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The Chinese Stance on the Darfur Conflict

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ABSTRACT

China's role in Sudan is one of the most closely watched and, in many circles, controversial relationships on the continent. This paper provides a Sudanese perspective and argues that, far from profiting from its close ties with Khartoum, the Chinese government has experienced considerable difficulties. As a result of complexities arising from the ongoing conflict in Darfur, China has gradually changed its foreign policy approach towards Sudan.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ARM	armed resistance movement
AU	African Union
CSO	civil society organisation
EU	European Union
GNU	Government of National Unity
ICC	International Criminal Court
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NCP	National Congress Party
SLA	Sudan Liberation Army
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMID	AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur
US	United States

INTRODUCTION

The rise of China and its role in managing the complex issues of peace and security have been the subject of considerable interest in recent years. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a major developing country, China's stance on the Darfur question is particularly important. Moreover, with significant economic and diplomatic ties to Sudan, China has come under close scrutiny and criticism by both local Sudanese and international actors who have accused it of providing unconditional support to the Sudanese government. In so doing, according to these critics, China is obstructing key international resolutions aimed at encouraging the Sudanese government to find a peaceful solution to the Darfur conflict and put a stop to the widespread acts of violence taking place in the region.

However, far from profiting from its involvement in Sudan, as some would assert, this paper argues that in reality China has paid a considerable price for its association with that country. The belief that China's oil interests determine its policies towards Khartoum and that these policies are essentially supportive of the practices and stances of the Sudanese government is widespread among influential members of the international community and international organisations. If not for this reason, then at least from their perspective the Chinese seem not to care much about the ongoing human disaster in the region, which has led to the killing and displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. Moreover, the international campaign on Darfur – in which popular, local, regional and international organisations have participated for the first time, along with a number of Western governments – has greatly troubled Chinese diplomats, who have felt that they were exerting considerable effort and expending precious time defending the stance of their country to try to improve its image in world opinion. By the same token, in the wake of such exposure and criticism, some Sudanese organisations and actors have for the first time in decades begun to view China with doubt and distrust.

How has China dealt with these international tensions and what has been its actual stance vis-à-vis the Darfur crisis? Has China really offered unconditional support to the Sudanese government and has this led to more suffering in Darfur? This paper will attempt to answer these questions by investigating and assessing the Chinese role in the conflict in the Darfur region from its outbreak in 2003 to February 2009.[1]

THE CHINESE STANCE ON THE DARFUR CONFLICT, FEBRUARY 2003–FEBRUARY 2009

China has never really been away from the centre of the Darfur conflict since its earliest years. Indeed, the country found itself drawn directly into the conflict when some members of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), which was led by Abdel Wahid al-Nur, kidnapped two Chinese workers (Li Aijun and Jia Huipeng) who were working on a well-drilling project for the local inhabitants on 14 March 2004. The incident occurred about 50 kilometres from the Buram area in western Sudan.[2] The inability of the Sudanese government and its official apparatuses to organise the release of the abducted Chinese workers meant that it was left to the 'friends of China' to do so. It is worth mentioning that the general secretary of the SLA at the time, Minni Arcua Minnawi, played an important

role in this process.[3] Moreover, it is probable that this abduction of two Chinese workers attracted the attention of the Chinese leadership, especially President Hu Jintao and the minister of foreign affairs at that time, Li Zhaoxing. Despite the issues that this raised, these Chinese officials and the Sudanese leadership in Khartoum did not believe that things would get out of control at this stage. Meanwhile, the Sudanese leadership, which visited Beijing repeatedly in that period, continued to convey false information about the situation in Darfur, saying that the armed rebellion there would be brought under control in a short time. They requested that China assist in confronting the emerging Western campaign on Darfur.

It seemed that the Chinese officials had accepted this official Sudanese version of events in Darfur; in any case, they were inclined, at least in the early stages of the conflict, to believe that the Sudanese government had been able to contain the problem and would therefore achieve a peaceful solution. They also believed that what was happening in Sudan was an internal affair that could be left to the Sudanese central government to handle. Thus, China continued to defend the stance of the Sudanese government, even adopting the language with which Khartoum explained the situation in Darfur. This was the view of most observers and a wide sector of the Sudanese political opposition in both the north and west of the country at that time. They even thought that the Chinese government was involved in obstructing several UN Security Council resolutions aimed at exerting pressure on the Sudanese government to stop the violence and improve the humanitarian situation of the population.[4] There was indeed close co-ordination between the two countries during that period. For example, when the Sudanese government rejected proposals for the replacement of the African Union (AU) peacekeeping force by UN peacekeepers, the rejection was based on the notion that at that stage African peacekeepers needed only financial support. So Beijing requested the UN to provide such financial support for the AU peacekeeping operation.[5]

However, by mid-2004 China began to shift its position on the Darfur issue, no longer offering unconditional support to the Sudanese government. This was a result of a combination of international pressure calling for China to adopt a 'responsible stakeholder' role in international affairs and, concurrently, trends within Chinese foreign policy circles that called for a review of Chinese foreign policy and the strengthening of efforts to co-operate with the other major (i.e. Western) powers. The proponents of better co-ordination with the West inside China's institutions and research centres expressed anxiety over the outcome of Chinese policies towards Iran, Sudan and North Korea. They described the policies of these countries as being ambiguous and hard-line, burdening Chinese diplomacy while sending the wrong signal to its friends in Tehran, Khartoum and Pyongyang that they could continue to ignore their countries' respective internal problems. In keeping with this approach, these Chinese institutions/research centres also called for a degree of co-ordination on Darfur and acknowledgement of the need to separate trade and investment in Sudan, on the one hand, and politics, on the other.[6]

Thereafter, China began a diplomatic campaign aimed at persuading the Sudanese government to change its policy through visits of special envoys such as Lu Guozeng, who met with Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir twice, in August 2004 and February 2005.[7] In similar fashion, the assistant minister of foreign affairs, Zhai Jun, undertook four visits to Sudan and met with the president and senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). These envoys urged the Sudanese government to improve the humanitarian

situation in the Darfur region, stop the killing and make a real effort to solve the crisis, and not to confront the international community through a hard-line approach or publicity only.[8] Chinese officials also took the opportunity to express their concern about the situation in the troubled region to senior Sudanese officials visiting China. For instance, during his visit in December 2004, Chinese officials asked the Sudanese minister of energy and mining to consider the importance of solving the problems of Sudan in a serious manner and providing economic, security and social assistance to the people of Darfur as quickly as possible.[9] At the same time, the former Chinese minister of foreign affairs, Li Zhaoxing, and his successor, Yang Jiechi, expressed their concern about the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Darfur. Some Sudanese diplomats and Chinese officials confirmed that during this period the Chinese were addressing Sudanese officials behind closed doors in a more blunt manner.[10] In fact, the Chinese approach towards the Darfur crisis continued to emphasise the absence of development in the region. From the Chinese perspective, a lasting solution would not be found without engaging with the development factor. Chinese Ambassador Liu Guijin declared that 'China will continue to support the development projects in the region; such as clean water supply and building agricultural technical centers, on the basis that the absence of socio-economic development is a part of the cause of the conflict'.[11] During this period, China began to provide support for the provision of water, electricity and health services to the inhabitants of the distressed region, with assistance amounting to $11.65 million by June 2008.[12]

Khartoum ignored these pressures and continued to pursue aggressive policies in Darfur, including maintaining support for the Janjaweed, convinced that Beijing would back such an approach as long as Chinese companies were given preferential treatment and the two countries remained tied through oil interests. The result was that China, frustrated by this lack of response, allowed the West to exert pressure on the Sudanese government. Following direct talks with the US government, China abstained in the vote for UN Security Council Resolution 1556 on 30 July 2004. Despite attempts by Sudan's ambassador in Beijing and appeals by the Sudanese government to China not to allow the resolution to be passed, the resolution implicated the Sudanese government in the conflict as a perpetrator of human rights violations and called for the rapid disarmament of the Janjaweed and the summoning of individuals to an international criminal court.[13]

Following the passing of the resolution, China continued to advise the Sudanese government to stop the violence and disarm the Janjaweed. Khartoum responded to these calls with increasing inflexibility, leading to a further deterioration in the security situation in Darfur.[14] In view of the indifference of the Sudanese government to Resolution 1556, China paved the way for further activism in the Security Council. Proposed by the US, Resolution 1564 threatened Sudan with oil sanctions if it continued to dismiss Resolution 1556 and the call for the expansion of the AU monitoring presence in Darfur and failed to end the atrocities being committed in the region. Despite the urging of the Sudanese government, China once again did not use its veto and abstained in the vote for Resolution 1564 on 14 September 2004.[15] The Chinese ambassador to the UN, Wang Guangya, said that 'China had abstained from constraining the adoption of the proposed resolution, for the sake of the enhancement of the African Union, to expand the spread of its forces, and to protect the supervisors of the cease-fire in Darfur'.[16] Mutrif Siddiq, the under-secretary of the Sudanese MFA, described the passing of the resolution as 'disappointing to the aspirations of the Sudanese people and their government … it withdraws powers from the

African Union, despite the bright words that were used, for the support and strengthening of the mission of the African Union in Sudan'.[17] Sudanese President Al-Bashir described the states that abstained from voting as 'the real friends of the Sudan'.[18] Despite this blatant opposition by Khartoum, China provided key support 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).[19] This was followed by China's abstention in the vote for Resolution 1706 on 31 August 2006, which expanded the mandate of the UN Mission in Sudan so that its operations included the Darfur region.[20]

This resolution had effectively transformed the African presence in Darfur to a comprehensive international presence. However, this was met with anger by Sudanese officials, who had requested China not to allow the resolution to pass, describing it as a threat to the national sovereignty of the country. Nafi Ali Nafi, assistant and adviser to the president and deputy president for political affairs of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP), openly criticised China when he asked, 'why is China waiting to use the right of veto in the face of unfair resolutions that target its friends?'[21] Not long afterwards Khartoum began its own diplomatic campaign to pressure Beijing to return to its prior stance in support of Sudan.[22] Indeed, there is evidence that the Chinese government, reacting to pressure from Chinese oil firms that had close ties to the ruling elite in Khartoum, sought to soften China's activist role. Hence the decision by China to make the deployment of UN peacekeepers in Darfur subject to Khartoum's approval. As the official spokesperson for the Chinese MFA stated: 'China supports the presence of an international peacekeeping force to replace the African forces, but with Sudan's approval.' It was also stated that, at the same time, China was 'trying to convince Sudan to assume a flexible stance'.[23] All this occurred at a time when Sudan strongly rejected the idea of replacing the AU forces, which its government had described as 'an attempt by the West to reoccupy the Sudan'.[24]

While Khartoum was maintaining its pressure on Beijing by playing the Chinese oil interest card, a harder line towards Sudan was being formed in the Chinese MFA. Moreover, in the Chinese Communist Party and state institutions concerned with the issue, there were growing calls for shifting support away from the Sudanese government and opening a common front with the West and the international community to continue to apply pressure on Khartoum. Thus, a new phase of direct Chinese pressure started, after China became convinced that the approach of reconciliation and quiet diplomacy was limited when dealing with the government of Sudan. In fact, it was the Chinese president who initiated this direction on 2 November 2006 when he met the Sudanese president during the China–Africa Summit in Beijing. Hu Jintao directly expressed the anxiety of the Chinese government about what was happening in Darfur and drew attention to the fact that China was also facing strong Western pressure, concluding by asking the Sudanese president to co-operate fully with the international community.[25]

Similarly, the Chinese government sent veteran diplomat Zhai Jun to meet the Sudanese leadership as a special envoy of the Chinese president. After visiting the refugee camps in western Sudan, Jun confronted the Sudanese president at a meeting on 8 April 2007 and asked if Al-Bashir could ameliorate the situation, because China was under tremendous pressure. Jun requested that the government of the Sudan accept UN

Secretary-General Kofi Annan's plan – known as the three support packages plan – but this was immediately rejected by Khartoum.[26] During Hu Jintao's visit to Khartoum on 2 February 2007, the Chinese president asked his Sudanese counterpart to accept the UN peacekeeping forces and to co-operate with the international community and the Security Council. Importantly, this signalled the fact that China was unable to take a stand against the Western position at the UN Security Council.[27] Speaking later, Liu Guijin, special envoy for African affairs, declared that Hu Jintao had applied direct pressure on the Sudanese president to make him accept the UN peacekeeping forces. Guijin stated: 'the talks between the Chinese president and the Sudanese president, in February 2007, had helped the Sudan to accept the spread of the international forces in the Darfur region'.[28]

The response of the Sudanese president was one of astonishment: 'We were convinced that China was not, and did not expect, to be an instrument for the American pressure against Sudan'.[29] The Sudanese concern was clearly demonstrated in another statement by the official spokesperson of the Sudanese MFA, Ali al-Sadig, who expressed his anxiety over the visit of the special American envoy, Andrew Natsios, to China in January 2007. Al-Sadig stated: 'China is a strategic ally of the Sudan. It should work with the Sudan, through the systematic diplomatic dialogue between us, and any American move towards Beijing is fruitless.'[30] Such statements highlight that Sudanese officials had failed to interpret China's emerging foreign policy activism more generally as Beijing began to express its intentions to co-operate with the international community over a variety of issues ranging from Darfur to North Korea and nuclear non-proliferation.

THE APPOINTMENT OF THE SPECIAL ENVOY

The new Chinese policy towards Darfur reached its climax with the announcement on 11 May 2007 of the appointment of a Chinese special envoy for African affairs, Liu Guijin (the former ambassador to Zimbabwe and South Africa),[31] who would be responsible for Darfur. China also announced that it was sending 275 military engineers to take part in the UN peacekeeping operation in Darfur.[32] By June 2008, 143 engineers had already arrived at their posts and China declared that the remaining members of its engineering mission would arrive in Sudan by mid-July. Moreover, China had also consented to the transfer of some of the Chinese engineers who were participating in peacekeeping tasks in Southern Sudan to Darfur to assist the Chinese engineering units in the construction of camps and the levelling of roads, thus preparing for the deployment of more UN-sponsored forces.[33] Yong Yu, the Chinese MFA spokesperson, referred to 'the readiness of China to co-operate with the international community to stop the violence in Darfur and return stability to the region', indicating that, 'China is prepared to co-operate with the US in this matter'. Importantly, she added that the US had played 'a positive role towards the solution of the Darfur problem … and that China and the US share between them a joint vision about Darfur, and both are working to resolve the problem through diplomatic means'.[34]

Behind this public shift in China's stance were a number of factors, including the fact that some leaders of the European Union (EU) raised the possibility of boycotting the Beijing Olympics scheduled for the summer of 2008 and the message sent by 108 members of the US Congress to the Chinese president calling on him to press Sudan to

take some serious steps to stop the violence in Darfur.[35] However, this public display of a change in China's approach to Sudan was, as noted earlier, already a feature of bilateral relations between the two countries behind the scenes.

With the announcement of the appointment of a special Chinese envoy, the Sudanese government informed Beijing that from its perspective the UN force was a prelude to the ousting of the ruling regime and the imposition of Western control over Sudan's internal affairs. It indicated that, if it lost power over Darfur by accepting the deployment of UN peacekeepers this, this might affect China's oil interests in Sudan.[36] The Sudanese president tried once more to get Chinese support to block the proposed US and UK sanctions, but Hu Jintao reportedly told Al-Bashir that first he would have to accept the UN peacekeeping forces and facilitate their task, after which China would negotiate with Washington and London to abandon the punitive measures that they intended to bring before the UN Security Council.[37]

Against a backdrop of deepening violence in Darfur, China joined the West in publicly pressuring Sudan on 31 July 2007 when it voted in favour of Security Council Resolution 1769, which authorised the UN to send a 26 000-strong peacekeeping force to Darfur.[38] The reaction of the Sudanese government was hostile and it once more threatened to fight these forces. However, faced with joint pressure from China and the West, coupled with the threat of additional new penalties, Khartoum accepted the deployment of the peacekeepers. But it was not long before it began to adopt new tactics to obstruct the execution of the resolution. This included raising many technical problems and objecting to the participation of some states in the operation, as well as insisting that the African continent provide the peacekeeping forces, thus delaying the whole mission for several months.[39] Furthermore, accusations that the Sudanese government was planning to sponsor an invasion of Chad in order to disrupt planned EU troop deployments there – which concurrently exposed the role of Chinese weaponry supplied to Chadian opposition militias – brought additional complexity to the situation. China, along with the other Security Council members, supported a resolution authorising deployment of the EU forces,[40] despite efforts by the Sudanese government to convince China to block the resolution.[41]

As a result of these developments and the persistent delays by the Sudanese government in fulfilling its obligations over Darfur, the Chinese envoy, Liu Guijin, confronted the Sudanese minister of foreign affairs, Deng Alor, at the African Summit in Addis Ababa on 31 January 2008 and informed him of China's anxiety over the situation in Darfur, asserting that, 'the patience of the international community has started to run out about what is happening in Darfur'.[42] Furthermore, as Guijin indicated in a rare public statement on the subject on 10 January 2008, 'the co-operation of China with states such as Sudan does not necessarily mean its approval of offences against human rights there … the Chinese Government does not support any massacre committed by the Sudanese government against its people'.[43] These statements indicate that the patience of the Chinese government had actually ran out, just as the patience of the international community had run out some time before. Following his attendance at the African Summit, the Chinese special envoy visited Khartoum. Reports indicate that he informed all the officials whom he met that the degree of frustration of the international community was such that it could lead to economic boycotts and a wide-ranging military embargo against Sudan. Moreover, that China would not be able to oppose these measures due to Khartoum's lack of co-operation with the international community.[44]

Despite this, Nafi Ali Nafi reiterated the Sudanese government's refusal to accept the deployment of non-African troops in the region.[45] Moreover, the Sudanese government escalated its military actions and bombarded the Jebel Moon area in western Sudan. The result was more killing and displacement of people.[46] The Sudanese government's continued dismissal of the calls from its friends in Beijing led the Chinese leaders to integrate China further with the efforts of the Western states, and on 8 March 2008 Liu Guijin called on the international community to 'speak in one voice' to influence the Sudanese government to bring an end to the crisis. Notably, he described the situation in Darfur as a 'humanitarian disaster' – the first time that China had used this language publicly since the outbreak of the crisis in 2003.[47]

Public concern and criticism marked the Chinese approach, for example Hu Jintao's use of direct language to Ali Othman Mohamed Taha, the vice-president of Sudan, during the latter's visit to China in June 2008.[48] Moreover, according to informed Sudanese sources, China did not respond enthusiastically to a request by Sudanese officials to assist them in getting a Security Council resolution passed condemning the attack on Khartoum by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and naming it a terrorist group. At the same time the Chinese government showed concern over the delays in implementing the Abuja Peace Agreement, which was signed in May 2006, calling for a return to negotiations and the resumption of the dialogue between the Sudanese government and the armed resistance movements (ARMs) in Darfur.[49] During the visit to Khartoum by Chinese Vice-President Xi Jinping, he directly linked the repercussions of the crisis in Darfur to China's interests in Sudan, pointing out that 'finding a peaceful solution in Darfur is linked to peace and stability in Sudan and the common interest of the two countries' and warning his Sudanese host that the deployment of international forces was proceeding too slowly.[50]

At the same time, the Chinese used international forums to press the ARMs in Darfur to return to the negotiating table. From the Chinese perspective, the West was in a better position to secure this latter aim. Liu Guijin used his visit to London in June 2008 to underscore this point: 'Without the return of the Darfurian Armed Groups to the negotiations table, Darfur will not witness any stability.' Moreover, he stated that 'pressure on one party alone [the government of Sudan] is not the suitable way to reach a comprehensive political settlement'.[51] Reinforcing this Chinese approach was General Martin Luther Agwai, commander of the AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) peacekeeping forces, who announced in May 2008 that he was 'not ready to risk the lives of his soldiers amidst the people of Darfur, who have decided to fight each other; and that military intervention in this conflict is not one of the tasks of the peacekeeping forces, as there was no peace there to be kept'. He called on the international community to exert pressure on the ARMs and the Sudanese government to demonstrate serious intent by returning to the path of peace.[52]

China actively participated in the Paris conference on Darfur in June 2007, despite the boycott by the Sudanese government and China's own doubts as to the intentions of the various participants, and also attended the Surt conference in October 2007.[53] Its unwillingness to speak for Khartoum in these settings caused Ali Ismail al-Atabani, a Sudanese journalist who is known to be very close to the leaders of the ruling party in Sudan, to say that '[t]he Government had no ally in that realm', presumably referring to China.[54] China did not hesitate to support the initiative of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) headed by President Salva Kiir Mayardit of Southern Sudan regarding

the unification of the ARMs in Darfur to produce a unified programme and vision to present to the Sudanese government and the international community.[55] China, in its desire to demonstrate its support for a peaceful solution in Darfur, was the first country to respond to the UN's call for the support of peaceful mediation efforts, providing financial support amounting to $500,000 for this purpose.

Continuing to assert that a political solution was the only way of ending violence in the region, China condemned the JEM attack on Khartoum on 11 May 2008 because it had led to the loss of civilian lives. China then 'called upon this Movement to return to the peace process' and start with negotiations that would achieve peace, stability and development in Darfur.[56] An important step was then taken when China expressed its readiness to play a mediating role between the ARMs and the Khartoum government in the Darfur conflict. Following his visit to Sudan in March 2008, Liu Guijin described the situation in Darfur as disastrous and stated that China is 'ready to operate as a diplomatic bridge among the parties to the conflict to assist in ending the crisis and stopping the bloodshed'.[57]

The contention of this paper is that perhaps the most significant event representing the transformation in China's stance vis-à-vis the conflict in Darfur occurred when Special Envoy Liu Guijin had a meeting with Ali Khalifa Askouri, the Sudanese opposition leader of the displaced people of Northern Sudan, at the UK parliament in London. Askouri urged the Chinese envoy that 'it is necessary that [China] adopts a new policy in dealing with the Sudanese problems', which should include the participation of the various political forces and civil society organisations (CSOs) in resolving the Darfur conflict.[58] Following this meeting, Guijin declared that his country 'endeavours to engage all the Sudanese political forces to achieve a consensus among the Sudanese' to bring about a peaceful solution to the crisis in Darfur.[59] It has been stated that certain Sudanese activists therefore considered the meeting between Guijin and Askouri to represent an important change in Beijing's policy, and they also expected China to take greater steps to work with CSOs in Sudan.[60]

THE CALL FOR AL-BASHIR'S ARREST BY THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

The crisis in Darfur entered a new and dangerous phase when on 14 July 2008 the general attorney of the ICC, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, called for the issue of a warrant of arrest for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Darfur.[61] Once more, Chinese diplomacy found itself confronted by a new challenge as a result of the Darfur crisis as the ICC call was issued less than a month before the opening of the Beijing Olympics. China, with one eye on the upcoming summer games, expressed grave concern over the ICC's decision. An MFA spokesperson stated: 'The activity of the International Criminal Court must be of benefit to the stability of the Darfur region and the accomplishment of the settlement of the case, and not the opposite.' Guijin refrained from issuing any statement about whether China would support such a decision, indicating that China would continue to consult with Security Council members and others to reach an understanding regarding the Sudanese question and the ICC decision.[62]

Meanwhile, on 17 July 2008 the *People's Daily* (the official organ of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party) argued that the ICC decision 'poured oil on

the fire and obstructs the efforts of the peaceful settlement and negotiations between the Armed Movements in Darfur and the Sudanese government'. It went on to describe the situation in Darfur as critical and what was required at that time was the enhancement of peace and the encouraging of dialogue among all the parties and not the threatening of certain parties to the conflict with penalties and arrest warrants.[63]

Having issued these public statements aimed at placating the Darfur activists and influential international organisations, Chinese diplomats immediately began conducting negotiations in Washington, a number of European capitals and Beijing to contain the impact of the ICC's decision.[64] Informed Chinese and Sudanese sources claim that telephone calls were made between senior Sudanese and Chinese officials exchanging opinions as to what the ICC would do next and their respective countries' possible reactions. According to these same sources, Sudan asked China to use its influence in the Security Council to prevent any further developments.[65] Meanwhile, the Sudanese representative at the UN declared that he was holding discussions with his Chinese and Russian counterparts in search of a formula that would effectively freeze the ICC decision.[66]

As China was focused on the upcoming Beijing Olympics in July 2008, the Chinese MFA (especially the departments dealing with the Darfur crisis) worked frantically to find a satisfactory solution to the Darfur issue. It conducted intensive consultations with the Arab League of States and the AU. Similarly, the Sudanese minister of finance, Awad Ahmed al-Jaz, conducted important talks in Beijing at the time of the Security Council's discussions concerning the extension of the UNAMID peacekeeping operation.[67] Co-ordination among the AU, the Arab League and China led to the passing of Security Council Resolution 1828, which extended the UNAMID mandate to 31 July 2009. However, the AU and China insisted on the inclusion of a paragraph in the resolution expressing concern as to 'potential developments subsequent to the application by the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court of 14 July 2008 and taking note of their intention to consider these matters further'.[68] The US had refrained from supporting the resolution 'because the language which was added will send a wrong message to Sudan and obstruct the efforts of achieving justice',[69] while Khartoum welcomed the resolution as balanced.[70]

During the debate on the resolution, the Chinese representative at the UN, Ambassador Wang Guangya, took the opportunity to call on the Security Council to use its authorities to freeze the procedures of the ICC's indictment of the Sudanese president. He drew the council's attention to the fact that, in China's opinion, no progress could be expected in the Darfur peace process without the full co-operation of the Sudanese government and described the decision of the ICC as 'inappropriate' and poorly timed, and that it would severely undermine the mutual political confidence and co-operation between the UN and the Sudanese government. He added that this indictment had been met with criticisms from international organisations such as the AU, the Arab League of States, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement.[71]

However, the Chinese stance came under attack from Islamists within Sudan for not going far enough, declaring it to be a weak position for that of a major global power. In the words of one writer:[72]

> Why did China use its veto rights only once to stop the successive penalties in the Security Council against the Sudan; while Beijing used this right without hesitation to stop a decision to punish President Robert Mugabe on the pretext that such a decision represents an outright

> interference of the sovereignty of the state and an offence against the immunity of its president. So, why Mugabe and not Al-Bashir?

While Sudan's official media were celebrating the passing of the Security Council resolution as a victory for the Sudanese government, China recognised that the ICC matter continued to pose a danger. Informed sources stress the importance of Special Envoy Zhai Jun's visit to Khartoum in early September, in which he delivered a personal message from Hu Jintao to Al-Bashir. He expressed his country's concern over the government-led attack against the Kalima refugee camp, which led to wide international condemnation. Jun warned against any irresponsible behaviour that might obstruct a peace settlement.[73] The Chinese envoy also stressed that criminal cases existed that should be addressed.[74] Moreover, he urged Khartoum to take into consideration the motives of the states that supported the indictment of the Sudanese president by the ICC.[75] Among the suggestions made by the Chinese government was to urge the Sudanese government to find a way to deal with the ICC,[76] the same position articulated by Zhou Yongkang, a member of the Political Bureau of the Chinese Communist Party, when he met Nafi Ali Nafi in Beijing on 16 September 2008. Khartoum did not respond to this proposal.

In this negative atmosphere, Qatar launched an Arab–African initiative. It was evident from the beginning that this initiative had the tacit support of important international actors and even some parties to the conflict within Sudan. France, the US and the Sudanese government all welcomed it, while the ARMs in Darfur did not take a negative approach to it, with JEM declaring its appreciation of the initiatives and other factions adopting a 'wait and see' attitude.[77]

China, on the other hand, saw the Arab–African initiative as an important opportunity to break the deadlock in the crisis. Beijing was very enthusiastic about it and called for co-ordination between China and Qatar. In discussions with Qatarian officials, the Chinese suggested urging the Sudanese sides to demonstrate greater flexibility in co-operating with the initiative. They also pleaded with Western governments to press the ARMs in Darfur to hold direct discussions with the Sudanese government.[78]

Through assessing information gathered from meetings held between Chinese officials and their Sudanese, Western and Arab counterparts up until February 2009, China's stance vis-à-vis the ICC crisis and the Sudanese government can be summarised by the five key points stressed by its officials. Firstly, the ICC indictment complicated the peace efforts in such a way that could lead to civil war and the dismantling of the Sudanese state. As such, Chinese officials called upon the ICC to freeze the indictment for a year. Secondly, they believed that it was important that the Sudanese government engage in dialogue with the ICC, even if through a third party. Thirdly, there should be a fair payment of compensation to the victims of the conflict in Darfur. Fourthly, what could delay a solution to the crisis was the continuation of differences between hard liners and moderates within the ruling NCP over the way to deal with the ICC. Finally, Chinese officials urged the Sudanese government to bring those responsible for criminal offences in Darfur to a fair trial, including the minister of state for humanitarian affairs, Ahmed Haroun, and the leader of the Popular Army for the Restoration of Democracy, Ali Kushayb. In addition, they advised the government to dismiss the former from his current post.

In light of these circumstances, this paper contends that at this stage of the crisis the Chinese stance was in fact closer to that of the West than that of the Sudanese government.

This is highlighted by the apparent similarity between China's approach and that of France. French diplomats also declared the need to begin procedures against Ahmed Haroun and Ali Kushayb for their alleged roles in committing crimes against civilians in Darfur, advocated the co-operation of the Sudanese government with the ICC, encouraged dialogue with the ARMs and demanded the non-intervention of Sudan in the internal affairs of neighbouring Chad.[79]

In fact, since China's abstention in the vote for Security Council Resolution 1593 in March 2005, which directed the ICC to investigate alleged crimes against humanity in Darfur, China had been well aware of its limited potential influence over such developments within the Security Council. In the case of any proposed resolution from its side for freezing the procedures of the ICC, the US (and perhaps also France and the UK) would use the veto right to abort such a resolution. For China to get any proposed decision passed in the Security Council, it would need the support of nine members in the council and no veto from any permanent member. Thus, the Chinese view was that this case needed to be settled within the Security Council and in co-operation with the Western powers, but that this would be extremely difficult without the Sudanese government becoming more flexible vis-à-vis the ICC.

According to many responsible Chinese officials, China faced significant challenges in dealing with the ICC due to the differences of opinion within the ruling party in Sudan between those who stressed the importance of dealing with the ICC and those who refused any co-operation. Such a lack of coherence was exacerbated by differences between officials in Khartoum and those in Juba, indicating that the Government of National Unity (GNU) was unable to agree on a unified national stance towards the crisis. It seems that China's advice to the Khartoum government, which Zhai Jun stressed in his September 2008 visit to Sudan, about the importance of dealing with the ICC did not bear fruit, as the Sudanese government continued to reject any kind of contact or any attempt at building relations with the ICC.

THE REACTION OF THE ARMED RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS IN DARFUR TO THE CHINESE STANCE ON THE CONFLICT

From the research findings of the present author, who conducted numerous interviews with Sudanese intellectuals and opinion leaders from outside the membership of the ruling NCP in Sudan, most of them see the Chinese stance vis-à-vis the conflict in Darfur as being in line with the stance of the NCP. From their perspective, China could not be an effective force for bringing about a resolution to the conflict.[80]

In fact, opposition forces outside the government do not stand alone in this regard, as officials within the partner party of the GNU, the SPLM, also share this opinion. At the time that the NCP government rejected the presence of international forces in Sudan, the general secretary of the SPLM, Fagan Amom, appealed to the government to accept Resolution 1706, stating that 'the rejection by the National Congress Party of the international resolution worsens the situation in Darfur'.[81] Likewise, Minni Minnawi, the senior presidential assistant of the Sudanese president (who is also the leader of the SLA and a signatory of the May 2006 Abuja Peace Agreement) declared that the ruling NCP does not wish to implement the Abuja Agreement and is placing major obstacles in the

way of its implementation.[82] Some of his adherents have consistently complained that China ignores them, and one of them conveyed to the author that they 'do not know the reason why China disregards their leadership, even though they became a part of the central government'.[83] In addition, the adviser to the Sudanese president, Abdalla Masar, who is known to be an ardent defender of the government's policy in Darfur, called upon China to pressure the Sudanese government to review its stance towards the various international resolutions.[84]

In general, the criticism voiced by some GNU officials, CSOs and ARMs was calm as they waited for Beijing to listen to their suggestions. However, a major transformation occurred when the Chinese president visited Sudan in February 2007. The *Khartoum Monitor*, which is a close affiliate of the SPLM, took advantage of Hu Jintao's visit to criticise the stance of the Chinese government towards the conflict in Sudan and called on China to review its approach and pressurise the NCP leadership to address the conflict in a serious manner.[85] The Darfur ARMs also took this opportunity to launch a violent information campaign against the Chinese stand vis-à-vis the crisis in the region.

One public statement by the National Salvation Front (one of the factions fighting in Darfur) claimed during President Jintao's visit that 'China's record in the Darfur case was shameful and depressing' and also added that China 'supports the Khartoum regime without caring about the war crimes committed by it in Darfur, and that [China] continues to provide the international political cover for Sudan to continue its massacres'. The statement then called on Jintao to 'review the stance of his Government towards the Sudan and Darfur'.[86] Meanwhile, a senior source within the SLA accused the Chinese government of providing the Khartoum regime with weaponry and aircraft used in Darfur so that China could control the wealth of the region.[87] Through this source, the SLA asked the Chinese president to engage with all the people of the Sudan and not only with the government in order to correct what it considered to be China's negative image in Sudan.[88] Moreover, the SLA pleaded with China to apply pressure on the Khartoum government to swiftly implement Resolution 1706.[89]

However, voices critical of China's policy towards the crisis in Darfur were not only heard within Khartoum. Ali Khalifa Askouri, the leader of the displaced people of Northern Sudan (who is also a known political activist), surprised observers by holding a press conference in Beijing after participating in an international seminar about Chinese investments in Africa held in Shanghai. At this conference he criticised Chinese policy towards the Darfur crisis, indicating that 'had it not been for the support of China, the killing, displacement and burning of villages by the Khartoum government would not have occurred'. Askouri also called on China to pressurise the Khartoum government to accept the international forces so as to protect the refugee camps. Furthermore, he asked the international community to encourage China to end its unconditional support for the Sudanese government.[90]

In addition to Sudanese political forces, China's stance towards the crisis in Darfur was also perceived to be problematic among senior officials, journalists and public figures in Eastern and Southern Africa, such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who expressed their concern about the failure of the Security Council to exert pressure on the Khartoum government to improve the situation in Darfur. They warned against the Janjaweed's attempt to annihilate African tribes.[91] Moreover, Chinese embassies in a number of Western capitals witnessed protests by Sudanese who were joined by many European citizens,

writers and Nobel Prize winners against China's stance vis-à-vis the conflict in Darfur. The demonstrators delivered memorandums to the Chinese ambassadors in London, Paris and Washington, DC, demanding that the Chinese government apply pressure on the Sudanese government to accept the UN resolutions and co-operate with the international community.[92] This occurred at a time when the Darfur Bar Association had sent letters to the responsible Chinese officials, including Special Envoy Liu Guijin during his visit to Sudan, in which they asked the Chinese to press the Sudanese government to stop creating obstacles preventing the implementation of the various UN resolutions.[93]

However, it was the criticism by the CSOs and ARMs within Sudan that quickly turned from condemnation and the denouncing of China's policies to the threat of attacking Chinese economic interests in Sudan at a number of sites where China's oil companies were operating. In October 2007 JEM, led by Khalil Ibrahim, attacked the Defra oil field in the Kordofan area, a site managed by the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company, with which the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation is affiliated. The group abducted two foreign oil workers and released a statement claiming that 'the attack on the Defra field is a message to China which arms the Khartoum Government'. Moreover, Ahmed Togo, the senior JEM negotiator, indicated in a statement to Reuters that 'the arms which we captured from the government soldiers during the attack were Chinese made'.

In a previous statement, JEM had given the foreign oil companies a week to leave Sudan.[94] Although China responded to this threat on 25 October 2007 by asking the Sudanese government to take urgent measures 'to guarantee the safety of Chinese employees in the oil fields and other sites of work', JEM succeeded in making an additional attack on the Rahwa field in the Kordofan region in December 2007.[95] The JEM field commander, Abdel Aziz Nur, told Agence France-Presse after the attack that his 'forces had attacked the Rahwa field in its targeting of the Chinese oil companies operating in the region'.[96] This occurred at a time when many of the ARMs in Darfur had declared Chinese forces within UNAMID to be unwelcome, as they were not perceived to be neutral in the conflict, while Isam al-Haj, the official spokesperson of the SLA, accused China of obstructing the efforts at 'mitigating the humanitarian crisis which afflicted the people of Darfur'.[97]

It is important to note that the address of the Darfur ARMs attending the Surt conference in Libya on 27 October 2007, which aimed at bridging the gap between these groups and the Sudanese government, disregarded the role of China in reaching a solution to the crisis. For example, the address on behalf of the ARMs delivered by Taj el-Deen Bashir, the JEM senior negotiator, thanked the delegates of the AU, the UN, the EU, the US, Canada, the UK and Norway, but did not acknowledge China's efforts to resolve the conflict, despite the presence of the Chinese Special Envoy Guijin, at this conference and the considerable humanitarian assistance that China had provided to the unstable region.[98]

In reality, all the opposition forces to the ruling NCP contended that China could play a positive and assertive role in the resolution of the dispute. To this effect, Saddiq al-Mahdi, leader of the National Umma Party, stated that 'there is a necessity for the intervention of Russia and China in the international efforts aiming at the resolution of the crisis, so as to create a much needed balance in dealing with the foreign forces concerned with this conflict'. Moreover, Al-Mahdi asserted that 'China and Russia have long relations with the Sudan, and so they must be involved in the solution so that the matter shall not be confined only to the efforts of the US and the European Union'.[99] It is possible that this

call for China's full participation in the international efforts to resolve the crisis is also a result of Al-Mahdi's concerns about the intentions of the US and its European allies in Sudan.

THE OFFICIAL REACTIONS OF THE WEST TO CHINESE POLICY IN DARFUR

As is well known, the criticism of China's initial role in the crisis put forward by the ARMs both within Sudan and abroad occurred within the context of wider international pressure on China. Moreover, many of the opposition groups within Sudan gained international support, for example, from the American film director Steven Spielberg, who withdrew from his post as a consultant for the Beijing Olympics.[100] In addition, China was exposed to significant pressure from EU ministers of foreign affairs during the 8th Asia–Europe Meeting in Germany in May 2007.[101] At the same time, more than a hundred members of the UK parliament sent a message to the Chinese president, Hu Jintao, on 29 October 2007 appealing to China to review its policy towards Sudan and to try to convince the Sudanese government to stop attacks against civilians, disarm its militias, co-operate with the ICC and facilitate relief operations.[102] Meanwhile, some European representatives encouraged the EU to maintain the arms ban that had been imposed on China since 1989 until it suspends its exports of arms to Sudan. Similarly, US Jewish organisations called upon Jews to boycott the Olympic Games in Beijing due to China's support for the Sudanese government, which, they claimed, oppressed the people of Darfur.[103] In the past, these Jewish organisations had followed Israeli policy, which avoided directing any criticism against China.

China's more active policy regarding the Darfur crisis was well received within Western official circles. The US president at the time, George W. Bush, commented on China's positive role in the crisis when he met the Chinese president at the White House in April 2006 and, moreover, at the G8 summit in June 2007, he described China as a principal stakeholder that shared several strategic interests with the US.[104] In addition, several aides of the US president commended the Chinese efforts at solving the crisis in Darfur, such as US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who affirmed that 'the US highly appreciates the positive role which China plays in Darfur'.[105] The US special envoy to Sudan, Andrew Natsios, reasserted this position in stating that it was 'because of the influence of China that Khartoum accepted the Security Council Resolution [for] the deployment of the UN–AU Hybrid Mission in July 2007'. Moreover, he added that 'the Chinese are making many positive initiatives, even when we did not ask them to'.[106]

China's new foreign policy activism, with the shift on Darfur being its clearest expression, has contributed to the recognition by Western countries of China's importance to development and peace in the world. President Nicolas Sarkozy of France underscored this point when he declared that '[m]ajor world problems cannot be solved without the co-operation and contribution of China' when referring to a number international crises such as the cases of nuclear proliferation by North Korea and Iran, as well as the humanitarian situation in Darfur.[107] At the regional level, the Arab League praised China's contributions to international stability and peace, especially its role in the Darfur question and its ongoing efforts to find a comprehensive solution to the crisis.[108]

CONCLUSION

After assessing China's role in the Darfur conflict since its outbreak in 2003, it is evident that the country had initially accepted the official Sudanese position and to a great extent supported the Sudanese government in the UN Security Council. As a permanent member of the council, China's Sudan policy at the early stages of the conflict served to obstruct many UN resolutions aimed at improving conditions in the region for the protection of the local population and forcing the Sudanese government to suspend its support for the violent acts taking place in Darfur. It is apparent that the Chinese declarations of support for the Sudanese government had been based on Khartoum's assurances to China that it (i.e. the Sudanese government) was dealing with the situation in Darfur.

However, China began to reassess its role vis-à-vis the crisis after it realised that there was a gap between official government rhetoric and the reality on the ground in the region. From December 2004, notably prior to the launching of the 'Genocide Olympics' campaign, China began to express its concern over the deterioration of the situation in the region by advising the Sudanese government to actively address the Darfur crisis. Moreover, on 30 July 2004 China effectively opened the door for Western powers to exert pressure on Khartoum by abstaining in the vote for Security Council Resolution 1556, which demanded that the government of Sudan fulfil its commitments to disarm the Janjaweed militias and bring its leaders who had carried out human rights violations in Darfur to justice.

This study has also revealed a further shift in China's stance since November 2006 when China began to apply direct pressure on the Sudanese government to co-operate with the international community and not to put obstacles in the way of the deployment of an international peacekeeping force in the Darfur region. It is evident that China's intervention in the Sudan at this stage led to the NCP government's acceptance of the deployment of UNAMID, as set out in Resolution 1769, and thus to Khartoum's increased flexibility in its dealings with the international community. Furthermore, this research has exposed the disconnection between the Sudanese and Chinese official positions towards the conflict from 2007, as China voted in support of each of the Security Council resolutions that aimed to exert further pressure on the Khartoum government. In June 2008, China supported the Security Council president's statement reiterating that the government of Sudan should co-operate with the ICC in its investigation of crimes committed by the parties to the conflict. The Sudanese government, on the other hand, considered this statement as outright interference in Sudan's internal affairs. Moreover, China participated in several international forums and conferences, such as the Paris conference in June 2008, that attempted to seek ways to end the violence in Darfur, despite their rejection by the Khartoum government as a distraction from current peace efforts.

Throughout this period, China continued to apply pressure on the Sudanese government by assuring its officials that only a peaceful solution to the conflict would bring an end to the crisis. Chinese diplomats engaged with their counterparts in both the West and Khartoum in the search not only for a political settlement of the ICC issue, but also for a comprehensive solution to the conflict in the Darfur region. However, China also began to emphasise that only by exerting pressure on all parties to the conflict to negotiate could a political settlement be achieved. As such, Chinese diplomats called upon their counterparts in the West to influence the ARMs in Darfur to engage in dialogue and took

an important step in declaring China's intention to mediate between the ARMs and the Khartoum government in the conflict.

However, Beijing ultimately did not succeed in this mediation role despite repeated calls to the ARMs to sit down at the negotiating table. While China certainly appeared to provide unconditional support for the Khartoum government in the initial stages of the conflict, the ARMs failed to recognise the shift in the Chinese stance towards the conflict and so continued their criticism of China's relationship with the government and the targeting of China's economic interests in Sudan. As such, they were unable to utilise this change in China's policy, which had widened the space for dialogue and given ARMs the opportunity to engage with such an influential member of the UN Security Council. By the same token, it is evident that China did not make a concerted effort to reassure the ARMS of its intention to bring about a peaceful solution to the conflict and thus build stronger relations with them. This paper therefore contends that the impact of China as a mediator in the conflict will remain limited unless it is able to establish balanced relations with all the key political forces in the Sudan rather than dealing only with the Khartoum government.

The critical stance of CSOs and activists in the West during the latter stages of the crisis was similar to that of the ARMs in Sudan, as they too did not grasp the shift in China's approach to the conflict in Darfur. Their call to boycott the Olympic Games in 2008 occurred at a time when Western governments had begun to acknowledge the transformation in Beijing's policy, as both the US and France commended China for the key role it played in persuading the Sudanese government to accept the deployment of UNAMID in 2007. As this paper has revealed, China had found its policy of 'unconditional' support for the government to be under strain as early as 2004, and the pressure that it began to exert on Sudan in response to the reality on the ground in Darfur led to Khartoum's acceptance of a number of crucial decisions pertaining to the conflict prior to the deployment of UNAMID. However, despite this shift in China's approach, Western governments and the media continued to criticise China over its perceived unconditional ties with the government in Khartoum during this period.

As a rising power, China is relatively new to the challenge of managing the complex issues of peace and security abroad. But in the case of Darfur, Chinese diplomats soon became aware that their policy of unconditional support for the Khartoum government and 'non-interference' in the internal affairs of the Sudanese state would conflict with China's wider interest of reassuring the West of its role as a responsible stakeholder in the international community. Thus, in this context, a more effective approach on the part of the international community towards China would have been to abstain from criticism and to acknowledge and encourage the latter's gradual shift towards this new policy activism at an earlier stage of the crisis.

In turn, however, the paper contends that there is an urgent need for China, as an emerging major player in the international arena, to establish research centres and institutes such as those in the West to provide decision makers with timely analysis and policy recommendations regarding conflicts, such as Darfur, in which China could play a pivotal role in the future. Moreover, a new development has occurred with the internationalisation of the Darfur conflict, which has implications for the wider perception of China's expanding presence on the African continent. The gathering of hundreds of Sudanese protesters and their supporters from a number of African countries at Chinese

embassies abroad signalled that the Darfur crisis may have distorted the historically positive image of China's role on the continent in the minds of Sudanese and Africans more generally. Consequentially, China will need to engage with African civil society in order to improve its image vis-à-vis public opinion in the future.

ENDNOTES

1 It should be stressed at the outset that this study is concerned with the Chinese position on the conflict in Darfur. It does not discuss the historical, economic, environmental, social or political conditions that led up to this conflict, nor the approaches needed to deal with it. For anyone interested in these dimensions of the crisis, many studies dealing with its roots are available from both inside and outside Sudan.

2 *China View*, 'Antigovernment militants abduct workers in Sudan, rescued', 27 March 2004, http://www.chinaview.cn; see also *People's Daily Online*, 18 & 23 March 2004, http://www.peoplesdaily-online.com/.

3 Anonymous informed source. Minnawi later broke away and formed his own faction of the SLA.

4 Xinhua News Agency, 1 September 2006; see also *People's Daily Online*, 30 January 2006; 24 October 2006, http://www.peoplesdaily-online.com/; *International Herald Tribune*, 2 & 3 September 2006; statement by Liu Jianqiao, official spokesperson of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), press conference, 2 November 2006.

5 Notice that the official spokesperson of the Chinese MFA, Yu Jiang, quickly announced in a press conference that 'China hopes' that the Security Council would pass a resolution offering financial support to the African peacekeeping forces in Sudan at the earliest possible time; *People's Daily Online*, 30 January 2006, http://www.peoplesdaily-online.com/.

6 Ahmed GK, 'Major changes in Chinese foreign policy', *Strategic Studies Journal*, 4, 11, Spring 2008, pp. 71–108.

7 Ahmed GK, 'Why China did not use its veto to abort international resolution no. 1593', *Al-Sahafa*, 14 April 2005 (in Arabic). See also *Sudanese Online*, 16 April 2005; 16 January 2007; 23 February 2007, http://www.sudaneseonline.com/; Xinhua News Agency, 'China envoy visits the Sudan on ties', 19 February 2005; see also *People's Daily Online*, 17 August 2004, http://www.peoplesdaily-online.com/. In an attempt to explain the Chinese position regarding the Darfur crisis, Zhai Jun, then director of the West Asia and North Africa Department at the Chinese MFA, met with Arab ambassadors in Beijing on 23 August 2004 and informed them of the results of the visit of Lu Guozeng, assistant minister of foreign affairs, to Sudan. Jun indicated that Guozeng had delivered a handwritten message from President Jintao to President Al-Bashir concerning China's stand on the conflict in Darfur. He added that China also called on the Sudanese government to implement its obligations and to deal with the Security Council resolutions, stating that penalties do not solve the problem. In this meeting, the Sudanese ambassador declared that Sudan would not accept the presence of foreign peacekeeping forces on its territories. In his meetings with the responsible officials in Khartoum, Guozeng reaffirmed the importance of co-ordination in order to avoid international penalties; see MFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), 'Minutes of the meetings of Zhai Jun with the Arab States ambassadors at the MFA in Beijing, 23 August 2004'. Beijing: MFA, 2004.

8 *Ibid.*

9 *Ibid.*; see also Xinhua News Agency, 14 December 2004.
10 Anonymous source; personal communication with a senior Sudanese official.
11 *China Daily,* 18 June 2007.
12 Xinhua News Agency, 27 June 2008.
13 Personal communication with a senior Sudanese official.
14 Ahmed GK, 2008, *op. cit.*
15 Xinhua News Agency, 18 & 19 September 2004; see also *People's Daily Online*, 15, 16 & 18 September 2004, http://www.peoplesdaily-online.com/.
16 Xinhua News Agency, 19 September 2004.
17 *Ibid.*
18 *Ibid.*
19 For the complete text of Security Council Resolution 1593 (2005), which was passed by the Security Council in its meeting no. 5158 of 31 March 2005, see http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2005/sc8351.doc.htm.
20 Xinhua News Agency, 1 September 2006; see UN Security Council, 5519th meeting, 31 August 2006, for the full text of the resolution, http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8821.doc.htm.
21 *Al-Rai Al-Am,* 6 April 2005 (in Arabic).
22 Private communication with a senior Sudanese official.
23 *People's Daily Online*, 24 October 2006, http://www.peoplesdaily-online.com/.
24 *People's Daily Online*, 27 October 2006, http://www.peoplesdaily-online.com/.
25 Private communication with a senior Sudanese official; see also Xinhua News Agency, November 2006; *Al-Sudani, Al-Rai Al-Am* and *Al-Shafa* during the period 3–4 November 2006 (all in Arabic); see also *China Daily,* 3–4 November 2006. Sudan continued to refuse to accept Security Council Resolution 1706 up to November 2006. During his meeting with President Hu Jintao, President Al-Bashir confirmed Sudan's rejection of the resolution and its non-approval of the expansion of the tasks of the UN Mission in Sudan with additional tasks to cover Darfur. He indicated that if this were done, it would undermine the sovereignty and independence of Sudan, therefore Sudan rejected the assignment of the peacekeeping task in Darfur to any entity except the AU. In that meeting, Al-Bashir asked China to support the AU both materially and logistically so as to allow it to complete its task in Darfur, according to an anonymous source; see Sudanese MFA, Asian Affairs Department, 'The African–Chinese Cooperation Forum, Beijing, November 2006'. Khartoum: MFA, 2006.
26 Xinhua News Agency, April 2007; see also *People's Daily Online*, 8 April 2007, http://www.peoplesdaily-online.com/.
27 *International Herald Tribune*, 3–4 February 2007; see also *China Daily*, 3 February 2007.
28 *South China Morning Post*, 11 January 2008.
29 *Ibid.*
30 *Al-Sudani*, 14 January 2007 (in Arabic).
31 In fact, and as an indicator of its desire to settle the Darfur conflict, China appointed other envoys to deal with the matter, specifically Ambassador Lu Guosing and Zhai Jun, the assistant minister of foreign affairs, who worked closely together.
32 *People's Daily Online*, 11 May 2007, http://www.peoplesdaily-online.com/; *China Daily*, 11 May 2007.
33 Xinhua News Agency, 26 June 2008.
34 *China Daily*, 11 May 2007.

35 *International Herald Tribune*, 12–14 May 2007.
36 Private communication with a senior Sudanese official.
37 Private communication with a senior Sudanese official; see also *China Daily*, 20 April 2007.
38 For the text of Resolution 1769, see http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2007/sc9089.doc.htm.
39 *Sudanile Online*, 12 January 2008, http://www.sudanile.com/; *Al-Sudani*, 18 April 2008 (in Arabic); *Al-Intibaha*, 24 February 2008 (in Arabic); *Al-Rai Al-Am*, 15 December 2007 (in Arabic).
40 *Al-Sudani*, 3 February 2008 (in Arabic).
41 *Al-Sudani* , 27 September 2007 (in Arabic).
42 *Sudanile Online*, 31 December 2007, http://www.sundanile.com/; see also *Al-Sudani*, 1 January 2008 (in Arabic).
43 *South China Morning Post*, 11 January 2008.
44 Private communication with a senior Sudanese official.
45 *Sudanese Online*, 25 February 2008, http://www.sudaneseonline.com/; *Al-Intibaha*, 24 February 2008 (in Arabic).
46 *South China Morning Post*, 26 February 2008.
47 *China Daily*, 8 March 2008.
48 *People's Daily Online*, 1 June 2008, http://www.peoplesdaily-online.com/; see also *Sudanile Online*, 'The Chinese president calls upon Sudan to do more about Darfur', 13 June 2008, http://www.sundanile.com/.
49 Private communication with a senior Sudanese official; see also *People's Daily Online*, 12 June 2008, http://www.peoplesdaily-online.com/. It seems that Beijing's decision not to support Sudan's attempts to have JEM placed on the list of terrorist organisations was a wise one, even though Khartoum was asking China, as well as its regional and international friends, to support this move. China thus kept sending its officials to international conferences in the US about the Darfur problem that were attended by JEM leaders. At the same time, the Sudanese first vice-president, Salva Kiir Mayardit, called for the activation of dialogue with the ARMs (including JEM, which his government was endeavouring to add to the list of international terrorist organisations).
50 Private communication with a senior Sudanese official.
51 *China Daily*, 25 January 2008.
52 *Al Ayam*, 'What is the route map for the Darfur crisis?', editorial, 1 June 2008; see also *People's Daily Online*, 26 January 2007, http://www.peoplesdaily-online.com/.
53 *People's Daily Online*, 'Chinese vice-foreign minister to attend Paris conference on Darfur', 21 June 2007, http://www.peoplesdaily-online.com/.
54 Al-Atabani AI, 'The movement is foreign made and the government has no ally', *Al-Rai Al-Am*, 29 October 2007.
55 *Sudanile Online*, 18 July 2007, http://www.sundanile.com/. The ARMs in Darfur amounted to 20 factions. By June 2008 they were collected into five main groupings: (1) Sudan Liberation Movement-Unity, led by Abdalla Yahya; (2) United Resistance Front, led by Bahr Abu Garda; (3) Sudan Liberation Army faction led by Abdel Wahid al-Nur; (4) JEM, led by Khalil Ibrahim; and (5) Sudan Liberation Army faction led by Minni Arcua Minnawi.
56 *People's Daily Online*, 12 May 2008, http://www.peoplesdaily-online.com/.
57 *Sudanese Online*, 7 March 2007, http://www.sudaneseonline.com/.
58 *Al-Sudani*, 24 February 2008 (in Arabic).
59 *Ibid.*

60 *Ibid.*

61 See the ICC indictment, http://www.icc-cpi.int/menus/icc/situations%20and%20cases/situations/situation%20icc%200205/related%20cases/icc02050109/icc02050109?lan=en-GB.

62 Press conference of the spokesperson of the Chinese MFA, Liu Jianqiao, 15 July 2008.

63 *People's Daily Online*, 17 July 2008, http://www.peoplesdaily-online.com/.

64 *Ibid.*

65 Private communication with a senior Sudanese official.

66 *Yahoo News*, 'Sudan's Bashir could escape war crimes indictment', 16 July 2008.

67 Xinhua News Agency, 31 July 2008.

68 UN Security Council Resolution 1828(2008), S/Res/1828(2008), 31 July 2008, http://www.un.org/documents/scres.htm; see also Xinhua News Agency, 'China urges Security Council to suspend ICC indictment of Sudan leader', 31 July 2008; *Al-Sudani* , 2 August 2008 (in Arabic.

69 *Ibid.*

70 *Al-Sudani*, 2 August 2008 (in Arabic).

71 Xinhua News Agency, 31 July 2008.

72 Al-Hindi ID, 'My testimony for God's sake', *Akhir Lahza*, 5 August 2008 (in Arabic). Al-Hindi is considered to be a member of the Islamic Movement who enjoys wide press influence and is an ardent defender of government policies. China voted on 12 July 2008 against a US and EU call for the imposition of penalties such as banning President Robert Mugabe from travelling, freezing his properties and some other penalties. That was because of the election fraud and widespread intimidation of opposition supporters by supporters of Mugabe's party, ZANU-PF, in Zimbabwe in the 2008 presidential elections. China called for the negotiations involving the AU and South Africa to be given a chance, on the assumption that dialogue is the way to resolve the crisis in the Zimbabwe. Both South Africa and China drew attention to the possibility that penalties would increase the complexity of the situation. Informed sources confirmed that South Africa had presented strong proof to China about the possibility of reaching a political solution to the crisis through negotiations. China also received assurances from Mugabe's government confirming that it was ready to sign an agreement with the opposition in the country. It asked China to delay the Western scheme in the Security Council on the basis that signing this agreement was only a matter of time; see Xinhua News Agency, 24 July 2008.

73 *Al-Sudani*, 31 August 2008 (in Arabic). The attack by the Sudanese forces on Kalima refugee and displaced people's camp in Darfur led to a new crisis within the GNU, to the effect that SPLM ministers withdrew from the three states of Darfur as a protest against what happened in the camp. The ministers who withdrew said in a widely distributed statement that they had decided to freeze their activities in the GNU so as not to become party to the crimes that were committed in the name of the GNU; see *Al-Sudani*, 1 September 2008 (in Arabic).

74 *Al-Rai Al-Am*, 1 September 2008 (in Arabic).

75 *Ibid.*

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77 *Sudanile Online*, 1 December 2008; 6 December 2008, http://www.sundanile.com/; see also *Al-Rai Al-Am*, 29 November 2008 (in Arabic).

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92 *Sudanese Online*, 'Sudanese protestors, foreign supporters in front of Chinese embassies in London, Washington, Paris and other Western capitals', 19 November 2007, http://www.sudaneseonline.com/; *Sudanese Online*, 14 February 2008, http://www.sudaneseonline.com/; see also *Alsharg Alawsut* (London), 22 June 2007.

93 Letter from Darfur Bar Association to Ambassador Guijin; full text available in *Sudanese Online*, 7 April 2008, http://www.sudaneseonline.com/.

94 Darfur rebels said that they had abducted two foreign oil workers; see *Sudanile Online*, 24 October 2007, http://www.sundanile.com/.

95 *Sudanese Online*, 'China calls upon Sudan to tighten security after the spread of the news of the attack', 25 October 2007, http://www.sudaneseonline.com/.

96 *Al-Sudani*, 12 December 2007 (in Arabic).

97 The leader of a faction of the SLA, Abdel Wahid al-Nur, refused the deployment of Chinese forces as part of the international forces in Darfur; see *Sudanese Online*, 18 December 2007, http://www.sudaneseonline.com/; see also *Sudanile Online*, 'Sudan Liberation Army reject the deployment of Egyptian, Chinese or Pakistani forces in Darfur', 28 December 2007, http://www.sundanile.com/. In fact, the targeting of the oil fields by the Darfurian ARMs started in September 2004, when an armed group attacked Charif field in southern Darfur and burned infrastructure. Ten government soldiers and five civilians were killed in the attack, of whom two were working in the oil field; *Sudanese Online*, 25 December 2004, http://www.sudaneseonline.com/.

98 A hard copy of the full text of the address by the Darfurian ARMs at the opening session of the Surt conference, Libya, 27 October 2007 was supplied to the author; see also *Sudanese Online*, 29 October 2007, http://www.sudaneseonline.com/.

99 Statements by Saddiq al-Mahdi, president of the Umra National Party and former prime minister, in his press conference in Doha on 27 January 2008; see also *Sudanile Online*, 23 January 2008, http://www.sundanile.com/.

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