

South Sudan Secession: What Implications for Darfur and Beijing's Strategic Policy Options?

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The political landscape of Sudan, the former largest country of Africa in terms of territory, has witnessed a dramatic change with the January 2011 referendum in South Sudan followed by the official division of the country into two separate independent entities on July 9, 2011, thereby sealing the fate of North and South Sudan. Such a situation presents crucial challenges not only to warring forces in war-driven Darfur, but also to major foreign investors such as China; hence the relevance of this paper that seeks to first provide an in-depth analysis of the role of Sudan in Beijing's foreign policy prior to South Sudan's secession before examining the implications that South Sudan's secession might have on the one hand, on the Darfurian political stance towards the Al-Bashir regime and, on the other hand, on Chinese strategic policy options vis-à-vis the region.

KEYWORDS: China; Darfur; Sudan; South Sudan; strategic foreign policy options.

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Sudan is a region that has been at war with itself through the entire history of its post-colonial journey with major ethnic and religious groups fighting one another and rebellious movements being organized along ethnic and religious lines. Such a political configuration of rebellious movements in Sudan (also self-proclaimed freedom fighters) has increased the complexity of the civil war between rebellious factions in Darfur and Khartoum on the one hand, and armed conflicts between Juba and Khartoum, on the other.

The multiplicity then of the fighting movements, the complexity of the configuration of the conflicts, the interconnectivity of the underlying causes (economic divide, growing inequality, social and political exclusion, marginalization, suppression and neglect from the central government based in Khartoum) that have led to the ongoing armed conflicts in the region, and the atrocity of the humanitarian crisis in the region have all made the armed conflict in Sudan the longest ever and one of the most complicated running armed conflicts in the history of African politics.

It is, therefore, in such a socio-political landscape that China has decided to invest and advance its national interest in the region despite the reality of a humanitarian crisis in Darfur that has been qualified as “genocide” by the international community.

By focusing on Beijing’s strategic engagement in the region, this paper seeks to first examine China’s involvement in the region by spelling out the strategic importance of Sudan in Chinese foreign policy, particularly before South Sudan independence in July 2011 (Section 1). It will then explore the implications that South Sudan’s secession would have on the Darfur rebel movement’s position *vis-à-vis* Khartoum (Section 2), before touching upon the role that Beijing will likely play after the secession of the South. Our third section will therefore attempt to figure out future potential Chinese strategic policy options with respect to a “two Sudans” configuration from this time on (Section 3).

Sudan in Mainland China's Foreign Policy

China's foreign policy behavior towards Sudan appears to be difficult to understand if not placed, as argued by Chris Alden, in the broader "context of Mainland Chinese foreign policy from the inception of the Communist Party government in 1949 to the rediscovery of Africa in the contemporary period,"¹ based upon the principle of Deng Xiaoping's (鄧小平) open door policy or "going out" diplomacy.

Having officially established diplomatic relations on January 4, 1959, the cooperation between Sudan and China has evolved into a close relationship. Chinese project investments have, therefore, been poured into the country, transforming Sudan into a leading exporter of oil for the Chinese market, despite an ongoing genocidal war in Darfur and Western sanctions against the Khartoum regime.

By displaying the top five African countries having strong economic ties with China, table 1 presents Sudan as a leading trading partner of China in Africa. Such a situation shows how important Khartoum is in Beijing's foreign policy (please see table 1 below for further details).

The structure of Chinese foreign policy towards Sudan is characterized by the prominence of the central government, and by the importance of provincial and municipal entities, thus leading to a decentralized Chinese foreign economic decision-making procedure. One of the advantages China enjoys in the conduct of its foreign policy toward Sudan is that China, unlike her Western rivals, has never been a colonial power in Africa.

If early relations were not significant, it was in the 1990s, after the discovery of oil in 1978 by Chevron, that China made its way from playing a marginal role to establishing a more central position in Sudanese domestic and international affairs, making Sudan a country that now stands out in Beijing's foreign policy configuration.

¹Chris Alden, *China in Africa: Partner, Competitor or Hegemon* (London: Zed Books, 2007), 9.

Table 1
Ranking of Top 5 African Countries in Two-Way Trade with China

Ranking	2006	2007	2008
1	Angola	Angola	Angola
2	South Africa	South Africa	South Africa
3	Sudan	Sudan	Sudan
4	Egypt	Egypt	Nigeria
5	Nigeria	Nigeria	Egypt
Top 5 countries as a % of total trade with Africa	56%	58%	61%

Sources: This table has been retrieved from the Saferworld China Program of January 2011. This report has used this table citing Sanusha Naidu as the source (Sanusha Naidu, "China's Engagement in Africa and the Prospects for Sustainable Development" [paper presented to the "China-Africa Civil Society Forum on Peace and Development," Beijing, June 2-4, 2010]), with Sanusha also citing the Chinese Ministry of Commerce as a source. For further details please see: Saferworld China Program, *China's Engagement in Africa and the Prospects for Sustainable Development*, January 2011, 7, <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/downloads/pubdocs/Chinas%20Growing%20Role%20in%20African%20Peace%20and%20Security.pdf> (accessed December 19, 2011).

Politically speaking, Beijing has always regarded Sudan as one of its most reliable allies in its search for energy to fuel its growing economy and sustain its international politics. The five principles of peaceful co-existence formulated by Premier Zhou Enlai (周恩來) in 1955, namely, mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity, non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence reiterated by President Hu Jintao (胡錦濤) during his February 2007 trip to Sudan, remain the policy guidelines of Beijing's foreign policy behavior in its dealings with other countries, especially Sudan.

With Sudan and particularly the issue of Darfur becoming a hot topic, Beijing has found itself caught in a dilemma of either continuing its blind support towards Khartoum or adhering to the international community's desire to see Beijing exerting more pressure on Khartoum with regard to the resolution of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Darfur. Amidst a deadly humanitarian crisis in Darfur and changing politics fol-

lowing the secession of South Sudan in July 2011, such a dilemma has led to a turn in Beijing's foreign policy attitude towards Khartoum, confirming China's desire to move from its traditional policy of non-interference to a more constructive engagement. Such a policy reorientation has been the subject of in-depth analysis throughout the writings of Daniel Large on "From Non-Interference to Constructive Engagement? China's Evolving Relations with Sudan."² Indeed, Beijing's determination to please the international community by influencing the Sudanese government over the Darfur issue has somehow, as Large has pointed out, "blurred the boundaries of non-interference."³ If the principle of non-interference, as emphasized by Large, "has been experienced as a principle of intention [used by Beijing] to mask the wider effects of its involvement,"⁴ under the contemporary configuration of international politics, China's principle of non-interference is increasingly perceived as a liability to the country's own interests.⁵ Indeed, the principle of non-interference, as Large argues, sometimes inhibits China's efforts to protect its investment concerns, restricting the country from being a credible and responsible stakeholder because, as advanced by Jakobson, "A policy of non-interference is not a credible policy for a nation that wants to be respected as a responsible global power."⁶

If the above arguments seemingly suggest that Beijing, adept of the strategy of charm offensive through tactical accommodation for the sake of its self-interest, is susceptible to international pressure in the conduct of its foreign policy, it is worth noting that Beijing also staunchly refused to bow to Western pressure particularly with respect to Tibet, Xinjiang,

²For further details please see: Daniel Large, "From Non-Interference to Constructive Engagement? China's Evolving Relations with Sudan," in *China Returns to Africa: A Rising Power and A Continent Embrace*, ed. Chris Alden, Daniel Large, and Ricardo Soares de Oliveira (London: Hurst, 2008), 295-318.

³Daniel Large, "China and the Contradictions of 'Non-interference' in Sudan," *Review of African Political Economy* 35, no. 115 (March 2008): 100.

⁴Ibid., 104.

⁵Ibid., 105.

⁶Linda Jakobson cited by Daniel Large in *ibid.*, 105.

and, more importantly, in the run up to the 2008 Olympic Games. For example, Beijing responded vigorously against French commercial interests by demonstrating against Carrefour, a French supermarket in China, after the disruption of the torch relay by French activist groups.⁷

Having expressed in 1994 a desire to welcome Chinese investments in the field of oil, and following a subsequent visit by President Al-Bashir to Beijing that resulted in China granting reduced rate loans to Sudan, Exim (Export-Import) Bank has taken the initiative to finance oil projects in Sudan. Seen, therefore, as China's leading energy investment recipient in Africa, Sudan in 2002 "contributed 9% of China's oil imports, or 40% of its African oil imports as a whole."⁸ Perceived by Beijing as the bridge-head to access the African oil market and the regional economy of Africa, Sudan has gained prominence in Chinese foreign policy, especially after oil development activities in 1999, with oil being central to politics and conflict in Sudan, and which has also contributed to the breakdown of the 1972 peace agreement,⁹ leading, therefore, to the repetition of the cycle of violence in the war opposing North and South Sudan, and in Darfur where violence in particular started to emerge in the early 2000s. The atrocities committed against the civilians in Darfur by the Al-Bashir fighters supported by the Janjaweed shocked the international community which took advantage of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games to lobby against China in the run up to the events by requesting that Beijing take her responsibility towards the resolution of the humanitarian crisis in Darfur.

Characterized as energy-based and coined by activist movements as devoid of any consideration of moral values in its foreign policy towards pre-secession Sudan, Beijing's foreign policy attitude, however, does not appear to be unique among countries in the world. In international politics, states have always sought to defend and protect their national inter-

⁷In so doing, Beijing wanted to avoid the establishment of any international precedent that may later be invoked to interfere in its domestic affairs.

⁸Large, "From Non-Interference to Constructive Engagement?" 280.

⁹The 1972 Peace Agreement was signed in Addis Ababa between rebellious factions of the South and Khartoum.

ests, interests that have sometimes conflicted with moral standards of the international community. For example, the U.S. maintained strong ties with Pakistan under President Pervez Musharraf and continues to maintain even closer relations with the Asif Ali Zardari government despite its willingness to shelter Osama bin Laden.

Besides, for the sake of advancing American national interests in the fight against terrorism, leaders in Washington have been willing to close their eyes to human rights abuses and economic crimes in Pakistan and Afghanistan. This reinforces Goldstein's idea according to which human rights and justice have sometimes been sacrificed on the altar of national security.¹⁰ French relations with Rwanda before the genocide of 1994, the U.S.'s close relations with the Cambodian Khmer Rouge regime in the 1980s, and Washington's active support of the South African Apartheid regime and the Shah regime in Iran, to name only a few, are concrete examples that demonstrate the West's contradictory stance towards the developing world.

Following China's readmission into the UN system in 1971 after the eviction of Taiwan, Beijing started a socialization process, acclimating herself with the aspirations of the international community. Knowing that the international community expects Chinese leaders to behave as responsible stakeholders on the international stage, Beijing gradually came to realize that its relations with Khartoum were under scrutiny particularly with respect to the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. Therefore, it became obvious to Chinese leaders that reshaping China's global image would require a more proactive stance towards the Khartoum regime in its management of the Darfur question.¹¹ Beijing's determination to show greater

¹⁰Daniel M. Goldstein, "Human Rights as Culprit, Human Rights as Victim: Rights and Security in the State of Exception," in *The Practice of Human Rights: Tracking Law between the Global and the Local*, ed. Mark Goodale and Sally Engle Merry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 56.

¹¹Beijing, in the run up to the 2008 Olympic Games, was, somehow, "blackmailed" by the Western activist movements in order to oblige Chinese leaders to readjust their foreign policy with regard to the Darfur issue. So the 2008 Olympic Games were a turning point for Beijing as Chinese leaders were eager to emphasize the successful organization of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games as a way of reshaping China's global image and reaffirming its place in the concert of nations.

flexibility in its foreign policy behavior was intended to deflect Western criticism and the international community's distrust *vis-à-vis* the Chinese authorities. Beijing, in fact, was seeking to strategically display its goodwill in addressing the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Darfur, a stance that would give her greater room to maneuver in using the 2008 Olympic Games as a forum to reaffirm Beijing's peaceful aspirations, in this era of power politics, for a regional and global power status. Under, therefore, persistent pressures from the international community, Beijing found it difficult to defend its foreign policy principle of non-interference in the face of a growing humanitarian crisis in Darfur.¹²

In a word, as a socializing agent of the international community, China has learned from the expectations of the international community, and has agreed to take into account the value-based expectations shared among states that make up international society. Such a situation has therefore led Beijing to strategically reorient its foreign policy behavior with regard to the increasing demands placed upon it by the international community to have a more responsible China that is equally sensitive to the humanitarian crisis in Darfur and the atrocities committed against the people in Darfur. Such a strategic reorientation of Chinese foreign policy towards the Darfur issue has been deemed necessary if the Chinese still want their reputation to be preserved, with reputation being defined, not from the rationalist perspective as "reliable allies or partners," but by being based upon the social constructivist perspective as "legitimate members of the international society."¹³

¹²Chin-Hao Huang, "U.S.-China Relations and Darfur," *Fordham International Law Journal* 31, no. 4 (2008): 835.

¹³The difference in terms of the definition provided to the notion of "reputation" in a realist or constructivist framework also affects the way in which states can be sanctioned. For instance, if rationalist theories lay emphasis on the application of sanctions that have a negative effect on states' pursuit of power (namely, sanctions in the forms of trade and economic embargoes, or arms embargoes), constructivist theories *a contrario* focus on immaterial and symbolic sanctions that target states' status as legitimate members of the international community (such as, among others, the revocation of diplomatic ties, or cultural or sports contacts). For further details please see: Henning Boekle, Volker Rittberger and Wolfgang Wagner, "Constructivist Foreign Policy Theory," in *German Foreign Policy since Unification: Theories and Case Studies*, ed. Volker Rittberger (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 111-12.

Internal or domestic factors have also played in favor of Beijing's strategic change in the conduct of the country's foreign and security policy *vis-à-vis* Sudan. Divisions have, indeed, appeared in Beijing's political establishment with regard to the Darfur question. Hence the apparition of two camps: the proponents of Beijing's continued presence in Sudan despite international criticism, and the opponents of Beijing's unconditional assistance towards Khartoum. The latter, in fact, have regarded Sudan as not worth the damage China is enduring in the international arena. These opponents believe that China has over-invested in Sudan but in return has had poor gains, having hurt its international image in the name of a "reckless country." They even go further by arguing that the gloomy security climate, in which Beijing has been playing, has hampered China's regional and international politico-economic ambitions. Such a situation has somehow influenced Beijing's Sudan policy designers even though China's patrimonial ambitions for Africa have remained intact.

In fact, the establishment of new multilateral and regional trade relations with the developing world, such as the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), rhymes with the establishment of alternative development and governance models that differ from those defined by Western institutions, namely, the Bretton Woods institutions. Chinese leaders even came up with the following *motto* "Do as we (Chinese) do, but not as they (the West) say." This, ultimately, suggests that Beijing has embarked on the promotion of an alternative developmental model of governance with potential repercussions on the management of regional and global security-related issues.¹⁴

To sum up, the Darfur crisis and the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games constitute defining moments that have contributed to test Beijing's diplomatic agility and pragmatist foreign policy behavior.

The official division of Sudan into two separate countries on July 9, 2011 means a division of the nation's human and natural resources, a

¹⁴These issues also take into account good governance and human rights violation issues, particularly with respect to the Darfur question. For further details, please see: Gregory Chin and Ramesh Thakur, "Will China Change the Rules of Global Order?" *Washington Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (October 2010): 126.

situation that would present challenges to Khartoum's relations with Darfur, and foreign investors, in particular Chinese investors who have been strikingly active in the country. With Beijing's above-mentioned energy-driven policy as a starting point, the following sections seek to examine, on the one hand, the implications that a separation of South Sudan would have on both Darfur and Chinese interests, and, on the other hand, the possible strategic policies that Beijing would implement in order to continue to advance its national interests in Sudan, regardless of the alteration of the political landscape in North and South Sudan.

The Implications of the Secession of South Sudan for Darfur

The issue of the secession of South Sudan has led to the emergence of two camps. On the one hand, there are the proponents of Sudan's partition who argue that secession appears to be the only viable road towards future conflict prevention, since it keeps warring factions away from each other while creating homogeneous entities and reduces security concerns over enmity among various ethnic groups. On the other hand, the opponents of partition claim that Sudan's division would lead to population transfers coupled with a near-impossibility of ethnic integration and homogeneity. They further argue that creating new borders that divide North and South Sudan is not a panacea that could prevent the recurrence of violence.¹⁵

The discovery and exploitation of oil resources has even exacerbated the hatred between North and South Sudan because, while at least 80% of oil resources are in the South, the pipelines have been going North, bringing wealth to the North and leaving poverty and misery behind in the South. Southern Sudanese have felt neglected with no choice but to

¹⁵Beyond such contradictory arguments, the historical record has, however, shown that secessions are neither better nor worse than other political solutions with regard to ending civil or ethnic conflicts. Drawing from the Indian and Pakistani experience, it goes without saying that ethno-centric territorial disputes and non-democratic entities are more likely to experience a recurrence of violence even after territorial partition.

fight at any cost for their own well-being. With less military personnel as compared to those from the North, Southern Sudanese soldiers have had to fight based on a ratio of one (1) Southern fighter to five Northern fighters.¹⁶ Northern fighters have been supported by the Janjaweed, an armed militia sponsored by President Al-Bashir and which, in return, pledges full allegiance to the Al-Bashir regime by fighting alongside Khartoum regular forces.¹⁷ Such a conflict has led to the advent of an unwritten doctrine that has heightened the psychological framework in the South and which has influenced Southern military personnel who have always seen themselves as freedom fighters ready to die for their motherland.¹⁸ It was in 2005 with the help of foreign involvement that a historic Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in Naivasha, Kenya between President Al-Bashir and Dr. John Garang, ending a twenty-two year civil war. In this CPA, two main agreements were prominent: the referendum on independence to be held in January 2011 in South Sudan with a simultaneous referendum in Abeyi that would allow the population in Abeyi to decide whether they wanted to join the North or the South.

With South Sudan having officially split on July 9, 2011 from North Sudan, the question remains to what extent such a situation would influence Darfur which has always sided with the South.

Rebel movements in Darfur are, indeed, driven by a political agenda which is somewhat similar to that pursued by Dr. John Garang and his SPLM/SPLA troops. For instance, under Dr. Garang's leadership, the South had been pursuing a politics of a change at the center, mainly a

¹⁶According to an interview, conducted on June 27, 2011, in the United Kingdom, with a South Sudanese military officer who had fought for several years (since the age of 12) with Southern Sudan Special Forces and who had once been appointed as the South Sudan Representative to Europe. He is currently cumulating the above-mentioned functions and at the same time engaging in Ph.D. research in the United Kingdom.

¹⁷Composed of Sudanese Arab tribes, the Janjaweed are gunmen or armed militias that operate on behalf of Khartoum. Fighting on the backs of horses, they are highly feared in Darfur since they indiscriminately butcher Darfurian populations, sending, therefore, waves of misery, desolation and ruin.

¹⁸This claim is corroborated by the interview undertaken in the United Kingdom on June 27, 2011 with the South Sudanese military officer mentioned earlier.

change of regime in Khartoum accompanied by an inclusive government, but without a project for independence *per se*. This goal of the South Sudan fighters is similar to that of the rebel movements in Darfur that have also been seeking a regime change and an inclusive government in Khartoum without any specific intention for political independence. Such an argument is corroborated by our interview with a Darfurian refugee in the United Kingdom who has affirmed that seeking formal independence is not the ultimate goal of Darfur.¹⁹ Following the death of Dr. Garang on July 30, 2005, the initial agenda of South Sudan, however, evolved from the position of a simple regime change in Khartoum towards the need for formal independence from Khartoum, a need that was expressed during the January 2011 referendum and incorporated into the political agenda of both North and South Sudan. “The call for an independent Southern Sudan, affirms a Sudanese interviewee, is a very new development in the history of the Sudanese civil war. (...) The demand for an independent Southern Sudan has been quite recent. In general, the Southern Sudanese were demanding more equality and autonomy within the same state rather than separate states.”²⁰

The critical issue now remains to find out what were the motivating factors that led Juba to shift from seeking a change of policy in Khartoum towards an agenda for formal independence following the death of Dr. Garang. However, providing a clear answer to this question remains a challenging task worth exploring through further research. This question, in fact, calls up the issue of the “politics of the Ghost of John Garang.” In other words, if John Garang were still alive, would he have pursued an independence policy or an agenda for a meaningful autonomy in South Sudan, or would he have maintained a position of seeking meaningful

¹⁹Interview on September 20, 2011, in the United Kingdom, with a Darfurian refugee and currently a very active board member in the Sudanese Association in the United Kingdom. He is also pursuing a degree in the United Kingdom.

²⁰Interview in May 2011, in the United Kingdom, with a Sudanese woman who has been very active in Child Rights Advocacy with Sudanese civil society organizations and the United Nations over the last fourteen years and is currently undertaking Ph.D. research in the United Kingdom.

policy change in the political establishment in Khartoum? Answering these questions remains a defining step towards finding out the exact reasons that motivated the South to shift from seeking a policy change in Khartoum towards demanding outright independence after the death of Dr. Garang.

Based on such an understanding, it appears to be difficult to say to what extent the secession of Southern Sudan would influence Darfur since, on the one hand, South Sudan was seeking formal independence *per se* and, on the other hand, Darfur rebel movements seem to be fine with remaining an integral part of North Sudan, but with a regime change and an inclusive government as their pre-condition to halt the ongoing military conflict.

Nevertheless, Khartoum has failed to make unity attractive in Darfur even though secession *a priori* does not seem to have been on the political agenda of rebel fighters in Darfur. Such an argument is corroborated by the statement of a Khartoum-based United Nations Development Program (UNDP) consultant and researcher²¹ who has argued that in his discussions with Darfurian refugees in Khartoum, he has discovered that the majority of Darfurians are not seeking independence from Khartoum, but are rather seeking a meaningful change in the Khartoum regime. With the secession of South Sudan being a reality, rebellious factions in Darfur will inevitably pursue a politics of rapprochement towards Juba since there are already linkages between rebel movements in the South and those in Darfur, at least with respect to the commonality of their grievances against the government in the North such as, among others, the slavery issue, the Islamic “arabization” of Sudan, and the exclusion of Darfurians from the center of power in Khartoum.²²

Owing to the certainty of these connections between the South and Darfur, it remains to be seen whether the independence of South Sudan is conducive to Southern support for Darfur rebels or whether Khartoum

²¹Interview on June 23, 2011 in the United Kingdom.

²²Arguments made, during our interview in the United Kingdom on June 27, 2011, by the South Sudanese military officer who fought among Southern Sudan Special Forces.

will expound on these linkages or Juba-Darfur solidarity and launch further attacks against the South or Darfur itself. Nevertheless, it appears to be obvious that the South will possibly use Darfur as a bargaining chip to pressure the North, and Darfur will obviously also make good use of South Sudan to draw and attract more attention from both Khartoum and the international community, so as to exert pressure on Khartoum to meaningfully take into account the Darfurians' aspirations. As argued by the Sudanese interviewee,²³ rebellious movements in Darfur have already made good use of the tactics used by South Sudan to mobilize international support for the cause of Darfurian rebels and Darfurian populations in general or at least to moderate international pressure on the Khartoum government to accept their demands. She has affirmed that "It took twenty years within the current cycle of the civil war in the South to amass the level of international engagement that Darfurian fighters achieved only within two or three years."²⁴ She went a step further by arguing that "There are a lot of debates over whether the Darfurian conflict in its current phase is the direct result of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that settled the war in the South, because the Darfurian rebels have seen that carrying a gun and engaging in an armed-rebellion against the central government can bring benefits."²⁵ She also admitted that "the fact that the government of Khartoum negotiated and made concessions to the SPLA was another message that basically encouraged the formation of the Darfur rebel movements and the engagement of the population in armed-struggles for their rights as they perceive them."²⁶

Another example reveals that the soldiers first deployed in the early stages of the conflict in South Sudan mostly came from Darfur.²⁷ These

²³Interview in May 2011, in the United Kingdom, with the previously mentioned Sudanese woman.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Account from the interview undertaken in the United Kingdom with Dr. Daniel Large on June 13, 2011.

Darfurian soldiers trained in Khartoum and deployed in South Sudan have come to quickly realize the success of the South in achieving the peace agreement with Khartoum. Having also experienced the great prosperity in Khartoum, they started complaining about the fact that their own region, Darfur, has not benefited at all from the Khartoum government's management of the country's oil resources. Such a situation fueled their grievances and discontent so much so that they remain determined more than ever to seek more justice and equality. With the experiences gained from South Sudan, they remain more than convinced that the current political configuration of the country, following the secession of Juba in July 2011, will provide a new politics for Darfur both internally and internationally.²⁸

In a word, Darfur and South Sudan remain interconnected phenomena. It appears obvious that, if the requests of Darfurian movements are not satisfied and owing to the experiences gained from South Sudan, Darfur freedom fighters might go further and ask for formal independence from the North, following in the footsteps of South Sudan. If the regime in Khartoum were capable of satisfying their needs and claims, they would be likely to accept the new North Sudan rather than seek formal independence. It is now up to Khartoum to develop a political framework that would make Darfur rebels feel comfortable to stick with North Sudan rather than pursue policies that would widen the gap between Darfur and Khartoum, a situation that could lead to more claims for further political autonomy, if not *de facto* or *de jure* political independence.

Furthermore, to the above-mentioned domestic issues can be added the fact that Darfur and the division of Sudan into two Sudans has caused new challenges to spring up for both Beijing and Khartoum. In other words, Darfur and South Sudan present Khartoum with two major challenges: Darfur's plight has captured international attention, and South Sudan has fought successfully for independence. Such a political landscape has contributed to the shift in China's policy towards Sudan as Beijing has

²⁸Ibid.

gradually bowed to international pressure in relation to Darfur, and has also leaned towards a two-state position owing to the rich oil deposits in South Sudan. Darfur and South Sudan are, therefore, interacting in a way so as to stiffen the resolve of the resistance or independence seekers in the two regions; hence bigger problems for Khartoum, as the greater the distance that Beijing maintains from Khartoum, the more that the way that Beijing approaches Sudan will be influenced, no longer as a unified entity, but as a divided country that presents new strategic challenges to the design of China's foreign policy, and the re-definition and implementation of Beijing's new "One China" strategic priorities in a "two Sudans" framework.

A "One-China" Strategic Interest in a "Two Sudans" Configuration: Policy Options in a Divided Country

President Al-Bashir has, during his trip to China on June 29, 2011, vowed to maintain peace and stability between the North and South. He even expressed his availability to develop a new mode of country-to-country relations with the South with a view to achieving the common interests of both sides. He also expressly manifested his readiness to enhance mutual political trust and expand pragmatic cooperation in the economy, trade and other areas with China, thereby furthering and lifting bilateral ties between Sudan and China to new levels. The question now, however, remains as follows: What policy options are available to China in a divided nation? And how is China, a long time good friend of Khartoum, going to henceforth guarantee its strategic interests in two rival entities?

Beijing indeed is not new to such a political configuration. In fact, China, during the period of transition that runs from the 2005 CPA to the official independence of South Sudan in July 2011, had maintained relations with both Khartoum and Juba, relations that fall under the principle of "One Sudan, two systems."²⁹

²⁹This image is used based upon a comparative perspective drawn from the principle of "One

Besides, during the civil conflict in Angola, Beijing was able to maintain a good relationship with both the ruling government (the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola, MPLA) and rebellious movements (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, UNITA) fighting against the Angolan central government. Such a Cold War era strategic political tool was aimed at protecting and guaranteeing Mainland Chinese strategic interests in a country blessed with huge natural reserves of oil and gas, vital elements to Chinese economic ambitions.

Beijing's foreign policy towards Luanda was mainly motivated by the rivalry with Moscow, accused of revisionism by Chinese officials. This proxy war situation encouraged by the Cold War dynamics can be described as communism fighting communism on African soil for "the role as the major ideological pole of anti-Westernism"³⁰ and the leader of Third World countries. If Angola has been a battleground for Cold War rival powers, it has also been a theater of inconsistent Chinese foreign policy behavior towards domestic rival factions, namely, the MPLA and the UNITA. Indeed, the early MPLA of Viriato da Cruz was pro-Beijing with da Cruz having shown great interest in Maoist guerilla warfare in their fight against colonial domination in the early 1960s.³¹ Such a situation has led to the MPLA receiving assistance from China that sought to play the role of the principal backer of the MPLA.

The apparition of the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA), which broke away from the MPLA with Viriato da Cruz joining the FNLA, also led to Beijing shifting its assistance from the MPLA to the FNLA and then from the FNLA to the UNITA of Jonas Savimbi in 1964. Nevertheless, Beijing's assistance towards the MPLA and FNLA did not totally cease even though Chinese leaders publicly backed the UNITA after the MPLA established itself in the Moscow camp, promising finan-

China, Two Systems" that has been applied to the relations between China and Hong Kong, a principle that Beijing expects to apply to its relations with Taipei.

³⁰Fernando Andresen Guimaraes, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War: Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998), 155.

³¹*Ibid.*, 156.

cial aid and military support to the UNITA elements. The lack of trust, however, between Beijing and the UNITA leadership forced China to also adopt a double-faced diplomacy that has seen Beijing continue to maintain “under the table connections” with both the MPLA and the FNLA.

In fact, despite the backing received from Beijing, Savimbi did not have much appreciation for the Chinese. As evidence, he was opposed to da Cruz because of his pro-Chinese stance.³² Savimbi, indeed, did not nourish any ideological affinity with China. He was neither Marxist, nor Maoist. And both parties were pragmatically playing off against each other for the sake of survival (mainly in the case of UNITA which needed to survive) or political benefits (mainly with respect to China which wanted to wash away Russian influence in Angola and in Africa).

The lack, therefore, of ideological proximity between Beijing and the UNITA leadership also led to Beijing, while supporting the rival UNITA, establishing ties again with the FNLA of Holden Roberto. The FNLA benefited from the Chinese financial help and military assistance in the form of military training, weapons shipments, and military advice. Despite its growing support for the FNLA, Beijing did not shut the door to MPLA or UNITA. As a result, on March 20, 1975, UNITA sent an envoy, Samuel Chiwale to Beijing requesting military support from the Chinese. In late May 1975, the MPLA leadership was invited by Beijing officials.³³ Beijing was then caught up in supporting rival movements (MPLA, UNITA, FNLA) struggling for power in Angola. It can even be metaphorically said, by using the words of Coker, that Beijing was attempting to “fish in troubled waters,”³⁴ a description that expressively depicts China’s complex and pragmatic foreign policy behavior in Angola.³⁵

³²Ibid., 157.

³³Ibid., 159.

³⁴Christopher Coker, *NATO, the Warsaw Pact and Africa* (London: Palgrave Macmillan/RUSI, 1985), 63.

³⁵After the independence of Angola, Beijing and Luanda officially established diplomatic relations on January 12, 1983.

The same scenario has been perceptible in Mozambique where Beijing has provided assistance to oust Portuguese occupiers. If diplomatic relations between Beijing and Maputo were officially established on June 25, 1975, the two countries had early connections during the wake of independence movements and guerilla campaigns against Portuguese rule, with Beijing providing financial aid, ideological advice and military support to free Mozambique from its Western colonizers. Unfortunately, soon after gaining its independence, Mozambique was, from 1977 to 1992, plagued by a long and violent civil war opposing anti-Communist forces referred to as the Mozambique Resistance Movement (RENAMO) and the Marxist-oriented movement named the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO). If Beijing officially backed the FRELIMO, it appears obvious that its indirect strategic alliance with South Africa and the U.S. government to counter-balance the ideological influence of the Soviet Union in Africa has resulted in Beijing being accused of indirectly supporting the South African-funded Mozambique Resistance Movement (RENAMO) in Mozambique. Such a situation has hampered the image of China in the socialist bloc and the developing world in general, leading to the waning of Beijing's early prominent presence not only in Mozambique and Africa, but also throughout the other Third World countries.

Another no less important example can be found in Beijing's relations with Cambodia during its civil war in the 1970s. For instance, during the civil war in Cambodia, Beijing simultaneously maintained close relations with the two warring factions in the region: the Khmer Rouge to whom China provided political, economic and military assistance from the 1970s to the 1980s and the Sihanouk government which Beijing allowed to form an exiled government in Beijing. Beijing indeed backed the Khmer Rouge in Phnom Penh to oust Prince Sihanouk from office, acted as its link to the outside world, and also provided refuge to the Prince in China. Such Chinese dual political support for warring factions appears to be a Chinese "magic potion" that enables Beijing to always be in a safe zone should either of them take control of the country, a situation that guarantees Chinese strategic interests in the region. Such a situation corroborates the argument according to which "for China, whoever hap-

pens to be in power is a friend of China as long as they will guarantee China access to resources,”³⁶ making, therefore, obvious the opportunistic nature of Mainland Chinese foreign policy in both Asia and Africa.

Familiar then with such politics akin to a “crab and frog”³⁷ strategy, Beijing is inclined to pursue similar policy options particularly in regard to the pursuit of its national interests in a divided Sudan. Beijing leaders, during a meeting on June 1, 2011 between the vice president of the Government of South Sudan, Riek Machar Teny, and a visiting delegation from China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), had even already vowed, ahead of South Sudan’s independence, to expand investments in South Sudan following the official independence of the country on July 9, 2011.³⁸ With China currently occupying the leading position in terms of investment in the oil sector in South Sudan and oil revenues accounting for around 98 percent of South Sudan’s budget, the relationship between Juba and Beijing would continue to increase for the sake of both partners’ vital interests, especially after South Sudanese President’s visit to Beijing in April 2012.

Beijing has also already expressed its readiness to accompany Juba in its project of building a pipeline that takes oil from South Sudan to world markets through Kenya. Beijing has even already translated its words into action by designing and providing training courses to South Sudanese in order to help them have a better knowledge and master techniques relevant to the petroleum industry, in view of the large energy potential that the newly-born nation has.³⁹ Such a Chinese willingness to

³⁶Ali Askouri, “China’s Investment in the Sudan: Displacing Villages and Destroying Communities,” in *African Perspectives on China in Africa*, ed. F. Manji and S. Marks (Cape Town: Fahamu, 2007), 77.

³⁷The notion of a “Crab and Frog” strategy was drawn from Peter Kien-hong Yu’s analysis. For further details, please see: Peter Kien-hong Yu, *The Crab and Frog Motion Paradigm Shift: Decoding and Deciphering Taipei and Beijing’s Dialectical Politics* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2002).

³⁸Sudan Tribune, “China to Expand Investment in South Sudan after Independence,” *Sudan Tribune*, June 1, 2011, <http://www.sudantribune.com/China-to-expand-investment-in,39080> (accessed October 27, 2011).

³⁹Xinhua, “China Trains Petroleum Workers in South Sudan,” *China Daily*, July 11, 2011,

support the new government of South Sudan has enabled Beijing to reassure South Sudan of China's goodwill *vis-à-vis* the economic development and prosperity of the newly-independent state seen by Beijing as a land of new opportunities.⁴⁰

In addition, with the decrease in Khartoum-controlled oil resources (Khartoum is now controlling only around 5% of Sudan's oil resources) as compared to the 85% of oil resources located in South Sudan (with the remaining 10% of oil resources being in disputed areas such as Abyei), it goes without saying that Juba will, in the future, weigh more in the balance than Khartoum in the Beijing-Khartoum-Juba strategic triangle.⁴¹ Such a situation would likely also influence Beijing's attitude towards Darfur as China is strategically re-orientating its interest-centered foreign policy in compliance with the changing dynamics in the region following South Sudan's independence, and more importantly due to the fact that Khartoum is increasingly losing leverage over Beijing as its strategic tool defined in terms of oil is drifting away from its control without forgetting the impact of the politics of rapprochement between Juba and Darfur on grounds of shared grievances and the possibility that South Sudan independence may be conducive to Darfur autonomy.

Even though oil production in the region, as pointed out by Huang Chin-Hao,⁴² is projected to decline in the next decade without forgetting that the constant disruption and continued tension between Khartoum and Juba are disrupting oil supply and extraction, it is still worth noting that,

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-07/11/content_12879709.htm (accessed October 27, 2011).

⁴⁰Further potential fields of investment are arising such as, among others, investments in physical infrastructure, hydroelectric energy, agriculture, education and health in a new country where everything is a priority. So, post-conflict reconstruction opportunities in South Sudan are legion for Chinese investors, a situation that would lead Beijing to revise its foreign policy priorities *vis-à-vis* Khartoum and Juba, the land of new opportunities.

⁴¹If, so far, Chinese authorities have chosen to play a delicate balancing game between Sudan and South Sudan, it remains likely that for the sake of China's national interests, Beijing's leaders would in the long run lean more towards Juba than Khartoum as more resources are sited in South Sudan.

⁴²Huang, "U.S.-China Relations and Darfur," 829.

as a visionary power that is aware of the power politics games and calculates from the perspective of a relative gain approach,⁴³ securing vital potential and alternative energy sources remains crucial to Beijing. Indeed, China shelters limited reserves and has a relatively flat domestic production of oil while the country is witnessing an ever growing demand for oil in the transportation, the petrochemical production, and oil-fired power generation sectors.⁴⁴ This would convince Chinese leaders to continue cementing their strategic triangular relations with Khartoum and Juba.

A strategic triangle, as defined by Dittmer, can be understood as “a sort of transactional game among three players.”⁴⁵ Indeed, owing to China’s disproportionate economic and strategic weight, its growing importance in both North and South Sudan, and in view of the rising economic and political power of Beijing in the international arena, both Khartoum and Juba are bound in a race of courting Beijing’s favor in various ways. In view of the importance of Mainland Chinese economic investments in North and South Sudan, both countries need China’s assistance to remain politically and economically viable. Besides, China needs a balance between North and South Sudan to maintain a stable region that would help secure Mainland Chinese economic interests in the region. Furthermore, with China making herself a constituent player in the Sudanese⁴⁶ game, a Beijing-Khartoum-Juba strategic triangle has appeared. Such a strategic triangle is somehow comparable to the Washington-Beijing-

⁴³The proponents of the relative gain approach are those who appreciate their gain in relation to what others get, while the proponents of the absolute gain approach are those who think, not in comparison with what others get, but in the following terms: “Anyways we got something.” This dichotomy between relative and absolute gain perspectives also calls up the debate on zero-sum game and non-zero-sum game approaches in international politics.

⁴⁴According to Rosen and Houser, China was the world’s fifth largest oil consumer with transportation accounting for 42 percent of the growth in oil consumption since 1995. For further details, please see: Daniel H. Rosen and Trevor Houser, *China Energy: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2007), 19-21, <http://www.iie.com/publications/papers/rosen0507.pdf>.

⁴⁵Lowell Dittmer, “The Strategic Triangle: An Elementary Game-Theoretical Analysis,” *World Politics* 33, no. 4 (July 1981): 485.

⁴⁶A term that refers to both North and South Sudan.

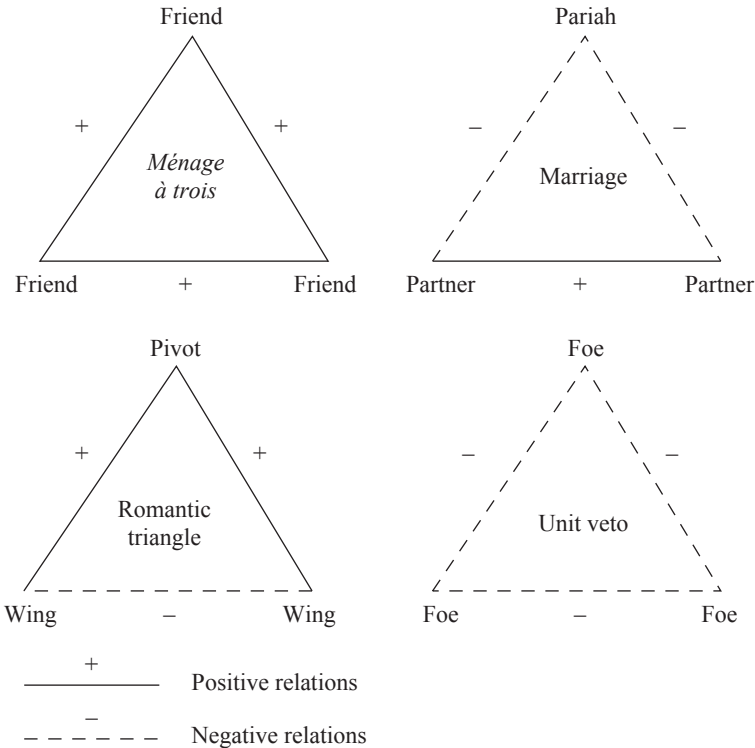
Taipei triangular framework since they bear similar characteristics. In fact Washington is to Beijing and Taipei what Beijing is to Khartoum and Juba. An in-depth analysis of the Washington-Beijing-Taipei strategic triangle has been undertaken by Wu Yu-shan.⁴⁷ In his analysis, Wu has spelled out four types of strategic triangles, namely, the “Ménage à trois,” the “Marriage,” the “Romantic Triangle,” and the “Unit Veto” as reproduced below in figure 1.

However, to give greater analytical value beyond a single case study of the Sudanese triangle, it is worth making the comparison between the Beijing-Khartoum-Juba strategic triangle and U.S. politics in cross-Straits relations. Indeed, drawing from the Beijing-Khartoum-Juba strategic triangle in comparison to the Washington-Beijing-Taipei strategic triangle, the question now is whether Washington can afford to maintain good relations with both Taipei and Beijing, when the two duel over sovereignty. In fact, in view of the current politico-economic and military conditions of the U.S., maintaining good relations with both Beijing and Taipei would enable the U.S. to better protect its vital and strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region. Besides, the diplomatic truce initiated by President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) in the politics of cross-Straits relations has helped smooth the heated political rivalries between the two belligerent nations, making, therefore, the task of Washington even easier when it comes to strategically and tactically managing the duel over sovereignty between Taipei and Beijing. With the status quo still remaining the principle in cross-Straits relations in an atmosphere of increasing political, economic, and military (the possibility of military cooperation between Taiwan and Mainland China) rapprochement coupled with Washington's reassurance strategy based on a smart policy of “strategic clarity” and “tactical ambiguity,”⁴⁸ managing to maintain good relations with both Taipei and

⁴⁷For further details please see: Yu-shan Wu, “From Romantic Triangle to Marriage? Washington-Beijing-Taipei Relations in Historical Comparison,” *Issues & Studies* 41, no. 1 (March 2005): 113-59.

⁴⁸Steven M. Goldstein and Randall Schriver, “An Uncertain Relationship: The United States, Taiwan and the Taiwan Relations Act,” *China Quarterly* 165 (March 2001): 159.

Figure 1
Schematic Representation of the Logic of Strategic Triangle



Source: Wu, "From Romantic Triangle to Marriage?" 117.

Beijing has become relatively easier for the hegemon Washington in the current state of affairs.

When seen from a structural and synchronic perspective, the Beijing-Khartoum-Juba strategic triangle is characterized by its specificity to the geographical configuration concerning those three countries only. That means that this strategic triangle is limited to the issue of the relationship between Beijing, Khartoum and Juba without any of the actors having to take either of the other partners (Beijing, Khartoum, or Juba) into consideration in their foreign policy *vis-à-vis* a third party (Ouagadougou,

London, Brussels, Amsterdam, or Ottawa) external to their Beijing-Khartoum-Juba strategic triangle, even though their interactions fall within the framework of international politics and which might affect the configuration of international affairs.

A quick explanation of these different triangles shows that a “*Ménage à trois* Triangle” is made up of three positive relations (three amity relations), a “Romantic Triangle” made up of two positive relations (two amities) and one negative relation (one enmity), a “Marriage Triangle” characterized by one positive relation (one amity) and two negative relations (two enmities) and a “Unit-Veto Triangle” made up of three negative relations (three enmities). If in a *ménage à trois* triangle all players are friends, and in a unit veto triangle all players are foes, in a romantic triangle, there are two wings who court a pivot.⁴⁹

By drawing from Wu’s analysis, it appears to be obvious that the Beijing-Khartoum-Juba strategic triangle would be a Romantic Triangle with Beijing playing the role of a pivot and North and South Sudan playing the role of wings. A “pivot” position enables Beijing to have better relations with both “wings” than they have with each other, and also in spite of their geographical proximity. In fact, North and South Sudan foreign policy attitudes towards each other would be tainted by the characteristics of a divided-nation model with the roots and memories of recent political confrontations remaining present in people’s minds. Historical examples of the divided-nation models remain legion in human history with the most important cases concerning North and South Yemen before unification in 1990, North and South Vietnam in 1975, East and West Germany in the 1990s, and more contemporary cases such as North and South Korea since 1953, and Taiwan and Mainland China since 1949.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Yu-shan Wu, “From Romantic Triangle to Marriage? Washington-Beijing-Taipei Relations in Historical Comparison,” *Issues & Studies* 41, no. 1 (March 2005): 117.

⁵⁰Contrary to the Korean case in which the division was caused by external forces without forgetting that both Koreas recognize each other as independent entities, Taiwan and Mainland China’s division was the result of the internal KMT-CCP civil war and Mainland China still refuses to recognize Taiwan’s independence, despite a growing economic interaction in the cross-strait relations which is encouraged through the lenses of the

The divided-nation model helps us understand the interactions between previously politically unified nations that were later on divided into separate entities which are still characterized by a deep sense of common culture and history. Playing the role of a pivot gives Beijing an advantageous position *vis-à-vis* Khartoum and Juba, as Beijing can obtain concessions from both Khartoum and Juba, wings that are still at war. Such a position also enables Beijing to monitor and manipulate both parties in line with its national interest by tilting towards one wing or the other and knowing that, owing to their political rivalry, the likelihood of Khartoum or Juba colluding with Beijing remains negligible. Voluntarily (willing pivot) or involuntarily (unwilling pivot), Beijing has embarked on playing the role of a pivot in the Beijing-Khartoum-Juba triangular framework. The question remains to be seen whether Beijing will be a strong or weak pivot and how it would use its pivotal position (by tilting more towards Khartoum or by tilting more towards Juba) to secure and advance its national interest (were the benefits gained by Beijing to be worth the game) in both North and South Sudan. Furthermore, it is worth noting that tilting too much towards one wing could possibly turn the Beijing-Khartoum-Juba triangular structure from a romantic triangle into a marriage triangular framework.

With the secession of South Sudan, Khartoum lost around three quarters of its oil reserves which are sited in Juba-controlled areas, a situation that could lead Beijing to lean more towards Juba and to therefore gradually leave the Al-Bashir regime with its insurgency movements in Darfur and Southern Kardofan regions; these insurgencies could also continue to tarnish the image of China if it continues to maintain strong economic, political and military support towards Khartoum.

One of the main challenges Beijing would have to face in the design of its strategic partnership would be to overcome the history problem which has seen Beijing as the main backer of Juba's wartime enemy.

theory of integration. Such a situation is characterized by great and promising economic exchanges and cooperation in an atmosphere of political hostility also known as a situation of economic dynamism and political impasse.

With post-war reconstruction and investment opportunities remaining paramount, Beijing would gain by managing and accommodating its strategic foreign policy in line with the political configuration in vogue in Sudan. Furthermore, the changing nature of politics in Sudan coupled with the new political reality in South Sudan suggests that Beijing should depart from its past practice of strict continued preference for Khartoum. Conscious of the impact that its foreign policy behavior might have both on its wider African engagement and national interests, Beijing, which had established “officially unofficial and unofficially official” ties with South Sudan in September 2008 by opening a diplomatic consulate in Juba, has no choice but to design and manage a post-war China policy that engages Juba and turns past foes into friends.

Conclusion

To sum up, with this divorce that has left Southern and Northern Sudanese living in two different and separate nations, the future of these two populations will always remain linked together, with the two nations being dependent on each other since most of Sudan’s oil is in the South and most refineries are in the North, a situation that will definitely necessitate a strategic reorientation of China’s policy options *vis-à-vis* the region, policy options that would be based on investment protection imperatives rooted in political stability⁵¹, a sine qua non condition to the advancement of Mainland Chinese national interests in South Sudan. Furthermore, the recent visit, on August 9, 2011, of the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi (楊潔篪)⁵² who has voiced Beijing’s readiness to cooperate with both South and North Sudan on the basis of the Five Principles of

⁵¹Chinese interests and investments remain vulnerable in a volatile Sudan since they are often targeted by groups showing their anger to Khartoum and applying leverage against Chinese assistance towards Khartoum through the sabotage of Khartoum’s strategic allies.

⁵²For further details on Yang Jiechi’s written interview, please refer to: China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ official website: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t847127.htm> (accessed October 30, 2011).

Peaceful Coexistence⁵³ reveals the dialectical nature⁵⁴ of Chinese foreign policy behavior when it comes to guaranteeing, protecting and advancing vital Chinese national interests. Such a strategic approach enables Beijing to carry on “fishing in troubled waters.”

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⁵³These five principles of peaceful coexistence are as follows: mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence.

⁵⁴In general Chinese cultural attitudes are characterized by dialectical approaches which allow the Chinese to be more pragmatic and to adapt to the changing nature of international affairs. For further details on Chinese Dialectics, please refer to: Peter Kien-hong Yu, *Hu Jintao and the Ascendancy of China: A Dialectical Study* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2005); and Yu, *Crab and Frog Motion Paradigm Shift*.

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