this growth in economic ties over recent years, Sudan still represents a very small amount of China's foreign trade and investment (0.2 per cent and 0.6 per cent respectively).

Political relations

China–Sudan commercial relations occur within an established framework of good political relations, including high-level ties between key

members of Sudan's governing political and business elite and Chinese political leaders and corporate executives. Sudan's ruling National Congress Party (NCP) signed an official cooperative agreement with the Communist Party of China in 2003.⁴²

When Chinese President Hu visited Khartoum in February 2007, he visited the Khartoum Oil Refinery and also met Chinese Embassy staff, workers in Chinese companies, and Chinese representatives of the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) peacekeeping force. Prior to this visit, the Chinese government had contributed largely symbolic aid after the CPA, but President Hu unveiled a package that included an interest-free loan of CNY 100 million (just under USD 13 million) for a new presidential palace, as well as debt cancellation of up to USD 70 million.

During the same visit, President Hu also met with GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit.⁴³ Salva, then vice president of South Sudan, had led an SPLM delegation to Beijing in March 2005. The signing of the CPA in January 2005 enabled Beijing to deal with the SPLM as part of the Government of National Unity (GNU). In July 2007, Salva made a more public visit to China where he met President Hu again and called for further Chinese investment in South Sudan on the back of the limited business entry of Chinese companies into Juba. To date, however, China's political engagement remains overwhelmingly with the North and the NCP, although Beijing appears to be adapting to the new political reality in South Sudan, including the prospect

of possible southern secession in 2011. The GoSS, in turn, appears willing to engage with China.

Darfur

Darfur has 'internationalized' China's relations with Sudan to an unprecedented degree. This internationalization has had the consequence of gradually shifting Beijing's position on Darfur away from a hands-off role to a more active engagement.

The Chinese government's diplomacy on Darfur has been historically anchored in its support for the sovereignty of Sudan, a preference for Sudanese, AU, or regionally brokered mediation processes, and opposition to sanctions—especially oil sanctions. Beijing has clearly sought to protect its Sudan-wide investment and has been particularly wary of US intentions in Sudan. In steadfastly insisting on state sovereignty and the principle of non-intervention (or Khartoum-sanctioned intervention only), China has therefore been at odds with provisions of the African Union Constitutive Act and evolving UN standards on humanitarian intervention. Its response to criticism of this policy is that it is following guidelines established by the UN Charter.

Although China has threatened to use its veto to block the UN Security Council from imposing sanctions against Khartoum over the Darfur conflict, it has never done so. Its strategy has been instead to dilute the language of resolutions and to frequently abstain from voting. China has abstained from eight of 22 UN Security Council resolutions concerning Sudan and Darfur since 2001 (Russia has the next highest number of abstentions with six). At the same time, the Chinese government has offered modest aid to Darfur, including a USD 3.5 million donation to the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) in

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June 2006; by comparison, UN officials estimate the annual budget of the new hybrid force, to be known as UNAMID, at around USD 2 billion.⁴⁴

Since early 2006, Beijing's approach to Darfur has shifted towards a more pragmatic stance. The shift was signalled during the debate over UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1706, which proposed the extension of

UNMIS's mandate to cover Darfur. For the first time, China publicly encouraged Khartoum to allow UN peacekeepers into Darfur⁴⁵ and called for a 'comprehensive political solution' to the crisis.⁴⁶ However, the resolution's final language, which invited Khartoum's consent to the deployment of UNMIS to Darfur, suggested China's ongoing protection of Sudan's sovereignty. In

the end, this right of refusal allowed Khartoum to stall UN peacekeeping machinery for more than seven months.

Despite the uncertainty around UNSCR 1706, China has since publicly cast itself as playing a 'constructive role' in Darfur⁴⁷—a characterization that other countries and commentators are coming to accept. China expressed support for the Darfur Peace Agreement

China's official policy continues to be the protection of Sudanese sovereignty.

of May 2006. Its permanent representative to the UN, Wang Guangya, subsequently worked behind the scenes to help broker a deal on the 'Annan plan' in November 2006 in Addis Ababa, which called for an expanded UN peacekeeping role in Darfur. The US envoy Andrew Natsios later described this as 'a vital and constructive role'.⁴⁸

President Hu's state visit in February 2007 further showcased China's public commitment to a resolution of the Darfur conflict. After meeting with President Bashir, the Chinese government made public statements calling for a 'comprehensive ceasefire', acceleration of 'the political negotiation process' involving rebel non-signatories to the Abuja accord, and offering humanitarian assistance of CNY 40 million (just over USD 5 million) 'to help the people in the Darfur region improve their living conditions'.⁴⁹

These messages were reiterated and even strengthened by senior official Zhai Jun during his April 2007 trip to Sudan, which included important symbolic trips to al-Fasher and Nyala. Zhai Jun continued to call for Sudanese 'flexibility' while opposing sanctions—simultaneously appeasing international criticism and providing continued support to the Sudanese government. China also committed to sending a team of 275 military engineers to Darfur as part of the second phase of the Annan plan, and affirmed the need for pursuing a peaceful resolution to the crisis through a negotiated political process and cooperation with 'the international community to ensure peace and stability of the Darfur region at an early date'.⁵⁰

Whether these messages alone were responsible for Khartoum's subsequent reversal of its opposition to UNSCR 1706, the government finally accepted the 'heavy support package' of UN peacekeepers to the Darfur region. The

subsequent Security Council debate in July 2007 over UNSCR 1769, which led to the creation of the 20,000-strong UNAMID force that will be deployed to the region, concluded when language threatening sanctions was dropped.⁵¹ Despite the significant watering down of the resolution, the final text demands that aerial bombings cease and prohibits the marking of aircraft to resemble UN craft. It permits the use of force or 'necessary action' to protect civilians, humanitarian workers, and UN personnel under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. The hybrid force is also authorized to 'prevent' armed attacks, which could cover actions against GoS-backed forces, and is set to be mobilized very quickly—no later than the end of October.⁵² China voted in favour of this resolution, which was adopted unanimously.

Despite these developments, China's official policy continues to be the protection of Sudanese sovereignty. Beijing's objection, alongside Russia, to a UN Human Rights Commission report on Darfur is one recent manifestation of this position.⁵³ Nevertheless, talk of a 'quiet revolution' in Chinese attitudes towards non-intervention is increasing.⁵⁴ China's gradual acceptance of its role as a world power and its development of a more long-term economic and diplomatic perspective have contributed to this change.

Mounting advocacy and negative media attention focused on China over its human rights record and lack of positive engagement in Darfur have also likely played a role in recent developments. An international campaign that raised the spectre of a boycott of the 2008 Olympic Games, to be held in Beijing, clearly angered diplomats. As China increasingly seeks to be seen as a 'responsible stakeholder' in world affairs, it appears to have judged Darfur to be a liability that requires more proactive engagement.

China's diplomatic involvement in the Darfur crisis continues to evolve, and the indications are that it will evolve towards increased engagement. In May 2007, Liu Guijin was appointed special representative for African affairs with a brief to facilitate a political solution to the Darfur crisis.⁵⁵

Conclusion

China has been an important economic and political ally of Sudan since relations expanded from the mid-1990s. Beijing's significant investment made an important contribution to constructing and expanding the Sudanese oil industry. It has also provided, and continues to provide, a financial and military means for Khartoum to engage in its brutal campaign to suppress the Darfur rebellion.

Until recently, Beijing worked simultaneously to obstruct international punitive and humanitarian action in the name of protecting Sudan's sovereignty. While there is some evidence of a shift away from Beijing's unconditional support for Khartoum, it has continued to strengthen economic, political, and military ties. China has thus recently found itself in the awkward position of wanting to appear aligned with the international community over Darfur while seeking to protect its significant economic interests—a dilemma exacerbated by increased advocacy and media attention on Beijing over its lack of positive engagement.

These factors appear to have led Beijing to reassess its roles and responsibilities, and to adopt a more pragmatic stance in mediating between Khartoum and the international community. Today, China appears more intent upon contributing to efforts to address the conflict in Darfur, though it still prefers solutions that neither draw attention to itself, nor put its resources at risk. Given Beijing's undisputed leverage with Khartoum, engaging it further may be a promising avenue in the international community's efforts to bring peace and security to Darfur. ■

Notes

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- 1 Cooper (2007).
- 2 The full extent of Chinese arms transfers remains unclear. China does not declare its arms sales to the UN Register of Conventional Arms Transfers. There are also significant transparency problems related to UN Comtrade data on small arms and light weapons. See Box 1.
- 3 SIPRI (1973).
- 4 Jakobson and Daojing (2006), p. 66.
- 5 Khartoum's support for Iraq during the first Gulf War, its associations with Iran, its role in the attempted assassination of Egyptian president Mubarak in June 1995 in Addis Ababa, and its harbouring of Osama bin Laden, all triggered US pressure.
- 6 Vines (2007).
- 7 Other stakeholders in the GNPOC consortium are Petronas of Malaysia (30 per cent), Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC) Videsh of India (25 per cent), and Sudan's state oil company Suda-pet (5 per cent).
- 8 Petronas has a 40 per cent stake in Petro-dar, Sudapet 8 per cent, and the Al Thani Corporation of the United Arab Emirates a 5 per cent stake.
- 9 Reuters (2006a).
- 10 Reuters (2007b).
- 11 For further information, see Human Rights Watch (2003) and Coalition for International Justice (2006).
- 12 Gagnon and Ryle (2001), p. 35.
- 13 Goodman (2004). Former SPLA official Lam Akol, Sudanese foreign minister since 2005, is the source of the 80 per cent figure.
- 14 See Section 5 of the Protocol on Wealth Sharing, in the CPA, available at <<http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/sudan/key-texts-cpa-wealth.php>>.
- 15 *Sudan Tribune* (2006).
- 16 Sudan Update (2000).
- 17 AI (2006).
- 18 Shichor (2005).
- 19 Human Rights Watch (1998).
- 20 Investigators were not always certain of the source of certain materiel; in some cases researchers noted that particular heavy weapons could have originated in China or a number of other countries. But in the case of T-59 tanks, Type 75 recoilless guns, Type 69 antipersonnel mines, and Type 72A anti-tank mines there was no uncertainty. Human Rights Watch (1998), p. 18.
- 21 Among the Chinese-made small arms and light weapons recovered were 12.7 mm Type W-85 machine guns; 12.7 mm Type W-77 machine guns; 12.7 mm Type 54 machine guns; and 37 mm Type 55-1 automatic anti-aircraft guns. Recovered Chinese ammunition included .62 mm ammunition for Type 56 (AK-47/AKM) assault rifles; 7.62 mm ammunition for Type 53 light machine guns; 12.7 mm Type 54 machine gun ammunition; 37 mm HE-T high explosive shells for Type 55 anti-aircraft guns; 60 mm HE mortar shells; 82 mm HEAT projectiles Type 65; 85 mm rounds for Type 56 field guns; 107 mm HE rockets Type 63; 120 mm Type 55 HE mortar shells; 122 mm HE projectiles; and 122 mm D-30 HE projectiles. Human Rights Watch (1998), pp. 18–19.
- 22 Human Rights Watch (1998), pp. 18–19.
- 23 AFP (1999).
- 24 AFP (2000).
- 25 Bevan (2007).
- 26 Christian Aid (2001), p. 19.
- 27 Flyers handed out at this military display obtained by the Small Arms Survey identify the producer of the heavy weapons as the El Shaheed Ibrahim Shamseldeen Complex for Heavy Industries.
- 28 UNSC (2006), para. 125, p. 37.
- 29 UNSC (2006), para. 126, p. 37.
- 30 AI (2006), p. 12; *China Daily* (2006); and *Beijing Review* (2006), p. 19.
- 31 *China Daily* (2006).
- 32 AP (2007b).
- 33 Xinhua (2002).
- 34 SUNA (2005).
- 35 Xinhua (2007c).
- 36 Gettleman (2006).
- 37 Data obtained from the Chinese Ministry of Commerce website, <<http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/>>.
- 38 Central Bank of Sudan (2006).
- 39 Kroeber and Donovan (2007).
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HSBA project summary

The Sudan Human Security Baseline Assessment (HSBA) is a two-year research programme (2005–07) administered by the Small Arms Survey, an independent research project of the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva.

It has been developed in cooperation with the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UNMIS, the UN Development Programme, and a wide array of international and Sudanese NGO partners. Through the active generation and dissemination of timely empirical research, the HSBA project works to support disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programmes, security sector reform (SSR), and arms control interventions to promote security. The assessment is being carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of regional, security, and public health specialists. It will review the distribution of armed violence throughout Sudan and offer policy-relevant advice to redress insecurity.

Sudan Issue Briefs are designed to provide periodic snapshots of baseline information. Future issues will focus on a variety of issues, including armed groups and victimization rates. The HSBA also generates a series of timely and user-friendly working papers in English and Arabic, available at www.smallarmssurvey.org (click on Sudan).

The HSBA project is supported by Canada, the UK Government Conflict Prevention Pool, the Danish International Development Agency (Danida), and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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