

THE OBJECTIONS ENCOUNTERED BY CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY WHEN RELYING ON ITS NON-INTERFERENCE GUIDING PRINCIPLE IN THE SUDAN CONFLICT

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Abstract: *Recently, China obstructed an intended international interference in the Sudan conflict at the UN Security Council when President Omar al-Bashir was overthrown in April 2019. Indeed, this is not the first time China has swiftly been involved in blocking interference in Sudan affairs on the basis of the non-interference norm, even in 2008 Sudan-Darfur conflict, China relied on the same principle to shield Sudan from global intrusion, but later changed its approach. This article examines the factors that prompted China to adjust her foreign policy concerning its relations with Africa especially the non-interference norm in Sudan and to what extent did China adjust the norm? The international relations between China and Sudan offer a perfect yardstick of how China edited its foreign policy stance in order to react to the brutal skirmishes in Sudan. It aims to unpack the reasons as to why China changed its goal posts using Sino-Sudan relations as a case study to show how China inclined to her non-intervention international relation foreign policy during the initial phases of the conflict in Sudan but later on as a result of heavy criticism and confrontation with the parties to the Sudanese conflict, it prompted China to revise its commitment to the non-interference strategy. My main argument is that what prompted China to change its mask from non-interference to interference in the conflict was as a result of both internal and external pressures. Therefore, does that mean that China changes its game plan according to the prevailing political game?*

Keywords: No-Interference Principle, China's Foreign Policy, China-Sudan Relations

Research Area: Social Science

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1. INTRODUCTION

The foundation of the present Chinese foreign policy emanates from chairman Mao's era in 1949 where he specified the readiness of China to start diplomatic relations with every nation prepared to acknowledge the five values of mutual benefit, equality and joint respect for territorial honesty as well as sovereignty. Indeed, these principles were approved by the first session of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference on 29th of September, 1949 and this was also accompanied by the declaration of the Central government of the People's Republic of China.

During the British colonial era, the British used India as a stronghold to spread their impact into the Tibet region of China. Britain conquered a number of different benefits in the Tibet region relying on numerous categories of unfair agreements enforced on the Qing government. In 1950, when the diplomatic relationship started between China and India, the latter still expected to continue enjoying the privileges Britain formerly had in Tibet, however, the government of China maintained that the privileges India had inherited in Tibet ought to be cancelled.

As a result in order to promote the essence of being nice neighbours and driven with the policy of peaceful co-existence, the two countries China and India settled on talks concerning Tibet region which took place from 31st December 1953 to 29th April 1954. The

Chinese Prime minister Zhou had a meeting with delegates from India and tabled the five principles of peaceful co-existence, specifically; mutual respect towards both countries' territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in both countries' internal Affairs, equality and mutual benefit.

In June 1954 the Chinese Premier Zhou and India delivered a Mutual statement on 28th of June, the following day on 29th June 1954 the Chinese Premier and Burma issued a joint statement as well both affirming the five principles of peaceful existence to guide their bilateral relationship, which was subsequently officially suggested as the principles governing their international relationship. The Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955 adopted ten principles for conducting international relations. It was a continuation and modification of the five principles of peaceful co-existence. Generally, China's approach to foreign countries stands on the pillar of the five principles as a yardstick for its foreign policy ever since the Bandung conference in 1955 held in Indonesia.

2. CHINA'S NON-INTERFERENCE FOREIGN POLICY IN SUDAN

China has been relying on the five values of co-existence when dealing with other nations as a pillar regulating its approach to international relations (Alden, 2007). The five principles notwithstanding, China put great emphasis on non-interference when it was interacting with Sudan in the early 1990s. In 1978 when Deng became the leader of CCP he instilled capitalistic tendencies on Chinese development goals which made tremendous development within three decades and growth of people's standard of living (Alden, 2007, p. 10). Deng closely related with the United States of America and made a declaration allowing opening up of the Chinese business arena to stimulate and attract investors from abroad so that the economy was more versatile to form what was duped by CCP as "*socialism with Chinese characteristics*", and indeed these reforms contributed a lot to China's enormous development (Alden, 2007, p.10).

Nevertheless, despite the tremendous economic development, Deng asserted a substantial warning concerning the character the Chinese foreign policy should exhibit on this journey of state's progress, he said that "observe peacefully, shelter our opinion, conceal our competences, always be excellent in maintaining a low profile and never clamor for leadership" (Alden, 2007, p.11). Positively, Deng's counsel still inspires Chinese foreign policy, although recently China underwent trouble in exercising it in the course of Sino-Sudanese corporation considering the fact that it enjoys the status as an international economic global force, particularly where violent domestic skirmishes interrelates with Chinese responsibility when dealing with Africa for example in the conflict that took place in Sudan.

Sudan was among the foremost nations that recognized the government of China during the 1955 Bandung Conference in Indonesia, which made it one of China's close associate on the African continent. Indeed, when China started to focus on the African continent, Sudan was one of the states that China dealt with at the beginning of the early 1990s in order to procure its national clamour for fresh energy bases like unrefined oil. China stresses that Africa and itself share a mutual historic occurrence of shaking off and attaining autonomy from Western colonialists and another shared experience is that both are developing countries as well (Zafar 2007: p.105).

When describing the Chinese foreign strategy, several Chinese scholars endeavored to explain the Chinese foreign strategy of non-intervention and respect for sovereignty as innovative involvement or creative intervention (Wang, 2011). Some scholars point out that

China does not intend to exchange the significance of non- interference, nevertheless, it is rather to amplify on its value (Pang, 2013, p .49). And that “*China is implementing a new technique that binds together non- interference with authorized interference*” (Pang, 2013, p .46). Equally, China as an emerging big power and the desire to protect the natives from China working in Africa, inspired its foreign relation strategy into being more active in the issues concerning security in African Security (Wang, 2011).

Therefore, the non-interference and nation’s sovereignty concepts have gone through modifications in order to progressively render it greatly useful (Wang, 2012). China is heavily recognized by African nations as a wonderful option to make strong South to South bond so as to shake off the North-south neo-colonial relations with the Western heavyweights (Lammers, 2007). This is because western powers like USA will discuss with African countries issues concerning good governance, proficiency, security and environment, on the other hand China concentrates on business (Alden, 2007, p .103)

In my opinion, China’s reluctance to mediate in the Darfur calamity attracted extraordinary international responses especially when it was discovered that her businesses in the production of oil in Sudan were a basis to enhance the government of Sudan to cruelly crackdown of her inhabitants. The proceeds got from Oil by the Sudanese government doing business with China gave it the financial muscle to obtain weapons from China. Certainly, the millions of dollars got from oil export proceeds gave Khartoum the financial muscle to assign a greater percentage of that money to the purchase of China’s arms in 1999.

Moreover, there was great rise in the importation of arms between 1999 and 2005 by the Sudan government, and according to the U.N and Sudan sources, it was uncovered that China transacted in excess of USD 3 million in small artilleries to the regime of President Al-Bashir, which by 2006 had raced to above USD 55 million (Herbst, 2008). Nevertheless, in 2004 United Nations Security Council imposed an arms embargo which China acknowledged, much as still for many years Sudan constantly bought most of its small weaponries from traders based in China.

I also think that these armaments businesses were a provocation that deepened the brutality made by the Sudanese government on the two groups of rebels in Darfur comprising the Justice and Equality Movement and Sudan Liberation Movement. However, originally China maintained a loyal intimacy to non-intervention principle on the initial start of the tragedy. Notwithstanding, the international advocacy for outside participation to pacify and halt the government of Al-Bashir motivated cruelty in the region of Darfur, but still China relied on non-interference approach to vindicate its non-active involvement in the direct part in the resolution and mediation of the Sudan conflict.

Interestingly, although China unrelentingly relied on her foreign policy principles, the African Union, United Nations and Arab League, on the other hand, became actively involved from 2003 to 2007 by outlining reasonable strategic responses in order to end the annihilations executed in Darfur catastrophes; however, some of their decisions made during this period remained significantly destabilized because of China’s determination to hold on to non-intervention, be it through military intervention or any other form, by stressing that they should not levy economic sanctions on Sudan and that United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force should not be deployed minus the approval of Sudan (Olimat, 2015, p.4)

Basing on the facts that were interfacing, I think that the refusal by China on the recommended processes was mainly as a result of two factors; the first reason is that because China sought to spare its philosophical devotion to non-intervention, and second, is that

China wanted to safeguard the continuous exploit of the oil exercises which if the sanctions were slapped on Sudan such business ambitions could not be achieved. And when I synthesize these two issues; it confirms in my opinion that China's self-centeredness had precedence overriding the issues tabled by external influences crying to China to initiate its diplomatic will on Sudan so as to discontinue the clash.

2.1 Rationale of non-Interference Chinese Foreign Policy with Sudan

Why non-interference with Sudan? Chinese tactic with foreign nations remains predominantly distinctive as well as organized. It stands on five essential standards as a benchmark of its foreign policy performing like a basis to dictate the Chinese external relations perpetually ever since the 1955 Bandung Conference in Indonesia (Wenping, 2010)

Indeed, this foreign relation strategy of non-interference used by China echoes one of the greatest significant values in the arena of international relations, which underlines that each sovereign country possesses the right to govern its actions without external interference. This norm forbids other states from meddling within the sovereign affairs of other countries (Wood 2007). The main justification was basically to strengthen recognition as well as association while instilling in confidence and cooperation when dealing with African countries (Osakwe 2012). Generally, it is widely perceived by analysts that China relies on the technique of non-intervention so as to uphold stable interactions when dealing with countries in order to prevent problems that can arise ultimately distressing its business association, perhaps which can occur after regime changes and should there be uprising the norm of non-intervention vindicates the Chinese government from getting encompassed in the cocktail battles of the conflict.

Nevertheless, though formal non-intervention in other countries' affairs can help to safeguard the strength within the joint relations, it's not a guarantee that those nations susceptible towards hostilities can enjoy stability (Campbell, 2012). This can be witnessed with the conflict in Sudan because China's failure to interfere relying on its foreign relation policy technique failed to maintain the peace anticipated despite the deep trust throughout the collaboration between the two nations (Large, 2009). In contrast, supporters concerning the policy technique, argue in by insisting that the policy strategy couldn't increase the conflict because non-interference in itself is peace-oriented (Safer world, 2011)

Similarly, China tabled an interesting argument by stating that it grounded its formal relations with Sudan on non-interference, joint respect as well as mutual benefits (Large 2008). China went on to claim that the government of Sudan valued this kind of respectful relationship viewing it as a compact endorsement and demonstration of the true friendship and honesty of China. On the other hand, challenges of the Chinese foreign policy, like the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, comprehended the non-interference policy like a tool used by China to assist the Sudan government, which consequently demonstrated the insensitivities of China to the issues being put forward by Sudan People's Liberation Movement (Large, 2009). Equally, it further indicated that Chinese military support to the government of Sudan, led to numerous southern Sudanese natives to comprehend the participation of China as vigorous partisan involvement, even though China continued to sustain an unwavering non-interference foreign policy in the affairs in the Sudan government (Large, 2012)

As I have noted earlier, China failed to efficiently intervene in the conflict because of its selfish interest which was essential of its foreign policy. Instead of taking the initiative of mediating so as to solve the Sudan conflict, instead it encompassed a dormant character while

appealing to the parties to resolve their differences cordially (Sudan Tribune, 2012). China played a part concerning the clash of just promising rhetoric assistance to peace towards the Sudan regime and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (Large, 2012). Thus, it broadly implies that the role China exhibited was very meagre concerning the issue of solving the conflict that endangered the nonviolent transition anticipated through a Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Furthermore, China was among the earliest nations to acknowledge the independence of South Sudan, after the referendum and instantly clinched the bond, through its aspiration for Beijing to loan South Sudan US\$8 billion for putting up of infrastructures (Sudan Tribune, 2012). Ordinarily China failed to assist considerably concerning the dialogues which cemented the path for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement nevertheless, China became indirectly a supporter of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, consequently being non-argumentative in opposition to its implementation on January 9th, 2005 (Large 2012).

2.2. Chinese non-interference policy challenges in Sudan.

Basing on the apparent facts in the global international relation field today, I think as an international big power, Chinese responsibilities, duties as well as tasks are wide-ranging and this means its reliance on non-interference foreign relation policy is subject to scrutiny. This means that China is of age, its foreign policy of shying away from intervention, a method regularly used by the government of China will encounter strong stress because of the political and economic global rise of China.

My main point here is that practically it is challenging for China to comprehensively rely on the policy of non-interference in a conventional way, reason being that as an emerging superpower; China shoulders responsibilities which necessitates its policies to demonstrate wide coverage all-encompassing issues like life protection, peace and security preservation, poverty alleviation and the secure political improvements as well as economic stability, which are particularly pertinent in Africa as a continent, and indeed African member nations are still searching for a remedy as far as some of the later issues raised are concerned. Consequently, the Chinese foreign relation policies continue to be significantly affected by African nations' fondness mainly because China has a great interest in the African continent.

This is the reason why these factors played an influential role as to why the strong position enjoyed by China with its non-interference norm afterwards deteriorated eventually between 2006- 2007 during the clashes in Sudan, especially after China was challenged to its self-centeredness that encompassed the straightforward bodily intimidation on its oil investments at the time of the conflict as well as the global condemnation steered by Western powers targeting the failure by China to be proactive, henceforth putting its international reputation in jeopardy.

The capacity of China to retain the business association with the government of Sudan separate from the political internal activities became debilitated; it could not disregard anymore the global condemnation of the suspected participation of boosting the calamity in Darfur. In 2007 China witnessed menace to its investment when the Justice and Equality Movement rebels deliberately challenged enterprises owned by Chinese in Defra, Kordofan, and this was followed with an unambiguous appeal requesting China to totally quit Sudan. In 2008 another outbreak further occurred when nine employees of Chinese origin were incarcerated in the southern part of Kordofan, eventually leading to five staff to die out of the nine caged (Large, 2012).

When these unfortunate casualties happened, it influenced China is reconsidering its argument of non-interference concerning the thundery internal issues of the Sudan conflict. It prompted China to acknowledge circumstances in order to get involved in boosting the wellbeing of her native workforce in the oil fields of Sudan and the other oil-related infrastructure developments where a lot of her money had been injected. These issues were seen as sensible other than maintaining as well as heeding steadfastly the norm of non-intervention in sacrifice of its businesses and native workforce in Sudan. Such factors undoubtedly prove that the comprehensive commitment to non-intervention principle by China during its relation with Sudan was entirely tested.

Henceforth, China embarked on its expected global responsibility by playing a positive part during the process of conflict mediation skirmishes in Sudan afterwards. The Chinese foreign relation policy principle was challenged and China's participation in the catastrophe elucidated the adjustment from being non-active to proactive Chinese international relationship in the Sudan conflict.

China responded to the international criticism by positioning its self vigorously by getting involved in the conflict mediation process in international cooperation, including engaging in convincing president Al-Bashir to allow external interference in the Darfur region. Much as in 2006 Wang Guangya, China's Diplomat to the United Nations played greater role concerning the United Nations-African Union peace conference which ultimately molded the strategy to scheme a robust joint United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force so as to resolve the catastrophe, previously China had specified her disapproval for military intrusion without the endorsement of the government of Sudan; subsequently, it removed surplus unswerving backing basing on the non-interference policy (Pang,2009).

Likewise, Al-Bashir steadily disagreed to external global intrusion in Darfur by specifying the rights to safeguard the sovereignty of his nation, pleading to the fact that United Nations and African Union peacekeeping force interrupted the sovereign principle, and further stressed that *"no blue helmeted (United Nations) peacekeeping force would ever set foot in Darfur"* (Nastios 2012, p. 65). In February 2007 however, Hu Jintao visited Sudan to have a meeting with President Al-Bashir and delivered a brief message to the effect that *"Darfur is a part of Sudan and you have to resolve this problem"* (Liao, 2012, p. 8). President Hu Jintao also convinced Al-Bashir to permit the peacekeeping force to come to Darfur.

Al-Bashir ultimately recognized Jintao influence, and subsequently allowed the United Nations and African Union Mission in Darfur that encompassed the largest UN peacekeeping force ever since. The straight vibrant participation of high political leadership from China holding special talks with president Al-Bashir proved a strong departure from its characteristic policy of non-interference, and this demonstrated effervescent adjustment of its noninterference foreign relations policy. Henceforth this visibly confirmed how the non-interference China policy was defied, and accordingly making China change from dormancy to reactiveness. And indeed it has been observed that *"although numerous nations pressed Sudan to consent to the troops China's Jintao message induced Al-Bashir to change his position (Nastios 2012, p.65)*

Nevertheless, on a more theoretical basis, China challenges the common allegations that its involvement to peace was inadequate, by showing its special opinion in the means peace can be acquired. China's approach to peace places more prominence on commercial development, organized by infrastructure creation, a decrease of poverty and sturdy

governance (Kuo 2012). China's view of peace is comparatively different from the Western powers liberal peace which emphasizes good governance and protection of individual rights

3. CONCLUSION

The factors uncovered in this piece of work visibly exposed the changing Chinese approach where initially it devoted firmly to her non-intervention norm of foreign relations when interacting with Sudan by remaining dormant at the time of the conflict in Sudan. Nonetheless, my argument is that as a result of global pressure and growing assaults on China's businesses in Sudan, this compelled China to modify its position and adjustment of her firm compliance with the non-interference principle and went on to expressively play a part in calming the conflict in Sudan which was a direct contradiction with the non-intervention foreign policy norm it ordinarily relies on.

Perhaps it would have been wise for China to assume a well-structured economic as well as social all-encompassing support, to be in a position to appease the communities and political leadership. By taking such an approach it might possibly have played a part in assisting to thwart the security threats encountered by their enterprises in the area. This is because community development enterprises may offer a great opportunity for discussion and interactions between the native inhabitants and the Chinese, and by using such kind of strategies the essentials of those who are helpless are certainly recognized. This kind of an approach may possibly have assisted China with regard to improving its economic security interests, and also demonstrate extra evidence of its actual effect to the lessening of poverty within the citizens of Sudan.

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