

## Oil and Darfur's Blood: China's Thirst for Sudan's Oil

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### Abstract

China, a rising super power and one of the fast growing economies in the world is showing unparalleled interest in Sudan. This interest plays itself out at the UN Security Council as well as inside Sudan. On numerous occasions, China has defied the United Nations Security Council and the international community by its usage or threat of veto to block several UN resolutions and sanctions on Khartoum's regime and those accused of war crimes in Darfur. All these make China-Sudan relation more complex as well as interesting topic for an exploration. In this paper, focus is on China's roles at the UN, China's oil imports from Sudan and its arms 'trades with Sudanese regime and how this complex relationship affects the Darfur conflict. Finally, the paper explores ways that China can help UN with the rest of the world to bring a lasting political settlement to Sudan's region of Darfur.

**Keywords:** Sudan conflict; China involvement; Darfur conflict; Oil; Civilians death and displacement

### Introduction

As one of the fast growing economies in the world, China's economy is growing at a faster rate and so are the needs to keep up with the phase of its growth. However, with more than a billion people to feed, and millions of industries to service, China finds it almost impossible to internally provide everything for its fast growing economy. This has left China with limited economic options but to look to other countries to supply resources it needs to meet its vast economy's demands. Faced with a challenge of fast growing industries, global competition and higher oil price worldwide, China has shown interest to invest in Sudan's oil. Indeed, China seemed to have found its economic solution for her growing industries. This solution has come in a form of partnership with Khartoum's regime in which Sudan's oil is the main bond joining the two countries. Ever since Sudan started oil's exploration in 1980, Chinese' oil companies and oil investors have moved to Sudan. They have drilled more oil wells, built oil pipelines to Port Sudan and several Chinese' oil tankers have been anchored at bay in Port Sudan and have transported billions of crude oil back to mainland China [1].

Khartoum's government on the other hand has benefitted from the sale of Sudan's oil to China to an extent which Sudan has never benefitted in the past from a single trader. These benefits have come in different forms. Sudan has been paid billions of dollars by the Chinese' oil companies which sounds like a basic economic 101 and one would think that selling oil to China is a good thing for Sudan's economy. Unfortunately, it has not been the case. The new found wealth has helped Bashir's regime to wage relentless civil wars in Southern Sudan, Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile, Abyei and Darfur. Since Khartoum began signing oil deals with Chinese' oil companies, Sudan has acquired more weapons which exponentially has increased the intensity of civil wars across the country. In places like Darfur, Blue Niles and Southern Kordofan, Khartoum government has carried out many atrocities some of which have been labeled as a genocide or crimes against humanity. One may ask, so what does China has to do with Sudan internal conflict? The answer lies on Sudan's oil. Currently, China happened to be one of the few superpowers that have invested so much in Sudan's oil. Therefore, it fits to examine China's foreign policy on Sudan, its roles at the UN and the relationship between oil's money and civil war in Darfur.

### Literature Review

Economic relationship between China and Sudan is not a new

phenomenon. It's dated back to 1962 when these two countries signed a formal agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation (ETC) which governed their relationships [1]. This was followed by the signing of another important agreement on Cultural, Scientific and Technical Protocol (CSTP) in 1970. These two agreements facilitated both China and Sudan to cooperate in the areas of infrastructure, public buildings and professional's exchange in the past. Between 1970 and 1990s, Sudan has received a lot of free interest loans for building roads, bridges, and agricultural sectors particularly in rice production from China. However, in the last decade, Sudan has experienced huge increase in China's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Sudan particularly in the oil sector which is in billions of dollars as of today [1]. Since 1999, China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) has invested more than \$ 15 billion in Sudan. Currently, it's estimated that CNPC owns half of Sudan's refineries. The money has been invested in building pipelines in blocks one, two and three located in Southern Sudan which is now The Republic of South Sudan. As of this year, China imported eight percent of its oil supply from Sudan. This amounted to 500,000 barrels of oil per day [2]. After Sudan discovered oil in Western region of Darfur in 2005, it is estimated as of today that China's CNPC owns six blocks in the Darfur area capable to produce about another 500,000 barrels/day [3] (Figure 1).

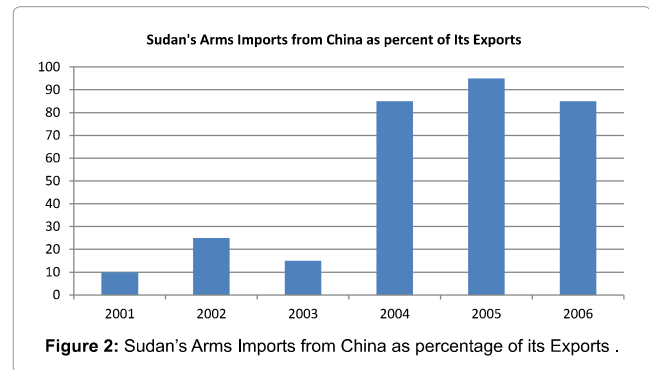
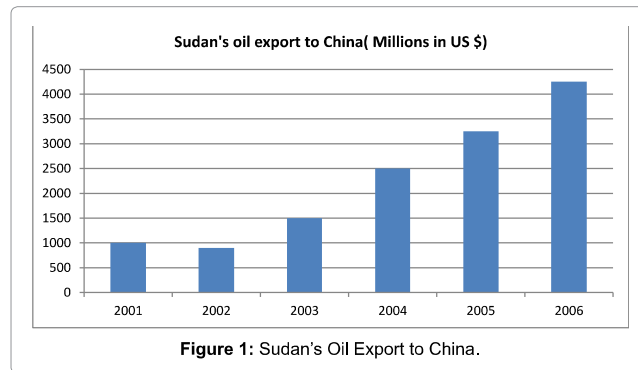
Furthermore, this new alliance between China and Sudan has bruised Beijing-UN relationship when it comes to United Nations sanctions' policies on Sudan. There is a school of thought that believes China's current foreign policy on Sudan is based on defending Beijing's economic interests particularly in Sudan's oil sector [4]. People, who hold this view, believe that higher oil prices worldwide have made Sudan a strategic source of energy to Beijing. In other words, China's economic needs steer its foreign policy on Sudan particularly with Bashir's government. This has been self-evident at the UN where China has vetoed several UN Security Council resolutions condemning President Bashir and his regime actions on South Sudan, Darfur,

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Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei. Despite the fact that China is aware of many atrocities committed by Khartoum's regime, China when given a chance has defended Bashir and his regime at the United Nations [5].

For instance, in 2004, China threatened to veto UN Security Council Resolution 1564 which called for oil embargo on Sudan. In 2005, China again used its influence to block resolution that gave the International Criminal Court the authority to bring Bashir and those behind war crimes in Darfur to justice [4]. China also refused the African Union and the United Nations call to deploy large contingent of peacekeeping forces in Western Sudan or Darfur region. Yet, Beijing was quick to send 400 Chinese soldiers to guard its oil wells in Sudan [4]. Such Beijing's actions at the UN undermined the effectiveness of United Nations sanctions against Bashir and his regime. They have shown that China would do everything at the UN to protect its oil's interest in Sudan. Every time China opposes or vetoes a UN resolution on Sudan, Beijing does so with Sudan's oil in mind. It doesn't want to anger Khartoum, its trading partner. At the top level, President Hu Jintao and Bashir have become very close friends. They often stand in solidarity with each other or defend each other particularly at the UN and other forums that are hostile to Beijing and Khartoum. In essence, economic relationship between Beijing and Khartoum has metamorphosed into a political one. Hence, the line between economic and military cooperation between the two countries got thinner which is where China's thirst for Sudan's oil and Darfur peoples' blood meet. Between 1991 and 2000, Sudan exported billions barrels of oil to China. At the same time, China sold millions worth of military hardware to Sudan. These transactions include helicopters, thousand pound of high-altitude bombers, large cache of ammunitions, Changhe Z-6 troop transporting helicopters, F-7m Air guard fighter jets, anti-personnel mines, anti-tank mines, anti-aircraft guns, 122 mm towed howitzers, T-59 Tanks, 37 mm anti-aircraft guns and many others [4] (Figure 2).

According to United Nations Comtrade data, China has transferred a lot of weapons and small arms valued at \$1 million in 2002, \$23 million in 2005 [4]. This finding is also confirmed by Human Rights First research which stated that China's military sales to Sudan have exponentially increased since 1999, which is exactly when Sudan's oil production increased [5]. The same report showed that Sudan's small arms purchases tripled between 1999 and 2000. It quadrupled during 2001, increased fifteen-fold in 2002. By end of the 2005, the report stated small arms imports to Sudan have risen to more than 680 times of what Sudan's arms imports were in 1999 [5]. This means, Sudan's Arms imports from China have been on the rise and so were military cooperation between Beijing and Khartoum. The top China-Sudan military leaders have had several meetings in 2002, 2003, 2005 and

2007, at the top official levels. In April of 2007, China's Defense Minister Mr. Cao Gangchuan openly made a disclosure that the two countries are further working to develop military cooperation in all areas [6]. The Chinese foreign Ministry Spokesman, Mr. Jiang Yu in 2007, said, "in conducting arms sales to Africa, we carefully consider area's situation and developmental model and stick to the spirit of protecting local peace and stability." It sounded like Mr. Yu was implying that China will continue to sell arms to Sudan because China's arms sales are not threats to local peace and security in Sudan.

The point is China doesn't consider local situation and neither is it working to promote local peace and stability in Sudan. The Chinese officials know how much destruction is happening in Sudan as a result of China's oil business with the Republic of Sudan. This is not just a bluff or an opinion. In 2006, the United Nations Panel of Experts condemned China's arms sales to Sudan and declared it as a total violation of arms embargo on Sudan. The report stated that China's weapons and military equipment have been found in Darfur and are being used by the Sudan Army Forces against the civilians in Darfur region [6].

Although the real number of people who have been killed in Darfur is disputable, there is no doubt, many people have been killed by the Khartoum's government or died as a result of a war related diseases/and or causes. Based on a recent researched by Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), there is a general consensus that military/violence caused by the Khartoum regime have resulted into death of thousands of people, destruction of homes, displacement of thousands if not millions of people into displaced camps, interruption of livelihood which have resulted into hunger and starvation, and war related diseases [7]. Between 2003 and 2005, it is estimated that 134,000 people died in Eastern Darfur just in only 17 months. Of the 134,000 people who died, 120,000 perished as a result of direct conflict, 35,000 died as a result of violent related to conflict [7]. This number doesn't include those who died of diseases, hunger and other natural causes. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated that 396,563 people have died as a result of war in Darfur alone [7]. If you added 2.5 million people who have died during war between Khartoum and South Sudan and thousands of people who been killed in Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei not to mention millions of people displaced in these regions, then, the number could be higher [3].

## Hypotheses

Hypothesis one (H1), there is a relationship between Sudan's oil export to China and Sudan's arms imports from China.

Hypothesis two (H2), the intensity of the Khartoum's campaign in Darfur is aided by China's arms exports to Sudan.

## Methodology and Analysis

Information used for analysis in report is based on a survey of 1,365 people collected from three regions of Darfur, North Darfur, South Darfur and West Darfur. The 1,365 sample was taken from a population of 2,622,488 living in refugee camps in Darfur. Each of the people selected was asked the following questions during the survey. 1) Do you know any person who has lost their home or did your personally experienced a property loss during the conflict? 2) Do you know what happened to your livestock? 3) Have you experienced or do you know any person who have experienced aerial bombing? 4) Do you have any relative killed, suffered violence and/or do you know any neighbor who has been killed or brutally violated as a result of the conflict? In addition to the survey, various literatures were examined and analyzed and compared with the results of the survey to examine whether this information support or reject the premises of the hypotheses stated above. The results of this survey highlighted the horrific magnitude of suffering and destruction the Darfur's people endured in the hands of Janjaweed, a militia's group supported by the Khartoum's regime. This is the breakdown of the survey. Of the 1,365 people surveyed, 81% of people reported that their village was destroyed by the Janjaweed, 80% of the people surveyed reported, their livestock was taken away by the Janjaweed and/or some have been killed during their village's attacks, 67% said, they witnessed or has experienced aerial bombing by the Khartoum's government and 44% said, they witnessed or saw someone being killed or shot by the Khartoum's soldiers [8].

As this literature review has shown, Sudan and China have had a long history of cooperation. The two countries share strong economic and military ties that are rooted in China's thirst for Sudan's oil of which Sudan equally benefits from this symbiotic relationship. As stated in Hypothesis one (H1), [there is a relationship between Sudan's oil export to China and Sudan's arms imports from China.] It is clear from this literature, as Sudan's oil exports to China increase; Sudan's arms imports from China increase as well [4]. Starting in 1999, when China increased its Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Sudan. Sudan's arm imports from China seemed to have been on the rise. In fact, as Sudan's oil export increases, Sudan's arms imports from China increases. As China's oil import from Sudan increases, China's arm sales to Sudan increases. These two correlations cannot be discounted. They explained the nature of co-dependence that existed between Beijing and Khartoum. More importantly, they accounted or explained why China protects or shields Sudan from sanctions at the United Nations. It shows that Beijing has a tangible interest in Sudan to protect. Sudan on the other hand has become the benefactor of China's foreign policy at the UN. It should not come as a surprise to people why China sells arms to Sudan and established a strong military cooperation with Sudan. Beijing is aware of what at stake. It understands that keeping Bashir's regime in power guarantees China's oil business with the regime. So, China sells arms to Sudan to strengthen the regime to keep it in power. Unfortunately, Bashir's regime has two agendas. First, the regime of course wanted to build a strong military capability which China is directly helping it. Second, in order for the regime to maintain its dominance in the country, it needs to suppress or subjugate the masses. In fact, it has been policy of the regime since it came into power in 1989 to repress all forms of political oppositions across the country.

So when the regime lost South Sudan in 2005. Darfur, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile became the regime's bigger threats which

explained why the regime is waging such brutal military campaigns in these regions. It doesn't want these regions to experience a sense of stability because doing so would threaten the regime in Khartoum. Making matters worse, oil discovery has been a blessing to the regime in its efforts to waging wars. Without oil exports to China and other countries, it would have been harder for the regime to fight wars at different fronts. Luckily, the regime has found a willing partner in Beijing who is willing to exchange arms for oil. Looking at the complexities of China-Sudan's oil trades. Several narratives emerged between 2003 and 2006 this report. It is clear that more weapons have made their way into Sudan from China. During this same timeframe, Darfur region experienced an increased violence orchestrated by Khartoum's government. In Darfur alone, a lot of people have been killed or died as a result of Khartoum's aerial bombing, earth scorched campaigns conducted by Janjaweed's militias intensified, thousands of homes destroyed, livestock taken away by Janjaweed, and thousands of innocent children and women driven out of their homes into displaced camps[8]. Virtually, in only three years, more than 396,563 people have lost their lives in the hands of Khartoum's regime of which China has played a role in aiding Bashir's regime in committing these graves human's atrocities.

Whether China accepts or denies her roles in the Darfur's war, history will be the best judge. However, the current literature pointed to four variables/factors both which sustained hypotheses one (H1) and two (H2). One, China's behaviors and actions at the United Nations Security Council reveals something about Chinese government foreign policy on Sudan. China has established a history of objecting to most UN Security Council's resolutions that condemn or impose sanctions on President Bashir and his regime pertaining to Khartoum's gross atrocities, crimes of war and crimes against humanity in Darfur and other regions of Sudan. These objections on the part of China should make it clear to anybody that Chinese' government is aware and conscious of her decisions in respect to Sudan. To some extent, Beijing's actions at the UN are premeditated with clear intention of protecting Bashir's regime from being held accountable for the crimes it committed in the country (Table 1).

Second, it has emerged clear from this research, there is a well-planned military cooperation between Khartoum and Beijing. The fact that China's Defense Ministry and Khartoum publicly acknowledged that they cooperate on varieties of military matters removed any doubt about China's intentions to protecting Bashir's regime. So when BBC Reporter, Hillary Anderson reported in 2008, that Chinese army lorries have been found in Darfur as well evident of China training Sudanese fighter pilots to fly Chinese A5 Fantan fighter jet, it was not a surprise to many people given the close military cooperation between Beijing and Khartoum [9]. The point is the China and Sudan have undeniable military cooperation of which China is not afraid to let the world knows.

Third, the fact that military hardware and weaponries with China's trademarks are found in Sudan and particularly in the war torn Darfur

State	Total Number	IDPs	Residents
North Darfur	754,789	479,342	275,447
South Darfur	918,985	770,808	148,177
West Darfur	948,714	715,708	233,006
Total	2,622,488	1,965,858	656,630

**Table 1:** Estimation of affected IDP and Residents Population in Darfur (UN Darfur Humanitarian Profile No 13-01).

region is a credible evident of China's involvement in the conflict. The trademarks evident confirmed that weapons, military equipment and other military hardware come from China or are made in Sudan with the help or permission of the Chinese government or companies. In fact, an article by Human Rights First stated that Chinese companies

have assisted in building weapons production factories in Khartoum. These factories are being used by the Khartoum's regime to produce machine guns, rocket launchers, mortars, antitank weapons and ammunitions that the regime uses to massacre people in Darfur and other parts of the Sudan [9].

2004	International Action on Darfur	China Dealing with Sudan
January		China's foreign Minister visited Sudan and signed economic and bilateral cooperation agreements.
May-June		CPECC wins two contracts to build pipeline from Block 3 and 7 to Port Sudan worth \$ 405.
July	China abstained from voting on Security Council resolution 1556 due to China's disagreement with the rest of the Security Council.	China gave Sudan \$ 3 million loan for technical education, colleges and universities.
September	China abstained from voting on Security Council resolution 1564, even when it has forced Security Council to removed explicit threats of sanctions on Sudan's oil sector if Bashir's regime refuses to comply with the resolution.	
November	China joined other nations objecting the inclusion of any significant action on Darfur contained in UN resolution 1574 on North Sudan peace process.	
2005	International Action on Darfur	China Dealing with Sudan
March	China abstained from voting on resolution 1591 even after it made Security Council to remove the threat on oil embargo in the event of noncompliance. It also abstained voting on resolution 1593 that referred Darfur to ICC on the ground that China is not willing to endorse the use of ICC against the will of a non-state party (Sudan in question?)	
July	Panel of Experts established by UN resolution 1591 after three months of it delayed by the Chinese unwillingness to accept panel membership composition.	
August		Chinese state-owned Harbin Power Equipment Company signed a \$ 400 million contracts to build substations and 1,776 transmission lines for Merowe Dam. CNPC bought 35% of the Sudan's gas development in Block 15. Chinese donated \$6 million in aid money for building of primary and secondary school in Southern Sudan
2006	International Action on Darfur	China Dealing with Sudan
April	China abstained from voting on resolution 1672 though China trimmed the sanction's targets on seventeen government and military officials to only five.	
May	China voted in favor of resolution 1679, but expressed reservation on the use of Chapter VII language to enforce the sanctions in an event of Sudan's noncompliance.	
August-September	The security Councils adopted resolution 1706 authorizing UN peacekeeping forces despites China delayed to seek Sudan's consent to the deployment of the UN peacekeepers. China abstained in protest to Chapter VII language included in 1706.	
November	China's UN Ambassador involved in persuading Khartoum to accept UN presence in Darfur during high level meeting in Addis Ababa. President Bashir visited China for China-Africa Cooperation where he thanked China for its support at the Security Council.	
2007	International Action on Darfur	China Dealing with Sudan
January	U.S. Presidential Envoy to Sudan Andrew Natsios visited China to ask China to accept the UN's troops deployments in Sudan.	CNPC signed \$ 1 million donation agreement with Sudanese Ministry of Welfare and Social Development to improve Sudan's social system. CNPC signed additional contracts worth \$ 900,000 to train Sudanese oil workers.
February	China's President Hu visited Sudan and encouraged Sudanese government to allow hybrid forces composed of UN and AU.	China Railway Engineering Group Ltd signed contract with Sudan to upgrade the country's rail line between Khartoum and Port Sudan worth \$ 1.15 billion. China's government announced \$ 12.9 million for the building of presidential palace and announced it willingness to forgive \$ 70 million in Sudanese debt.
April	China's foreign Minster visited Darfur refugees' camps. China asked Khartoum for more flexibility.	
May	100 Members of the United States House of Representatives and groups of bipartisan Senators wrote letters to China's President Hu Jintao to do more regarding Darfur. Beijing announced \$10 million in China's aid to Darfur victims and contributed 275 military engineers to be part of the UN peacekeeping.	
June	Bashir accepted United Nations hybrid forces.	CNPC signed agreement with Khartoum to own 35 % of 40 percent stake in the Block 13 near Red Sea.
July	Security Council resolution 1769 passed and UNAMID created. China vetoed this resolution.	
December	ICC prosecutor reported to Security Council that Sudan has failed to cooperate with the investigation. China refused in joining the other members of the Security council to issue a condemnation binding resolution on Sudan and those indicted by the ICC.	

**Table 2:** International Efforts to Deal with Darfur's Conflict and China's dealing with Sudanese' Regime (Human Rights First, 2008).

Fourth, China's endless thirst for Sudan's oil has blinded Beijing's policymakers. The world other major oil companies from Canada, British, Malaysia, India, United States and others that operated in Sudan in the past have ceased doing business with Khartoum. Oil companies from these countries stopped doing business with Sudan because they understood that continuing oil business with Khartoum's regime would mean they are aiding a regime that is killing its own citizens. Unfortunately, China's oil main company, China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) refused to follow suit with the rest of the world's major oil companies and so is the Chinese' government. Instead, Beijing and its oil companies have joined Bashir's campaign by consciously agreeing to do oil business with a brutal regime that has been condemned by most of the international community. In defiance of an international solidarity, China and her oil companies are consciously interested in extracting Sudan's oil and less interested in saving lives. Despite numerous calls by the international community for China to join the community of nations to punish Khartoum, China when given an opportunity to come clean has refused to cooperate with the rest of the world. Therefore, it's sufficed to say that China has consciously allied itself with Khartoum in waging war against the Darfur which makes Beijing an equal murderer of the Darfur's people [10].

It is clear that China is taking an advantage of a desperate Bashir's regime. While some people may argue that China-Sudan relationship is normal under international laws, the circumstances surrounding current Beijing-Khartoum relationship are not normal. China-Sudan oil relationship has serious consequences that directly affect millions of people in Sudan. As stated earlier, oil export to China is helping Khartoum's regime to generate money which it uses to terrorize its own people. Furthermore, China's oil drilling has negatively affected peoples' living conditions in oil drilling areas. There have been considerable declines in the rural populations in areas surrounding oil fields. For instance, in Melut and Maban provinces, more than 15,000 people have been forced away from their homes to give way for China to extract oil (The systemic pattern of displacements constituted a case of human rights abuse in which both Beijing and Khartoum are responsible and equally guilty of committing crimes against humanity [11]).

In summary, the findings supported the premises of this paper. By now, the relationship between Darfur's civil war and China's oil imports from Sudan is clear. Since China started oil imports from Sudan, Chinese' weapons and other military hardware have made their way into Sudan's territory of which some have been used by the regime to fight against the Darfur's people. Consequentially, thousands of people got killed with the help of the China's weapons, thousands of homes destroyed, and many innocent children and women have been driven out of their homes into displaced camps. Therefore, no doubt, China has Darfurians' bloods in its hands. The question now is what can China do to help international community to reverse the trajectory of war in Darfur and/or help itself come clean? Although, thousands of people are already killed, homes destroyed and thousands of people displaced, Beijing's cooperation with the rest of the world is essential if the conflict trajectory is to be reversed. In areas where people are displaced, institutions of laws and order have disappeared and gross human rights violations are occurring each day. Currently, there are no UN peacekeepers stationed in refugee camps to protect civilians from bandits and thugs that are terrorizing refugees in these camps. Given China's interest in the region, China can play a key role in providing security in these refugee camps. China's relationship with Khartoum could make it easy for China to propose a China's led humanitarian mission to Darfur to improve the security in these displaced camps. Furthermore, China can stop arms trade to Sudan and other parties

involved in the Darfur conflict. China can achieve this by supporting UN arms embargo on Sudanese' Army Forces (SAF) and rebel's groups in Darfur. Currently, UN resolutions 1556 and 1591 that prohibited sales of arms and military equipment to Khartoum's regime and rebels in Darfur are not fully implemented because of China's opposition at the UN. However, as a Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council, China's current position on Sudan doesn't allow other Permanent Members to act which explains why China's cooperation is critical regarding UN sanctions on Sudan. If China ended its support for Bashir's regime, there is a chance that these resolutions can get back on track. In addition, China can help UN deal with the Darfur conflict by softening its threat of veto or use of veto at the UN Security Council. There have been numerous times that China has blocked resolutions meant to sanction Khartoum's government for its continued atrocities in Darfur. Should China reverse threat or use of veto at the UN Security Council, there is a chance that UN can mobilize enough support to further isolate the Bashir's regime and stop further bloodbath in Darfur. Of course, this would require China to stop shielding Bashir's regime Human Rights records both at the United Nations and/or at the Human Rights Council Forum [12].

Moreover, With China's influence on Sudan, it should support UN and the African Union to promote an environment where parties can negotiate a peaceful and sustainable peace settlement in Sudan. China has political leverage which it can use to bring various groups together in a way that UN in its current form may not achieve. Currently, Khartoum's regime is toughened China's present position at the United Nations. However, this could change if China take the opposite role and start putting some political pressure on President Bashir and his regime. This would also send a peace message to various rebels in Darfur knowing that there is a new window to achieve a lasting political settlement to the Darfur's problem (Table 2).

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