



Briefing Paper

CHINA IN SUDAN: *Having it Both Ways*

BACKGROUND

It has become widely understood that China's influence over Sudan is "critical to Khartoum's economic development and international relations, as well as to prospects for a peaceful resolution to the Darfur conflict."³ This influence reflects China's role as Sudan's chief economic partner, major arms supplier, and key diplomatic supporter,⁴ and China has received substantial criticism internationally for the nature of this relationship in light of the ongoing atrocities in Darfur.

"We are getting support without conditions from China...there is a feeling of fraternity and equality with them."

Sudanese Finance Minister Elzubair Ahmed Elhassan—June 2007¹

To some degree, China has responded to this pressure. It has taken actions that appear to be designed to re-craft its image from that of Khartoum's enabler to one of a responsible global power concerned with ending Darfur's bloody conflict. China has, for instance, emphasized that it was during its presidency of the United Nations Security Council that Resolution 1769, authorizing the long-awaited peacekeeping force to Darfur, was passed.

This report offers a brief overview of China's current relationship with Sudan and its actions with respect to Darfur so far in 2007. It finds:

- ▶ **On the diplomatic front, China has helped push Sudan forward in some respects, but has remained its advocate in others.** On the positive side of the ledger, China did help facilitate the passage of Resolution 1769 as well as getting Sudan to agree to other potential steps towards peace. On the negative side, reports indicate that China worked behind the scenes to significantly weaken the terms of 1769, and China has regularly mimicked Sudanese arguments that aim to sanitize the situation in Darfur.
- ▶ **Economic ties between China and Sudan have grown much closer in 2007.** Trade between the two countries more than doubled in the first half of 2007. China also continues to sign new accords, such as oil development agreements, that strengthen economic ties between the two countries.
- ▶ **The military relationship remains troubling.** Two recently released studies by well-respected organizations have fueled concerns that weapons from China are being used against the people of Darfur, and that China is not doing enough to prevent such usage. Further, in the spring of 2007, China indicated its desire to further its military relationship with Sudan "in every sphere."
- ▶ **Humanitarian aid falls far short of other types of assistance.** China has extended some humanitarian aid to the people of Darfur in 2007 but such aid has been far less than the new support it has provided to the government of Sudan. A striking example was provided during President Hu's February visit to Khartoum, during which he announced several new economic aid packages to Sudan, including an interest-free loan to construct a Presidential Palace. The sums involved were dramatically larger than the modest amount of new humanitarian aid provided.



In short, it appears that China is now trying to have it both ways. It has taken some positive steps towards facilitating peace in Darfur, perhaps with the concerns of the international community in mind. At the same time, however, it has worked to ensure that its special relationship with Sudan is not threatened—indeed,

it has tightened its economic relationship with Sudan this year—and that it continues to receive the benefits from that relationship. On balance, China’s engagement in efforts to end the Darfur conflict appears modest and is outweighed by its much deeper, unconditioned economic, military and diplomatic support for Sudan’s government.

On the resolution of the Darfur issue, we have played a very constructive and even unique role.

China’s special diplomatic envoy for Darfur, Liu Guijin—September 2007²

The time has come for China to choose: Will it genuinely commit to do all it can to bring security and justice to Darfur? Or will it contribute to a solution in Darfur with one hand, even as it vitiates that effort with the other hand? As detailed in the last section of this analysis, China, along with other countries, needs to augment its pressure on Sudan to live up to its commitments to the international community and to take other steps towards peace in Darfur. Above all, China needs to make clear to Sudan, in a way that its continued relationship with Khartoum so far does not,

that until there is real peace on the ground in Darfur, and refugees can safely return to their homes, there will be no more business as usual.

THE DIPLOMATIC AND POLITICAL LEDGER

For years China has premised its trade policy in Africa and elsewhere on a policy of “non-interference” and “respect for national sovereignty.” One result is that China is willing to disregard rogue behavior by countries (such as Sudan) with which it has intimate economic ties. Nonetheless, since 2006, and especially in 2007, China has been pressed by other governments, the United Nations, and a host of other international organizations to apply genuine pressure on Sudan to adjust its policies, especially vis-à-vis the continuing conflict in Darfur.

Cognizant that it was paying a growing political price for providing unconditional political cover for Sudan’s behavior, but apparently unwilling to alienate Khartoum after having invested so much in that relationship, Beijing has walked a fine diplomatic line. High-ranking Chinese officials and diplomats have urged Sudan to accede to the demands of the international community and accept the deployment of an AU-UN hybrid force in Darfur. They have done so, however, always recalling their adherence to principles of state sovereignty, non-interference, and rejection of economic sanctions of any kind, assertions that deprive their intercessions of much force.

Specifically, while China was President of the Security Council in July, UN Resolution 1769 establishing the United Nations-African Union mission (UNAMID) passed, and China voted for it. China claimed significant credit for getting Sudan to accept the agreement. China also has committed—and has begun to send—315 military engineers to be deployed in Darfur as part of the UN force. Further along these lines, China offered to play a key role in the upcoming peace talks in Libya.



Before it would vote for the Resolution, however, China insisted on changes that significantly weakened its final text.⁵ Working with Sudan and South Africa, in particular, China succeeded in deleting language that would have set the stage for mandatory Security Council targeted sanctions were Sudan to fail to cooperate in implementing the Resolution. Moreover, the hybrid force’s mandate to “seize and dispose” of weapons found in Darfur in contravention of the arms embargo (UNSCR 1556/2004) was diluted in the final text; the force was permitted merely to “monitor” them.⁶

Further, in 2007 China generally continued to defend the behavior of the Government of Sudan. In March, China—joining Russia and a number of Arab and Muslim states—opposed the conclusions of, and called on the United Nations Human Rights Council to “ignore, a report from a mission to Darfur that blamed Sudan for continuing war crimes against civilians there.”⁷ There have also been comments from Chinese officials that have mirrored those of the Sudanese government sanitizing the horrors of Darfur. Chinese media and Chinese officials have always maintained that the “root causes of the Darfur conflict were poverty and a lack of development”⁸ and have been silent on the effects of Government and *janjaweed* militia violence against civilians since 2003. During a

May 2007 visit to towns and camps for the internally displaced in Darfur, comments from Chinese envoy to Sudan Liu Guijin echoed the official Sudanese position that Darfur, aside from occasional highway banditry and crime, is “basically stable,”⁹ just at the same time that United Nations and NGO aid spokesmen were decrying a steady degeneration of the already tenuous security and humanitarian situations.

THE ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP

For over a decade, China has been Sudan’s closest economic partner. China is Sudan’s leading trade partner; it purchases about two-thirds of Sudan’s exports, and provides one fifth of its global imports.¹¹

China is the leading developer of Sudan’s oil industry and a major purchaser of Sudanese oil. China has also developed much of the infrastructure of the country and Chinese companies have been assuming a larger role in the agriculture, mining, medicine and education sectors over the past few years. Also, in February of this year, China and Sudan signed a \$1.15 billion contract to build a railroad connecting Khartoum with the country’s largest port, Port Sudan.¹² In June, the China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) concluded a production-sharing deal with the Sudanese government to develop the country’s newest offshore oil block.¹³ China’s heavy trade and investment in Sudan helped generate a robust 11 percent economic growth rate for Sudan in 2006;¹⁴ estimates for 2007 are even higher.

Our assistance is free of any political pressure and helps resolve specific problems, a good demonstration of China’s peaceful development road and constructive role in the world.

*Chinese Foreign Minister
Li Zhaoxing—March 2007¹⁰*

The economic ties between China and Sudan became considerably closer in 2007. According to China’s Xinhua Financial News, trade between the countries more than doubled in the first half of the year. Total trade volume from January through June was \$2.4 billion, up 124 percent from January through June of 2006.¹⁵

THE MILITARY RELATIONSHIP

China’s heavy investment in the Sudanese economy, and the oil sector in particular, are of concern because of the manner in which the fruits of that growth and revenue are being used. Chinese spokespersons regularly justify China’s economic ties to Sudan as being key to that country’s development for all its people, but it is obvious that, in the context of the crony nature of the Khartoum regime and the historic concentration of wealth among Sudan’s ruling elite, that “a rising tide does not lift all boats” in Sudan, and indeed that the wealth produced by Chinese investment—which is unconditional—feeds conflict. The Darfur region has not received the economic benefits of this growth. To the contrary, Darfur has suffered because of this growth as Sudan’s rapidly expanding economy has put the government in a position where it can readily fund its military and its weapon purchases. According to a former minister of Finance for Sudan, as much as 70 percent of the income generated from oil sales has been dedicated to acquiring and manufacturing arms.¹⁸ This has perpetuated the North-South civil war (1983-2005) as well as the current conflict in Darfur (2003-present).

China has played a direct role in selling arms to Sudan and in developing its weapons industry. Chinese arms sales rose twenty fivefold between 2002 and 2005 (the last available data). “China appears to have become Sudan’s largest

In conducting arms sales to Africa, we carefully consider the local area’s situation and development model and stick to the spirit of protecting local peace and stability.

*Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman
Jiang Yu—May 2007¹⁶*



seller of weapons just prior to the onset of the Darfur conflict, and has remained so ever since,”¹⁹ concluded a July 2007 assessment by an independent research project at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland.²⁰

Much of this occurred in spite of a United Nations Security Council arms embargo.²¹ China insists that none of its transactions with Sudan violate the embargo; some of the most respected international human rights organizations disagree, and provide compelling evidence to support their claims.²² Their

assertions are reinforced by the United Nations Panel of Experts, which reported in October 2006 that “blatant violations of the arms embargo by all parties continue unabated. Weapons, notably small arms ammunition and military equipment, continue to enter the Darfur States from a number of countries and from other regions of the Sudan.”²³ Furthermore, the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to UNSCR 1591 sent a letter on January 26, 2007 to the President of the Security Council, which stated that “[s]hell 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.”²⁴

The above sources do not conclusively prove that China knowingly violated the embargo, or that Sudan used Chinese arms in Darfur with China’s knowledge. On the other hand, it is hard to believe that China is not aware of the use of these weapons and pieces of equipment in Darfur by the Sudanese armed forces, especially since the same UN Panel of Experts conclusively reported on it (with photographs) in a March 2007 report that was suppressed by the action of certain Security Council members, prominent among them China. There is, in any case, a consensus—acknowledged by Chinese officials—that it is incumbent on China, as a weapons exporter, to prevent weapons it provides from being used in the areas targeted by the embargo.²⁵ China, along with several other countries selling arms to Sudan, has not taken the necessary actions to prevent such transfers, and continues to sell arms to Sudan since the conclusions of the Panel of Experts and the Chairman of the Security Council Committee.

When you exploit oil and resources and nothing goes to the population, then you are financing the war against them with resources and that is negative.

Sudanese Deputy Central Bank Governor Elijah Aleng (formerly of the SPLM)—May 2007¹⁷

The military relationship between China and Sudan continues unabated and may even be expanding. Meetings between Chinese and Sudanese military officials have taken place in 2002, 2003, 2005, and 2007 at the highest levels.²⁶ After such a meeting in April 2007 in Beijing, Chinese Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan stated that his government “[is] willing to further develop cooperation between [Sudan and China’s] two militaries in every sphere.”²⁷

THE BALANCE SHEET OF CHINESE AID

In August, China announced it had sent the fourth of five shipments of humanitarian aid destined for Darfur. The shipment, valued at \$2.6 million, consisted of pumps, tents and blankets. The fifth batch just sent by China includes aid for Darfuri schools, generators, vehicles and pumps. It was reportedly worth \$5.1 million. (The first three shipments, consisting of tents and medical and agricultural equipment, were collectively valued at \$2.6 million.²⁸)

China’s humanitarian aid to Darfur—which thus totals less than \$11 million—is dwarfed by the economic assistance it provides the Sudanese government. During a visit by Chinese President Hu Jintao to Khartoum in February, he and President al-Bashir signed seven cooperation accords. *China provided a \$13 million interest-free loan to build a new presidential palace, by itself more than the entire amount of the humanitarian aid it has provided to Darfur this year.* China also committed to building a number of new schools. They also signed a zero-tariff agreement on 44 Sudanese commodities; Hu provided a \$77 million loan for infrastructure projects, as well as a \$40 million grant; and China canceled Sudanese debts amounting to \$80 million.²⁹

Chinese businesses, in response to criticisms that they are in Sudan—and throughout Africa—merely to exploit natural resources with no regard to the welfare of local inhabitants, have gotten involved in a modest amount of charity work. In January 2007 the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) signed an agreement with the Sudanese Ministry of Welfare and Social Development, pledging \$1 million to be earmarked for improved social services. Around the same time, CNPC committed \$900,000 to train Sudanese oil workers.³⁰ These steps pale in comparison to the level of investment of these companies in Sudan.

CONCLUSION

Even as the United Nations and African Union work hard to launch real peace talks, the situation on the ground in Darfur is deteriorating. Sudan's government has mounted new attacks and, according to the Secretary General of the UN, has been obstructing the implementation of UN Resolution 1769 by refusing to approve the list of UNAMID contributors recruited and agreed by the UN and AU.³¹

China is hardly the only country that needs to do more to bring peace and security to Darfur. Many other countries also need to contribute additional resources to the UN hybrid mission and to recalibrate their relations with Sudan considering its involvement in the horrors of Darfur. But, given its unmatched supportive relationship with Khartoum, the current responsibility and potential role of China in ending the tragedy in Darfur is unique, undeniable and absolutely indispensable.

While there is plenty of evidence that during the past year Beijing has reevaluated its relation with Khartoum, and has chosen to no longer unquestioningly support Sudanese positions vis-à-vis the crisis in Darfur, it continues to bolster bilateral ties in important ways. As Sudan's key economic, military and political ally, and the country with the most leverage over Khartoum, China has accepted its role as a major player in Africa and has made overtures to the international community signaling its willingness to engage in a more constructive way. If Beijing wants to demonstrate that it is unarguably committed to helping end the Darfur crisis, it is imperative that it:

- ▶ Use its position as a leading member of both the Security Council and the G-77 to push for the swift recruitment and deployment of the peacekeeping mission authorized by UNSCR 1769.
- ▶ Contribute helicopters and heavy transport vehicles to the UNAMID mission to help fill the gaps in these areas.
- ▶ Make clear to Sudan that if it continues to obstruct progress towards peace, this will damage Chinese-Sudanese relations—including trade and investment ties.
- ▶ Suspend all arms sales and military cooperation with Sudan until the atrocities have stopped.
- ▶ Continue to work harmoniously with other countries to strengthen the political peace process led by the African Union and United Nations envoys, and to pressure all parties to participate fully and unconditionally in peace talks.
- ▶ Publicly acknowledge the mass killings, human suffering, and displacement taking place in Darfur, instead of echoing Khartoum's talking points that sanitize these horrors.
- ▶ Provide greater humanitarian assistance to Darfuri civilians.

- ¹ Vivienne Walt, "A Khartoum boom, courtesy of China," *Fortune*, 6 August 2007.
- ² Edward Cody, "In China, a Display of Resolve on Darfur," *The Washington Post*, 16 September 2007.
- ³ "Arms, Oil, and Darfur: The Evolution of Relations Between China and Sudan," *Small Arms Survey*, July 2007: 1.
- ⁴ Lee Feinstein, "China and Sudan," *TPM Café*, 24 April 2007. http://www.tpmcafe.com/blog/americaabroad/2007/apr/24/china_and_sudan
- ⁵ This comes on the heels of eight Chinese abstentions on 22 Security Council resolutions concerning Sudan or the situation in Darfur since 2001. Of much importance, in August 2006, China also managed to incorporate language that requires Sudanese consent to the extension of the United Nations Mission in Sudan's (UNMIS) mandate to include Darfur. That text provided Sudan with an opportunity to bring the United Nations peacekeeping operation for Darfur to a standstill for months on end.
- ⁶ *Small Arms Survey*: 9, 10.
- ⁷ *Reuters*, "China, Russia seek to block U.N. report on Darfur," 16 March 2007.
- ⁸ *Reuters*, "China urges dialogue not sanctions on Darfur," 3 September 2007.
- ⁹ *Reuters*, "Visiting China envoy says Darfur 'basically stable,'" 23 May 2007.
- ¹⁰ "China urges Japan to face up to its history," *chinadaily.com*, 6 March 2007.
- ¹¹ Lee Feinstein, "China and Sudan".
- ¹² *Sudan Tribune*, "China Wins \$1.15 bln Sudan Railways Construction Contract," 5 March 2007.
- ¹³ *Sudan Tribune*, "China's CNPC, Sudan sign deal for new offshore oil block," 2 July 2007.
- ¹⁴ *World Bank*, "Country Brief: Sudan," <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/SUDANEXTN/0,,menuPK:375432~pagePK:141132~piPK:141107~theSitePK:375422,00.html>
- ¹⁵ *Xinhua Financial News*, "China's trade with Sudan in June 2007," 29 August 2007. A different news story suggests that oil trade has surged as well, with China importing five times as much from Sudan in the first five months of 2007 as in the first months of 2006; see *Associated Press Financial Wire*, "Report: Chinese, Indonesian state-owned oil companies sign Sudan deal," 2 July 2007. The Coalition has not yet been able to corroborate this surge from other sources.
- ¹⁶ "China not supplying arms for use in violence-wracked Darfur—FM," *Sudan Tribune*, 9 May 2007.
- ¹⁷ "Sudanese official cautions China on oil investments," *Sudan Tribune*, 17 May 2007.
- ¹⁸ Jeffrey Gettleman, "Far Away from Darfur's Agony, Khartoum is Booming," *New York Times*, 23 October 2006.
- ¹⁹ *Small Arms Survey*: 5. It must be noted that most countries underreport the value of imports and exports in their customs data, upon which the UN Comtrade statistics used here rely entirely. Therefore, this figure should be viewed as a conservative approximation; the actual figure is likely to be higher.
- ²⁰ Additionally, Amnesty International contends that "Sudan imported \$24 million worth of arms and ammunition from the People's Republic of China, as well as nearly \$57 million worth of parts and aircraft equipment and \$2 million worth of parts of helicopters and aeroplanes from China, according to the data from Sudan for 2005, the last available trade figures." Cf. <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAFR540192007>
- ²¹ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1556 (July 2004) established an arms embargo on all non-governmental actors in Darfur. In March 2005, the Security Council extended the ban to include Sudan's government as well.
- ²² Cf. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch materials, available online at <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAFR540192007?open&of=ENG-SDN> & <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAFR540192007> & <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/01/29/sudan15189.htm>
- ²³ *United Nations*, "Report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) concerning the Sudan prepared in accordance with paragraph 2 of resolution 1665 (2006)," S/2006/795, 2 October 2006. Additionally, China has provided technical assistance to Sudan's otherwise substandard arms manufacturing industry in the past. According to a Christian Aid report, a former military commander with the government stated in 2001 that he had witnessed "military vehicles and tanks, rocket-propelled grenades and heavy machine guns being assembled under the supervision of Chinese engineers." He also noted that "most of [the hardware] is unmarked...the government doesn't want to show where its oil money is going." Although these claims were made two years prior to the onset of the conflict in Darfur, there is no evidence that Chinese policy has changed in any significant way.
- ²⁴ *United Nations*, "Report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to paragraph 3 of resolution 1591 (2005) concerning the Sudan," S/2006/65, 30 January 2006.
- ²⁵ *Associated Press*, "China tries to prevent weapons in Darfur," 6 July 2007.
- ²⁶ *Small Arms Survey*: 6.
- ²⁷ *International Herald Tribune*, "Report: China, Sudan to boost military cooperation," 3 April 2007.
- ²⁸ *Xinhua*, "Humanitarian aid from China leaves for Sudan's Darfur," 16 August 2007.
- ²⁹ *International Herald Tribune*, "Chinese president tells Sudan counterpart to give U.N. bigger role in resolving Darfur conflict," 2 February 2007.
- ³⁰ *Xinhua*, "Chinese oil CPCN to improve Sudan social facilities," 1 February 2007.
- ³¹ UN Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General on the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur," 8 October 2007.



About the Save Darfur Coalition

The Save Darfur Coalition raises public awareness about the ongoing genocide in Darfur and mobilizes a unified response to the atrocities that threaten the lives of people throughout the Darfur region. It is an alliance of more than 180 faith-based, advocacy and humanitarian organizations. The coalition's member organizations represent 130 million people of all ages, races, religions and political affiliations united together to help the people of Darfur. For more information on the coalition, please visit www.SaveDarfur.org. To obtain footage from the Darfur border region, coalition events, various interviews, and more, please visit the Save Darfur Coalition media gallery at <http://media.savedarfur.org>. All footage may be previewed in non-broadcast quality and may be purchased in broadcast quality by filling out the purchase request form provided on the site.