

China's Major Approaches to Solving the Darfur Issue

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Abstract: *China has been involving itself in the international efforts to solve the Sudanese Darfur problem since 2004. In this process, China has adopted three approaches to finding ways out of the crisis: multilateral cooperation, bilateral coordination, and the involvement of Chinese enterprises in Sudan. These approaches are interactive and mutually promoted in a consistent and effective frame. Multilateral activities in the UN provide more opportunities for China to assist in shaping the contents of the resolutions related to Darfur. China also pays attention to conducting cooperation with relevant regional organizations in this process. On the basis of its multilateral approach, the bilateral coordination on key issues between China and the US and, China and Sudan exert a significant impact on solving the problem. Chinese enterprises in Sudan also play a mixed role in the whole process through their economic influences there.*

Key Words: *Bilateral and Multi-lateral Approaches; Chinese Enterprises in Sudan; Darfur; the US Middle East Policy; China and the Middle East*

Introduction

In April 2003, a fierce racial conflict broke out between Arabic and black people in the Darfur area of Sudan to control the water source and pastures, which in turn triggered a large-scaled humanitarian crisis. At the beginning of this crisis, there were not many people who found an apparent connection between this conflict in Sudan and China, several thousand kilometers away from Sudan. However, in November 2003, China was listed for the first time as a stake-holder in the civil war of Sudan in the report published by a human rights organization in the United States. This report initiated waves of criticism from mass media and Western governments which had regarded China as being indifferent towards the humanitarian crisis in Sudan, indicating an unfair bias by the Sudanese government against the indigenous natives of Darfur. Meanwhile, many people in China, including the domestic Chinese chemical and petroleum corporations, academic circles, and even general public began to openly demand that the Chinese government should protect its legitimate interests in Sudan. Some even came up with new approaches to adjusting the fundamental principles of China's diplomacy. Under such circumstances since 2004, the Chinese government began to involve itself in the Darfur issue.

Considering the goals and content of China's policy, the government's involvement in the Darfur issue could be divided into two stages. In the first

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stage (July 2004~May 2006), the Chinese government firmly opposed any strong sanctions against Sudan and urged the Sudanese government to open a dialogue with the UN and to open negotiations with the rebel force of the Sudanese opposition factions. Finally, the Darfur Peace Treaty was signed by the Sudanese government and Sudan Liberation Movement, owing to the joint efforts made by the international community and China. During the second stage (August 2006~to the present), the UN Security Council issued Resolution 1706, bringing an accelerated process of UN involvement in Darfur that was strongly opposed by the Sudanese government. Therefore Kofi Annan, then the UN Secretary-General, offered a new three-stage approach that proposed a "Mixed Peace-keeping Force" jointly established by the African Union and UN and supported by UN financial, technical, and logistical aid to the African Union.² The Chinese government strenuously sought to persuade the Sudanese government to accept Annan's approach, and at the same time actively lobbied at the UN and other international organizations to revise and improve on the existing approach, in order to prevent possible sanctions against Sudan. In January 2007, Chinese President Hu Jintao paid a successful visit to Sudan. After this visit, the Sudanese government finally agreed to implement the second stage of Annan's approach, and accept the stationing of the above-mentioned mixed peace-keeping force in Darfur. Now the major related parties still disagree with each other on practical means to implement effectively the third stage of Annan's approach and finding acceptable ways to re-initiate the political re-construction process in Darfur.

All the related research on China's involvement in Darfur could be classified into three categories. In the first category, research has been concentrated on the motives and influence of China's involvement. For example, Chinese scholar Meng Wang has discovered that China's adjustment of its policy on the Darfur issue could be attributed to multi-layer dilemmas in the competition among great powers. These dilemmas refer to: a dilemma in defense of China's overseas interests; a dilemma for China's implementation of its "Outward Expansion Strategy"; a dilemma for China's involvement in international community; and a dilemma for China's construction of its national image and reputation. Therefore, the active changes and adjustments in foreign policies initiate China's campaign on protecting its overseas interests in a period of encountering new strategic opportunities.³ Based on these opinions, he advocates a reform on the China's grand strategy.

In the second category, some Western scholars, such as Morton Abramowitz and Jonathan Kolieb, and David J. Scheffer have blamed the Chinese government for its deliberate non-interference and sheltering of the Sudanese government for

² The general conditions of Sudan could be surveyed on the website of the Foreign Ministry of People's Republic of China, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/wjb/zzjg/xybfs/gjlb/1414/1414x0/default.htm>, accessed June 1st of 2008.

³ Meng Wang, "Darfur Crisis: the Challenges and Opportunities for China's Diplomatic Transformation," *World Economy and Politics*, 2005 (6), pp. 35-40.

the purpose of its own new colonialism in Africa.⁴ These research, mainly focusing on China's economic manipulation in Sudan, hold that the manipulation results in China's negligence of anti-humanitarian atrocities of the Sudanese government and its inactivity to assist in solving the internal problems in Sudan that are closely observed by Western countries. Such scholars seldom mention the active diplomatic effort already undertaken by the Chinese government.

In the third category, efforts have been made to describe China's diplomatic efforts and constructive role in the situation in Sudan. For example, some scholars, such as Jianbo Luo and Hengkun Jiang summarize China's diplomatic efforts into four items: 1) communication and dialogue with various parties related through bilateral and multilateral channels so as to narrow the disagreements and achieve a consensus; 2) active communication with the Sudanese government and frequent dispatches of special envoys to Darfur for close observation and inspection; 3) active and constructive proposals to ensure deserved respect on various interests of all the related parties; and 4) a sincere solicitude and commitment to the actual living conditions of refugees and the humanitarian crisis in that area.⁵ Some scholars, such as Chun Zhang paid attention to the possibility and prospect of cooperation between China and the international organizations on the Darfur issue.⁶ Some scholars such as Daojiong Zha even make an indirect analysis on the specific role of large Chinese corporations in the process of settling disputes in Darfur.⁷ Notwithstanding the reasonable opinions and analysis by various scholars, all of the above-mentioned research is relatively ambiguous, lacking an appropriate classification and a detailed comparison on the means of China's participation in this issue.

With an emphasis on the identification of major means of China's involvement in the process of settling the Darfur issue, this article analyzes the interdependent relations between various means of China's involvement, with a comparison on these different means. In other words, in addition to closely attending to what China has been doing in relation to the Darfur issue, much more importance to the analysis over various means of China's involvement and their interacted relations should be made. The article is divided into four sections. The first section discusses the multi-lateral channels of China's participation in the process of settling the Darfur issue, including China's utilization of channels offered by the UN and such regional multilateral organizations as the African Union and Arabic Union. The

⁴ See Morton Abramowitz and Jonathan Kolieb, "Why China Won't Save Darfur," *Foreign Policy*, June 2007, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3847; David J. Scheffer, "China and Darfur: Time for Pressure," *New York Times*, April 16th, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/16/opinion/16darfur.html>

⁵ Jianbo Luo & Hengkun Jiang, "Reconciliation Process in Darfur and Shaping of China's National Image," *Diplomatic Review*, 2008 (6), pp.44-50; Jianhua Yu & Zhen Wang, "China's Diplomatic Effort on the Resolution of Darfur Issue in Sudan", *Arab World*, 2003 (2), pp.11-18.

⁶ Chun Zhang, "Probing on Cooperation between China and EU over Darfur Issue," *Studies on West Asia and Africa*, 2008 (9), pp.29-33.

⁷ Daojiong Zha, "China's Interest of Oil in Africa: A Topic for International Politics," *Studies on International Politics*, 2006 (4), pp.53-67; Hongwu Liu & Xinfeng Li, eds., *Studies on Darfur Issue from a Global Perspective* (Beijing: World Knowledge Press, 2008), pp. 199-200, 203.

second section pays attention to the bilateral channels used by China, including the China-US and the China-Sudan channels. The third section analyzes the role of Chinese enterprises investing in Sudan. The last section is the conclusion based on a comparative analysis of the three above-mentioned channels and expounding on the internal connections among them.

I. Multi-lateral Channels

Since 2002, the Chinese government has attached much more importance to multilateral channels in the process of settling international disputes, with a stress on “multilateralism and new concept of security outlined by mutual trusts, mutual benefits, equality, and coordination.”⁸ In solving the Darfur issue, the Chinese government has also paid the most attention and attached the greatest importance to multilateral channels, including UN and regional international organizations.

A. The UN Channel

In 2004, the Darfur issue was listed on the agenda of the Security Council. As a permanent member, China was engaged in the process of solving this issue, implementing a series of measures, such as assertions of its fundamental stand, offering constructive proposals, and providing financial and manpower support to the UN peace-keeping mission in that region, all of which were enforced through the framework of the Security Council.

First, in voting on various Security Council resolutions on Darfur and Sudan, China established its basic stand that international sanctions against Sudan should be avoided because sanctions themselves could not effectively settle local disputes. Since 2004, altogether 24 resolutions on Darfur issue have been passed in the Council,⁹ on which China cast 18 supporting votes and six abstention votes. Among China's abstentions, four resolutions warned the Sudanese government of possible sanctions, and one proposed the transfer of four armed officers in Sudanese government and opposition factions to the International Criminal Court for trial.¹⁰

On April 25th, 2006, in voting on Security Council Resolution No. 1672, Guangya Wang, the Chinese ambassador to the UN, clearly expressed China's position, “Viewed from past practices and experience, sanctions often failed to fulfill original objectives, and at the same time brought suffering to civilians. If any party of the Abuja negotiation has to take consideration on another package of

⁸ “China's Foreign Policy”, website of the Foreign Ministry of People's Republic of China, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/wjdt/wjzc/t24782.htm>, accessed on June 1st, 2008.

⁹ The time distribution of these resolutions is as follows: 4 in 2004, 7 in 2005, 8 in 2006, and 10 in 2008. Specific data can be surveyed on the UN website: <http://www.un.org/chinese/peace/peacekeeping/sudan/scres.htm>, accessed on October 16th, 2008.

¹⁰ There is another resolution on positioning of the task and scale of UN special mission to Sudan. During this period, Russia voted 5 abstentions and the US voted 2 abstentions, with no member of the Council voting against any resolution at any time.

agreements due to sanction resolution made by Security Council, the conflict in Darfur will be inevitably prolonged or even intensified.”¹¹ Furthermore, in the Council, China endeavored to maintain and stress the important role of the African Union, and prevented pressure imposed on the Union by other countries. On August 31st, China abstained on Resolution No. 1706, indicating its reservation of dissent on the UN's full takeover of the peacekeeping mission in Darfur and its insistence of the leading role of the African Union in this peacekeeping situation.¹²

Second, during the process of determining the Council's agenda, China sought to coordinate different positions of various big powers by closed-door meetings and offered constructive proposals to affect the content of final resolution. These efforts include an insistence on due respect towards the Sudanese government in resolutions related and deletion of passages implying possible sanctions against Sudan in Resolution No. 1564.¹³ Meanwhile China also successfully softened the tone of several resolutions.

In addition, China offered an original proposal of a three-party mechanism composed of the Sudanese government, African Union, and UN, and a dual-track strategy promoting both the peacekeeping mission and political solution. At the same time, the Chinese government also laid a stress on the urgency of humanitarian assistance and rescues that should be paralleled to the political solution.¹⁴

Third, China offered proper and timely support for the UN peacekeeping mission, with an insistence on necessary recognition of such peacekeeping mission by Sudanese government and an equal status for the African Union as a partner. As a matter of fact, the peacekeeping mission itself is an outcome of international political cooperation. Before passing Security Council Resolution No.1769, China kept a rather cautious and meticulous attitude on the proposal of sending a peacekeeping force to Darfur. Then, on July 31st, 2007, the Council passed Resolution No. 1769 and authorized a mixed mission jointly operated by the UN and the African Union in Darfur. China immediately declared that it would send a troop of several hundred soldiers to participate in the peacekeeping mission in that

¹¹ Minutes of 5423 Conference, S/PV.5423 Document of UN, which can be read on the UN website:<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/PRO/N06/325/75/PDF/N0632575.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed on April 25th 2006.

¹² Resolution No. 1706 (2006) of Security Council, UN, (Passed at the 5519 Conference of the Security Council on August 31st 2006), which can be read on the Darfur webpage of the UN website, <http://www.un.org/chinese/peace/peacekeeping/sudan/scres.htm>; Minutes of the 5519 Conference, S/PV.5519 Document of UN, August 31st of 2006, pp. 4-5, can be read on the UN website: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/PRO/N06/325/75/PDF/N0632575.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed on June 15th of 2008.

¹³ “Guangya Wang, Chinese Ambassador to UN, Talked on the New Resolution of the Security Council on the Darfur Issue of Sudan,” September 20th, 2004. Details could be found on the website of the Foreign Ministry of P.R.C.: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/zxxx/t158100.htm>, accessed on June 1st of 2008.

¹⁴ Regular Press Conference Held by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Yu Jiang on April 29th, 2008, Details can be found on the website of the Foreign Ministry of P.R.C.: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/xwfw/fyrth/t430205.htm>, accessed on June 1st of 2008.

region. ¹⁵In March 2008, as the first country making donation to settling the Darfur issue, the Chinese government donated \$500,000 US dollars to the UN Trust Fund for the Political Process of Darfur Issue.

B. Regional International Organization Channels

Sudan has membership in both the African Union and Arabic Union. Therefore in addition to the UN channel as the major diplomatic method for mediation, China also extended coordination and communication with the African Union and Arabic Union.

The African Union has been independently mediating and promoting peace talks between the Sudanese government and opposition factions of Sudan even before the UN was involved in the Darfur issue. Therefore, China emphasized that "Darfur is not only Sudanese Darfur but also African Darfur," and laid a stress on the active role with substantial measures of the African Union in the peacekeeping process and security maintenance in Darfur. Since 2004, Chinese representatives have always emphasized the leading role and priority of the African Union in the peacekeeping mission and mediation work related to Darfur. ¹⁶A large number of meetings have been held between Mr. Alpha Oumar Konare, the Chairman of the African Union, and Zhaoxing Li and Jiechi Yang, the former and present Chinese Foreign Ministers, and Jun Zhai and Guijin Liu, the two Chinese special envoys to Sudan. Among these meetings, China hopes that the African Union plays the leading role in the peace keeping in the region and maintains close cooperation among the UN, the African Union and Sudanese government.

In May 2006, after the signing of the Abuja Agreement, Zhaoxing Li, Chinese Foreign Minister at that time highly praised the African Union. He said that "the domestic problems of Africa could be completely resolved through political negotiation through pure African wisdom, African method, and African leadership." ¹⁷ In November 2006, during the Beijing Summit for the China-Africa Cooperation Forum, Chinese officials exchanged opinions with many leaders and diplomats from member states of the African Union, and initiated a joint effort with many African countries that finally resulted in the establishment of the Tripoli Mechanism, a cooperative institution offering effective measures to settle the

¹⁵ "Chinese Government Decides to Send Engineering Dispatch to Darfur," May 11th, 2007, Details can be found on the website of the Foreign Ministry of P.R.C.: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/zxxx/t318072.htm>, accessed on June 1st of 2008.

¹⁶ "Chinese Special Envoy for Darfur Held Information Revelation Conference for Domestic and Foreign Press," March 7th, 2008. Details can be found on website of the Foreign Ministry of P.R.C.: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/zxxx/t412957.htm>, accessed on June 1st of 2008.

¹⁷ "Foreign Minister Zhaoxing Li Made Speech on the Ministerial Conference for Sudan Issue in Security Council," May 9th 2006. Details can be found on the website of the Foreign Ministry of P.R.C.: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/zxxx/t251342.htm>, accessed on June 1st of 2008.

Darfur crisis. Furthermore, China offered financial aid of \$1.8 million US dollars to support the the African Union's peacekeeping actions in Darfur.¹⁸

With Muslims accounting for over 70% of its population, Sudan ranks an important member of the League of Arab States. Therefore China also hopes that the League of Arab States could play an active role in the process of settling the Darfur issue, and takes measures for further cooperation with it for a smooth resolution of related problems. On the second ministerial conference of the Forum for Cooperation between China and Arab Countries in June 2006, both parties declared an emphasis and concern on "the national unification, ethnic unity, and territorial integrity of Sudan." The parties of this conference announced that they "welcome the Peace Agreement signed in Abuja on May 5th, 2006, call for an implementation of that agreement for peace by various parties of Darfur issue, and attach great importance to the irreplaceable responsibility of the League of Arab States to coordinate with African Union on this issue."¹⁹In addition, the League of Arab States also opposes the U.N. sanctions on Sudan, which shares the same stance with China.

II. Bilateral Channels

Multilateral diplomacy usually enjoys an extensive basis, but could be easily trapped into a dilemma or stalemate due to stubborn insistence of various countries on specific details of the agenda. Compared to multilateral diplomacy, bilateral diplomacy could be focused on some specific target or used as an efficient means to make a breakthrough on certain events or agendas. The crucial point of the Darfur issue lies in the controversy over the appropriateness of sanctions against the Sudanese government and proper means to make it accept the UN peacekeeping mission. Outwardly, such controversy reflects the disputes and confrontations between the UN and Sudanese government, but in essence it was the US and its allies that raised all the proposals which were unacceptable to the Sudanese government. Therefore, it is impossible for China to achieve a satisfying resolution on the Darfur issue without effective coordination and successful mediation between the US and Sudan through the channels of bilateral diplomacy.

A. Coordination between China and US

Among all the big powers, the US is most deeply involved in and most intricately connected to the Darfur issue. Despite a relaxation on the US-Sudan

¹⁸ "Press Conference of Summit of China-Africa Cooperation Forum Is Held in Beijing: Foreign Ministers of China, Ethiopia, and Egypt Answer Questions from Journalists," November 5th 2006. Details can be found on the website of the Foreign Ministry of P.R.C.: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/zxxx/t278875.htm>, accessed on June 1st 2008.

¹⁹ "Communiqué of the Second Ministerial Conference of the Forum for Cooperation between China and Arabic Countries," Details can be found on the website of the Foreign Ministry of P.R.C.: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/ziliao/wzzt/zahzltdejbjhy/zywx/hycg/t273086.htm>, accessed on September 22th, Zhaoxing Li, Chinese Foreign Minister at that time 2008.

relation after 9/11, 2001, the US still has taken a relatively stern position against the Sudanese government on the Darfur issue. Therefore, a choice of an appropriate means to coordinate the gap between its own stand and the attitude of the US government through bilateral channels became a crucial point for China to help resolve the Darfur issue. Since 2004, the Darfur issue was gradually put onto the list of high priorities in the US-China dialogue agenda. China extended its discussions with the US around this issue through rather diversified channels of bilateral diplomacy, including a summit of the top leaders, hotline telephone conversations between the leadership of the two countries, ministerial-level meetings, and mutual visits of special envoys from both countries.

Consensus became the major objective for the coordination between China and the US. A Chinese scholar who met Mr. Natsios, the US special envoy to Sudan, revealed that a tacit agreement was made between the leadership of these two countries that US should lead the process of settling south-north dispute in Sudan while China should promote the final resolution of the Darfur issue.²⁰ After a visit to China in January 2007, Mr. Natsios testified in the US Senate that China took rather active and positive actions in Sudan and largely supported the US effort in this region.²¹ At the G8 Summit in 2007, then US President George W. Bush, expressed his appreciation and praise of China's positive role on Darfur issue.²²

The coordination between China and the US established a compatible international environment for China to participate in the Darfur issue. As a matter of fact, the western world holds strong distrust and misunderstandings for China's role in solving the Darfur issue. For example, the US Congress connected the Darfur issue to the Olympic Games in Beijing and passed several proposals calling for boycott on the Olympic Games held in Beijing. Under such circumstances, Guijin Liu, Chinese special envoy to Darfur paid a special visit to the US and explained China's efforts on Darfur issue to many prestigious senators and congressmen.²³ Meanwhile, Wenzhong Zhou, Chinese ambassador to the US, also introduced China's Africa policy to common people in the United States through various channels. Thanks to such effort and endeavors, the U.S. politicians and press eliminated some of their hostility and misunderstandings about China's

²⁰ The time of the meeting was March 19th, 2008, while the location of the meeting was A Section, New Hongji Building, School of International Relations, Peking University.

²¹ Edward Cody, "China Given Credit for Darfur Role, US Official Cites New Willingness to Wield Influence in Sudan," *Washington Post Foreign Service*, Saturday, January 13, 2007, Page A13, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/12/AR2007011201924.html>; "Top US Diplomat Cites Chinese Cooperation on Darfur, Natsios unveils new 'Plan B' Sudan sanctions to Senate," April 11th, 2007, <http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2007/April/200704111658531EJrehsiF0.2924921.html>, accessed on June 20th 2008.

²² "President Hu Jintao Met President Bush of US," June 8th 2007. Details can be surveyed on Details could be surveyed on the website of the Foreign Ministry of P.R.C., <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/wjb/zzjg/bmdyzs/xwlb/t328677.htm>, accessed on June 1st, 2008.

²³ "Chinese Special Envoy to Darfur Held Information Revelation Conference for Domestic and Foreign Press," September 18th 2007. Details can be surveyed on the website of the Foreign Ministry of P.R.C., <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/zxxx/t363782.htm>, accessed on June 1st, 2008.

policy over Darfur to some degree. In this way, the public opinion of the international community towards China was accordingly improved and the process of settling the Darfur issue was more effectively promoted.

B. China-Sudan Coordination

Since the establishment of bilateral diplomatic relation between China and Sudan in February 1959, the friendship between these two countries has been maintained. Owing to these close connections and contacts, the Sudanese government has been willing to understand China's opinions and give serious consideration to China's attitude, so China has become the permanent member of the UN Security Council that maintains the most smooth and effective contact with the Sudanese government, mainly through such channels as summits of top leaders and diplomacy of special envoys.

The summit between top leaders plays an important role to provide clarified and precise advice for the resolution of political dilemma, so as to promote the policy transformation of Sudanese government. In February 2007, President Hu Jintao made an official visit to Sudan and proposed four principles for the proper solutions to Darfur issue,²⁴ which put an emphasis on respect of Sudanese sovereignty and its territorial integrity, equal dialogue, and a promotion of three-party cooperation among Sudanese government, the UN, and African Union. Since then, apparent changes began to occur on the stalemate of Darfur issue. In April 2007, Sudan declared that it accepted the consensus made by the UN and African Union on the conference held in Addis Ababa, and generally agreed to initiate the approach for the second stage. Jun Zhai, assistant to Chinese Foreign Minister, remarked that "it is because of China's important role that Sudanese government generally accepted the three-stage approach proposed by Annan and showed more flexibility on this issue."²⁵

The diplomacy of special envoys plays an important role in the extensive shuttle diplomacy for the purpose of timely expression of specific policy positions and effective communication over concerned issues. Since 2004, three high-ranking officials, namely: Guozeng Lü, Jun Zhai, and Guijin Liu, have been appointed special envoys of the Chinese government to Sudan and other related countries. Among these officials, Guijin Liu holds the office of "special envoy of Chinese government for African affairs", who is in charge of mediation over the Darfur issue with his rich experience on China's diplomacy towards Africa. During their communication and contact with Sudanese government, Chinese special envoys have made outstanding achievements with their sincerity and seriousness on the

²⁴ "Hu Jintao Held Meeting with Sudanese President Baxier," February 4th 2007. Details can be surveyed on the website of the Foreign Ministry of P.R.C., <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/wjb/zzjg/xybfs/xwlb/t294619.htm>, accessed on June 1st 2008.

²⁵ "Jun Zhai, Assistant to Chinese Foreign Minister, Held Information Revelation Conference for Domestic and Foreign Press on Darfur Issue," April 12th 2007, Details can be surveyed on the website of the Foreign Ministry of P.R.C.: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/zxxx/t310576.htm>, accessed on June 1st 2008.

issue.²⁶

For example, after Jun Zhai's visit to Sudan, the Sudanese government reached a framework agreement with the UN on the second stage action of Annan's approach. After Guijin Liu's first visit to Sudan in 2007, the Sudanese government declared an unconditional and complete acceptance of the third stage approach of the Annan Plan, and agreed to accept the stationing of mixed troops set up by the UN and African Union.²⁷ Moreover, special envoys traveled to the Darfur area and took a first-hand observation over local conflicts through direct contact with local opposition leaders.

Meanwhile, China provides the Darfur area with huge amount of assistance in terms of goods and grand projects, so as to promote local social development. Up to March 2008, China had transferred to the Darfur region its assistance of 80 million yuan, ranking the first in the list of countries offering assistance to that region. In addition, China is the first non-African country that sent a peacekeeping force to Darfur. In conformity with the requirement of the Security Council, China sent 315 peacekeeping engineer soldiers to southern Darfur for such missions as construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, buildings, airfields, and defense works, prospecting on water sources and water-drilling, as well as the establishment of related water-in taking facilities.²⁸

III. Channels of Enterprises

In approximately the past ten years, the oil trade has played a very important role in the rapid development of bilateral relations between China and Sudan. In September 1995, China Natural Gas and Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) signed a contract with the Sudanese Energy and Mining Ministry for a profit-sharing over petroleum products in the south of Sudan. By the end of 2003, CNPC had made an investment of \$2.7 billion US dollars and obtained over 10 million tons of oil in Sudan, which accounted for 11% of the total amount of petroleum imported into China and ranked the first in the top list of foreign energy source markets.²⁹ In recent years, China's oil trade and investment in Sudan have not been seriously

²⁶ US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Christensen highly praised Guijin Liu for his efficient and successful role in settling the Darfur issue. The author recorded his remark while meeting him in Boston on February 28th 2009.

²⁷ "Gang Qin, Foreign Ministry Spokesman of China, Answered Questions from Journalists over Consent of Sudanese government on Stationing of Joint Peacekeeping Force of UN and African Union in Darfur," June 13th 2007. Details can be surveyed on the website of the Foreign Ministry of P.R.C.: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/xwfw/fyrth/t329633.htm>, accessed on June 1st of 2008.

²⁸ "Premier Wen Jiabao Made Phone Call to British Prime Minister Brown," February 19th, 2008. Details can be surveyed on the website of the Foreign Ministry of P.R.C.: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/wjdt/wshd/t408343.htm>, accessed on June 1st, 2008.

²⁹ Zichao Kong, "Important Discovery of the Regional Survey over Six Districts of Sudan and Its Significance," *Oil & Gas Fields of Fracture*, 2001 (7), P.18; CNPC Representative Office of the Coordination and Administration Group of Sudan Project, "Milestone established on the Shore of Nile River," *Chinese Petroleum and Petrochemical Industry*, 1999 (6), pp.22-23; Daojiong Zha, "China's Interest of Oil in Africa: A Topic for International Politics," *Studies on International Politics*, 2006 (4), pp.53-67.

impacted by the Darfur issue. CNPC now has started its oil-drilling operation in Darfur and got consecutive business projects through business tenders.³⁰

Under such circumstances, large Chinese corporations, especially CNPC, inevitably assert their influence on the Darfur issue and have urged the Chinese government to more actively participate in the process of settling the Darfur issue. First, CNPC has managed to maintain normal oil trade with Sudan, contributing to the improvement of social and economic conditions in Sudan and consolidating the foundation of friendly relations between China and Sudan. Since 2002, China has been the largest trade partner of Sudan, especially in terms of the oil trade.

In 2007, the total volume of Sudanese exports of oil and petroleum products added up to \$8.419 billion US dollars, including its oil export of \$7 billion US dollars to China.³¹ In the past decade, Chinese petroleum corporations have helped Sudan to establish its own general system of oil drilling and production. In this way, Sudanese people both in the north and south could share larger "oil dividends", which has promoted the local social development and ethnic reconciliation. The data calculated by CNPC shows that the oil projects invested in Sudan by China have brought jobs and employment to 1.5 million local people and the oil cooperation between these two countries has offered much help to gradual eradication of local strife and conflicts.³²

Second, Chinese enterprises that stationed in Sudan have constructed a large quantity of projects related to the people's livelihood, which benefit to ease the tension of the humanitarian crisis in Darfur and created favorable conditions for the Chinese government to help resolve the Darfur crisis. According to statistics at the end of 2007, Chinese corporations and enterprises had drilled 46 wells, established 20 small hydro power stations, and completed the water-supply project extending from Southern Darfur Province through Gadarif Province all the way to Northern Darfur Province, which was financed by a Chinese loan with special preferential interest rates.³³ In March 2009, Merowe Dam, perhaps the longest dam in the world, was established in Sudan, which was contracted and built by SINOHYDRO Corporation and China International Water and Electric Corporation.³⁴

³⁰ "Zhongyuan Oil Field Corporation Has Got a Package of Drilling Project in two Major Districts of Sudan," October 28th, 2008. Details can be surveyed on the website of Chinese oil-drilling: <http://www.china-drilling.com/news/CNPC/2008/10-28/7293.html>, accessed on March 12th, 2009.

³¹ "Sudanese Central Bank Has Issued Its Data of Foreign Trade in 2007," April 14th, 2008. Details can be found on the website of Business and Economic Section of the Chinese Embassy in Sudan: <http://sd.mofcom.gov.cn/aarticle/ztdy/200804/20080405476255.html>, accessed on June 15th, 2008.

³² "China Has Helped Sudan to Establish a Complete Oil System and Brought Chance of Peaceful Transition to Sudan," March 12th, 2008. The article can be read on the website of CNPC: <http://www.cnpc.com.cn/CNPC/xwzx/hyx.htm>, accessed on March 12th, 2009.

³³ "Foreign Ministry Spokesman Liu Jianchao Held Regular Press Meeting on February 14th, 2008." Details can be surveyed on the website of the Foreign Ministry of P.R.C.: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/xwfw/fyrth/t407327.htm>, accessed on June 1st, 2008.

³⁴ "A Large Lake Emerging from Immense Sea of Sand: A Report on the Start of Power Generation of Mailuwei Dam in Sudan", March 4th, 2009, http://news.xinhuanet.com/overseas/2009-03/04/content_10940883.htm, accessed on March 10th, 2009.

The major large-scaled projects in Sudan that are invested and being constructed by China include: Friendship Bridge in Merowe, the Project of a 50,000-ton-level Container Dock of Sudan Port, and Government Housing Reconstruction Project in the south of Sudan.³⁵In addition to these large projects, Chinese enterprises have also completed such supporting programs as the maintenance of roads, construction of schools and hospitals, and training on agricultural technologies. CNPC has donated books and educational facilities of \$250, 000 to University of Juba in the south of Sudan, and granted another \$500,000 for local teachers' training to promote local education on such applied sciences as oil engineering in the south of Sudan for the purpose of balancing the development gap between south and north of Sudan. Generally speaking, these projects not only have brought substantial benefits to local people, but also have eased the tense conditions of the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, creating favorable conditions for the Chinese government to help settle the Darfur issue.

However, owing to strong political and cultural differences, a negative response from local people was created in some locations, resulting from some measures taken by Chinese enterprises, such as insistence on light weapon trade with the Sudanese government, the relatively low wage for local employees, employment of local police and soldiers as guards at Chinese enterprises, and some neglect on environmental protection, which have incurred criticism from the international media.³⁶Furthermore, the protection of the Sudanese government on Chinese enterprises due to the intimate relation between Chinese petroleum corporations and the Sudanese government has stirred up hostility and disgust of some local political factions.³⁷In this sense, the Chinese government should strengthen its guidance and direction for Chinese enterprises stationed in Sudan. Guijin Liu testified that the Chinese government will give more incentives and education to Chinese enterprises in Africa so that they can integrate themselves more effectively into local societies, with a more extensively accepted employment of local labor and more favorably recognized compliance with local laws.³⁸

IV. Conclusion

This article identifies China's three channels to get involved in settling the Darfur issue. The first is multilateral channels. On the one hand, China participates

³⁵ Business & Economic Section of Chinese Embassy in Sudan: Projects under Implementation in Sudan, April 19th, 2006. Details can be read on the website of Business and Economic Section of the Chinese Embassy in Sudan, <http://sd.mofcom.gov.cn/aarticle/zxhz/zzjg/200604/20060401947157.html>, accessed on June 15th, 2008.

³⁶ Information was obtained from interviews with some experts and scholars of School of International Relations, Peking University, in March to April 2008.

³⁷ Rob Crilly in Nairobi, "Darfur Onslaught 'to Clear Way for Chinese Oil Hunt' Say Rebes," August 14, 2008, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/africa/article4525805.ece>.

³⁸ "Chinese Special Envoy to Darfur Held Information Revelation Conference for Domestic and Foreign Press," September 18th, 2007. Details can be surveyed on the website of the Foreign Ministry of P.R.C, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/zxxx/t363782.htm>, accessed on June 1st, 2008.

in settling the Darfur issue through the UN Security Council, which lays the foundation for China's solution and consolidates the legitimacy of China's participation. On the other hand, China pays much attention to effective cooperation with such regional organizations as the African Union and Arab Union, creating conditions for fulfilling China's policy goals in Sudan.

The second is bilateral channels. Bilateral consultation and negotiation offers the most important channels for China to get involved in the process of settling political barriers of the Darfur issue. Actually, the crucial point of the Darfur issue lies in disputes over sanctions and dispatch of peacekeeping forces, which became a dilemma that must be resolved through bilateral negotiations.

The third is the enterprise channels. As a complement to multilateral and bilateral channels, Chinese enterprises located in Sudan exert both positive and negative influence on the Darfur issue, with an inadequate coordination between the Chinese government and Chinese enterprises.

From a panoramic point of view, the above-mentioned three channels could be defined as follows. Multilateral channels, including the UN and regional organizations, offer means for China's participation into the process of settling the Darfur issue, which could help China to shape the agenda-setting for the settlement. At the same time, China encourages Sudan's policy adjustments through strengthening its bilateral coordination with the US and Sudanese government and the positive influence of Chinese enterprises in Sudan. Based on all these efforts, China will be back to the UN to devise political resolution and a roadmap for settling the ongoing Darfur issue.

Based on a review over the past experience of China in the process of settling the Darfur issue, China should pay more attention to the following three points in its involvement in similar processes of settling regional disputes or problems. First, China should insist on a reliance on the UN framework so as to ensure the legitimacy of its participation. Meanwhile it should attach greater importance to the potentially significant roles of related regional organizations, extending active cooperation with these players so as to win utmost support from various parties in the region. Second, it should lay a full stress on bilateral coordination with local parties and major big powers for the purpose of focusing on key points and overcoming core barriers, so that political stalemates could be broken. Third, the Chinese government should have more coordination with Chinese enterprises and exert more concurrent regulation and guidance on these enterprises through diversified ways so as to create favorable conditions for fulfilling its policy goals.³⁹

³⁹ For similar views, see Anshan Li, "China and Africa: Policies and Challenges," *China Security*, Vol.3, No.3, Summer 2007, pp.69-93.