

## THE PRAXIS OF CHINA-SUDAN BILATERAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS

**Ochieng Ombok and Pontian G. Okoth**

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology  
KENYA

### ABSTRACT

The Sudanese oil diplomacy, which has been a major determinant of Sudan's economic conduct, has been greatly influenced by the praxis of China-Sudan bilateral economic relations for three reasons. First, China-Sudan bilateral relations have remained relatively stable since 1959 even in the face of drastic changes in the political environment, second, China developed Sudan's oil industry and changed Sudan into a net oil exporter, and third, China became the main importer of Sudan's oil, taking up to 70% of Sudan's oil production which provided China with about 6% of its energy needs at home. The objective of the study was to explore the praxis of China-Sudan bilateral economic relations influencing Sudanese oil diplomacy. The respondents in the study were officials from Kenyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs China's Embassy in Kenya, Sudan's Embassy in Kenya, South Sudan's Embassy in Kenya, Students at Pwani University of Mombasa, University of Nairobi's Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies, Confucian centre at Nairobi University and students at Maseno University. The study relied more on qualitative analysis, but quantitative analysis was also used. Qualitative data were analyzed using qualitative analysis methods while quantitative data collected in the field were analyzed using descriptive statistics in form of histograms and pie charts and inferential statistics. Probability sampling method used was simple random while non-probability sampling methods used were convenience, purposive and snowball sampling methods. Simple random was used to get information from university students while purposive sampling was used to get information from respondents with special knowledge on the subject. Both primary and secondary data were collected. The collection methods included key informant interviews, questionnaires with closed and open-ended questions, library research and content analysis. Likert scales were used to capture respondents' attitudes toward, and level of agreement on, various related issues. Data were presented in histograms and pie-charts and later interpreted into meaningful information.

**Keywords:** Bilateral Relations, Peaceful Coexistence, Confucianism, Taoism, Realism.

### INTRODUCTION

Chinese thought and conduct have been traced from the ancient Confucian-Taoist-Buddhist framework to the present time, showing how they have evolved as they got transformed by leaders of China, from Chairman Mao Zedong to Secretary General Xi Jinping, for application to Chinese economic statecraft in the present international conditions. The thrust of China's reforms can be traced back from Deng Xiaoping's Twenty-Eight Character Strategy to Xi Jinping's four comprehensives that outline China's post-2015 development strategy. This paper traced the praxis of Chinese relations by examining its application of principles and strategies, taking us through the Twenty-Eight Character Strategy of Deng Xiaoping, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, the Principles of Establishing Diplomatic Relations, the Eight Point Diplomatic Philosophy, the Chinese Business and Negotiation Strategies, the Eight Principles of Providing Aid to Foreign Countries, the Five Principles of Handling Relations with African Countries, the Five Point Proposal on Developing a Long-Term and Stable Relationship of All-Round Cooperation with all African

Countries, the Five Principles Guiding Relations with Arab and African Countries, the Going Out Strategy, the Entry Strategy and Peaceful Rise Of China, and finally, the use of Chinese Soft Power, all philosophically traceable to Confucian and Taoist analects and precepts.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

At the global level, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has recently taken on a much more significant role in the international arena with a steadily growing economic and political involvement in Asia, Africa and Latin America the South Pacific region, usually associated with its rise as a new world power with the potential to challenge the global leadership role of the remaining superpower, the United States (Seib, 2009). On November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008, China issued its *Policy Paper on Latin America and the Caribbean* (PPLAC). First, the PPLAC appreciated the increasingly important role that Latin American and Caribbean countries were playing in regional and international affairs. Second, it stressed the bilateral trade and economic relationships with Latin American and Caribbean countries. Third, it confirmed cooperation in a wide range of fields, including international affairs. Fourthly, it expressed the idea that China viewed its relations with Latin America and the Caribbean from strategic perspectives, reiterating that One-China policy was the political foundation for the establishment and development of relations between China and the Latin American and Caribbean countries (Dong and Callejas, 2008:67).

While China's unique economic approach to Africa meets the African countries' need for funding and infrastructure development, the model has been widely criticized. In particular, China's natural resource-backed loans raise questions about the continent's future and its capacity for sustainable development (Sun, 2014). In terms of composition, China's imports from Africa primarily focus on energy and natural resources. In 2011, more than 80% of China's USD 93.2 billion in imports from Africa consisted of crude oil, raw materials and resources (Fang, 2012). In order to relate well with other countries, China formulated the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence which included mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence (Zhuqing, 2004; Gazze, 2010:12). Central to Chinese engagement with Greater Sudan was the guarantee of the Sudanese state's freedom from interference by outside actors (Jakobson, 2007; Stahl, 2011:154; Tull, 2006). Of the five principles, non-interference contributed greatly to China's record of maintaining good relations with successive periods of short parliamentary and longer military governments in Sudan (Ali, 2006), as domestic political affairs are considered exclusive concerns of national governments, which must be respected by other states (Saferworld, 2011: ii). As a way to keep friends and avoid making enemies, China consistently abstained on matters that interfered in other countries' internal affairs or undermined their national integrity. From 1999 to 2009, China used three vetoes and sixteen abstentions in the UNSC, five of the abstentions on Sudan (Manley, 2012:344). According to Large and Patey (2011:185), China's motivations in Sudan evolved from an interest to forge ties in the early 1990s, growing to its present interest to maintain, protect and expand.

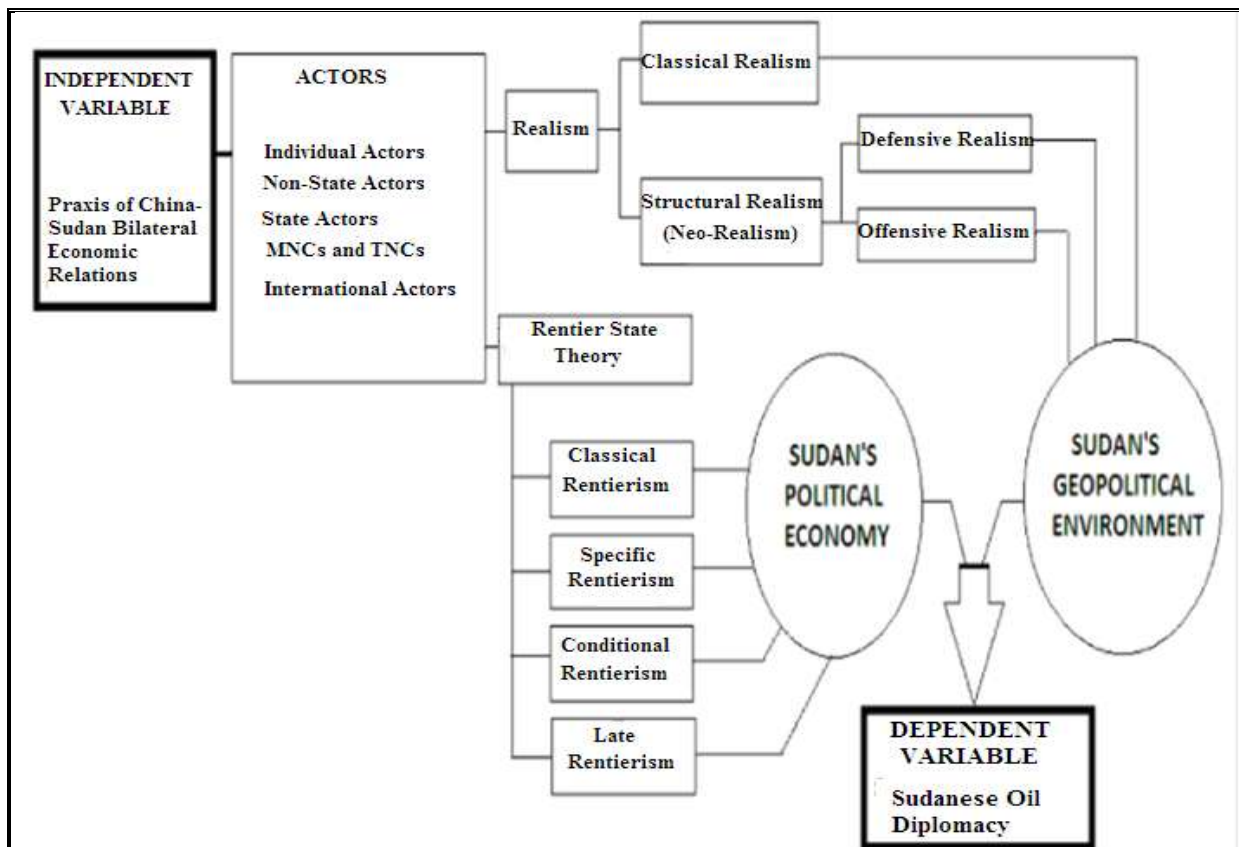
### Conceptual framework

This study relied on a conceptual framework using Realism theory and the Rentier State Theory. Classical Realism theory and Structural Realism theory were used to explain China-Sudan relations before the discovery of oil while the Rentier State Theory was used to explain Sudan's economic and domestic policy conduct as a response to the requirements of

the China-Sudan relations after the discovery of oil. The effects of rentierism were emphasized in the post-2011 independence period, where a disagreement in oil transit fee between the two states led to a cessation in the sale of oil, a situation that drastically affected the economies of both states.

### Conceptual Model

Underneath is a conceptual model summarizing interactions among independent, intervening (moderating) and dependent variables.



**Fig.1: Conceptual Model showing Interaction of Independent, Intervening and Dependent Variable**

The conceptual model above represents the interaction between the independent and the dependent variables, and the intervening variables in between. The independent variable is the 'praxis of China-Sudan bilateral economic relations' and the dependent variable is 'Sudanese Oil Diplomacy'. These variables interact through the agency of various actors, categorized as individual, non-state, state, multinational and international, and acting to attract greatest benefits to themselves. The actors' understandings, activities, logic, responses and attitudes are instructed, influenced and governed by a conceptual model made up of three theories: classical realism, structural-realism and rentier state theories. Classical and structural realism explain the power and security seeking conduct of China, Sudan and other state actors involved in Sudanese oil diplomacy. Structural realism theory is divided into defensive and offensive realism, which explain the security conduct of both Sudan and South Sudan towards each other during the interim period and the period after secession, characterized by an arms race to build military defence and the struggle to control the latent economic power in the form of available oil fields. Structural realism and classical realism

theories determine Sudan's geopolitical environment. The rentier state theory, divided into classical rentierism, specific rentierism, conditional rentierism and late rentierism determine Sudan's political economy. Rentierism, therefore, had its effect on Sudan's and South Sudan's economies while realism had its effect on their geopolitical environment. The Sudan's geopolitical environment and Sudan's political economy create the field in which Sudanese oil diplomacy, the dependent variable of the study, is realized.

## METHODS

### Study Area, Design and Population

This research was basic, aimed at adding knowledge about the social world by describing the praxis of China-Sudan bilateral economic relations and Sudanese oil diplomacy in great details and in a holistic manner through, among others, comparing and contrasting between the pre-and post-9<sup>th</sup> July 2011 geopolitical and economic environment in the study area. Historical comparative research design was therefore used in this study. The study area covered *Greater Sudan*, with an area of 2,505,813 sq.km. and a population of about 46 million making it the largest country in Africa. In 2011, *Greater Sudan* divided into *New Sudan*, and South Sudan: *New Sudan* at latitude 15degrees 00N and longitude 30degrees 00E, with an area of 1,861,484 sq.km. and a population of 35,482,233 (*Index Mundi*, 2014), and South Sudan, at latitude 08degrees 00N and longitude 30degrees 00E, with an area of 644,329 sq.km. and a population of 11,090,104, thus, changing the region's geopolitical and demographic signature.

### Study Instruments

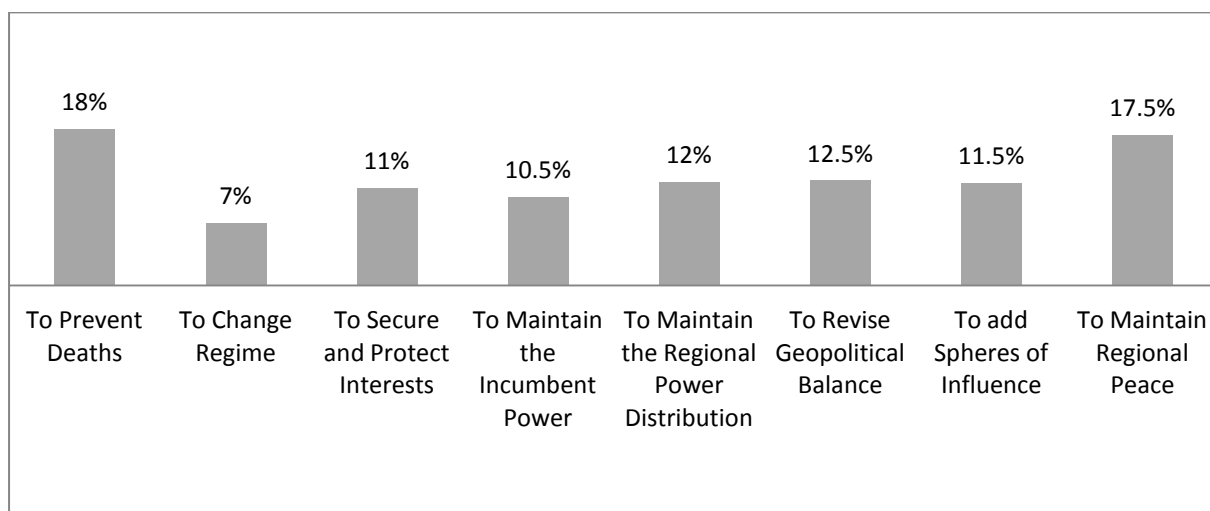
This study used both probability and non-probability sampling methods. Under probability sampling, simple random method was used while non-probability sampling methods used were convenience, snowball and purposive and convenience sampling. The questionnaires consisted of both close-ended and open-ended questions and were used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data as recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda, (2003), and to also update information and data derived from other sources.

### Data Analysis

Data collection was carried out through both primary and secondary sources, collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. Primary sources included questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, observation and original documents that were collected from source documents in Embassies of Sudan, South Sudan and China, and from the Kenyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while other documents were downloaded by the researcher from internet sites following advice from the respondents. The researcher had face-to-face interviews with experts and scholars in the field of diplomacy and international relations. Document study was done from both published and unpublished sources, including books, theses, journals, research reports, government papers, policies and speeches. Primary data were also collected through telephone interviews, mainly with snowballed interviewees, from direct and live television coverage of events, and through self-administered questionnaires with closed and open ended questions. In-depth interviews, which are also called "intensive" or "focused" interviews, were preferred in order to obtain as much detailed information as possible from experts in the relevant fields, as recommended by Pitout (1995:112).

## RESULTS

In the study, respondents were asked a number of questions interrogating the *modus operandi* of the China-Sudan bilateral economic relations especially on the principles applied by China in their foreign policy, covering the five principles of peaceful coexistence that were seen to permeate Chinese interactive formulae. Respondents were asked to rate circumstances under which a foreign state should intervene in internal affairs of a sovereign state and the results are presented in the histogram below:



**Figure 2: Views of the public on the circumstances under which foreign states may interfere in internal affairs of Sovereign States**

With 200 respondents taking part in the study, the findings showed that most felt that a foreign state should intervene in internal affairs of a sovereign state to prevent deaths at 18% (36), and to maintain regional peace at 17.5% (35). To revise geopolitical balance was third at 12.5% (25), followed by to maintain regional distribution of power at 12% (24) to add spheres of influence at 11.5% (23), to secure and protect interests 11% (22), to maintain the incumbent power at 10.5% (21), and finally, the least was to change regime at 7% (14). Regime change and maintaining the incumbent power are two reasons that most respondents did not consider as adequate for interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state. The findings established that changing a regime or maintaining the incumbent leaders in power during moments of instability or exercises of plebiscite are not adequate reasons to interfere in the internal affairs of independent sovereign states. However, the findings showed that there is adequate reason to interfere in the internal affair of an independent sovereign state if the intention is to prevent deaths of innocent non-combatant civilians. It is in this regard that the researcher concludes that China's omission due to the principle of non-interference was considered inappropriate, since taking a pro-active step to prevent deaths would have been considered morally and ethically acceptable.

## DISCUSSION

At the local level, focusing on Chinese praxis in the “*Sudans*” in the period covered by this study, the concept “*Sudan*” changed drastically and has, therefore, been operationalised to disambiguate and facilitate understanding. The gist of this study lies in the understanding that the first “*Republic of Sudan*” broke into two parts: the second “*Republic of Sudan*”, and the Republic of South Sudan. To differentiate between these Republics for the sake of

understanding, the *first Republic of Sudan* is referred to as the “*Greater Sudan*” and the *second Republic of Sudan* is referred to as “*New Sudan*”. The *New Sudan* in this study should, however, not be confused with the *United New Sudan* that Colonel John Garang de Mabior had in mind, for Colonel Garang’s *United New Sudan* was envisaged to be an all-inclusive democratic post-referendum *Greater Sudan*.

Between 4<sup>th</sup> February 1959 and 9<sup>th</sup> July 2011, Peoples’ Republic of China had bilateral relations with the first “*Republic of Sudan*”. After July 2011 Peoples’ Republic of China still had bilateral relations with the second “*Republic of Sudan*”. However, the first Republic of Sudan was geographically, politically, economically, demographically, culturally and socially different from the second Republic of Sudan. A concurrent bilateral relationship after the July 2011 secession is that of Peoples’ Republic of China and South Sudan

China consistently adhered to these principles even to the point of being accused and considered guilty by omission for contributing to internal atrocities of other states through their inaction and unwillingness to participate in the internal conflicts of sovereign states. China’s foreign policy and statecraft was guided by a praxis which, in turn, was instructed by strongly rooted and well defined principles of engagement and interaction. The principle of non-interference, when applied in the Sudanese situation, was seen by other actors as an omission on the part of China, but the misinterpretation of Chinese conduct by the so-called ‘international community’ arose from their failure to see China’s praxis as a product derived from Confucianism and Taoism, thus, making it different from western conduct. The expectation of the so-called “international community”, usually a group of Western states led by the US, including the UK, France, Germany, Australia and Israel, and some MNCs and TNCs that represent their interests abroad, has been to see China subscribe to the Western version and praxis of democracy. China, on the other hand, has always maintained that there is no single version of democracy applicable to all countries in the world, and that each state must, therefore, be allowed to come up with its own version of the concept. China also considers the Western conduct of forcing their version of democracy on other independent sovereign states as an unwelcome and unwarranted interference that must be avoided at all costs (Ombok, 2014).

The findings also show that China was not obliged to participate in the internal affairs of sovereign states in ways that would challenge the authority of the incumbent leadership, and would, therefore, not be expected to adopt the “big stick diplomacy” or “gunboat diplomacy” to achieve political ends, as is frequently seen in fancifully named western interventions, exemplified by the recent UK/France/NATO bombing of Libya in the 2011 operation Odyssey Dawn to effect the overthrow and execution of President Gaddafi, US/UK and allies failed attempt at the UNSC in a resolution that was vetoed by China and Russian Federation, aimed at effecting regime change in Syria that would have toppled President Bashar Assad, the recent EU/US overthrow of President Victor Yanukovich of Ukraine (Paul, 2015; Norkina, 2014) in an effort to extend US/EU/NATO influence in Eastern Europe, US/UK support of Israel during the Israeli bombing of the Gaza strip in 2014, the US/UK/Saudi Arabia support for Islamic State in Syria (ISIS) and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) rebels operating in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, and the US/UN support of Saudi Arabia’s bombing of Yemen in 2015 (Amos, 2015; Jayalakshmi, 2015; Brumfield and Shelbayah, 2015).

China’s actions are seen to be based on principles traceable to Confucian and Taoist thought, and the researcher concludes that Confucianism can be used as the core instruction for international interactions, cooperation and action. Chinese economic praxis, derived from

Confucian business practice and Taoist accommodative attitudes, has demonstrated that there is no clear demarcation between capitalism and socialism (communism) when it comes to practice, as China has managed to develop an economy that includes both socialism and capitalism, where capitalism operates inside a communist system and delivers the required development and progress.

China maintains and pursues cooperative approaches to international affairs and reiterates its commitment to the path of peaceful development and the win-win strategy in continuing its path of opening-up to the outside world, and also reaffirms its cooperation and friendship with all countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in the hope that social construction of a harmonious world of durable peace and common prosperity can be made possible. The Sudanese praxis, on the other hand, was more of a response and an adjustment to the socio-political and economic situation on the ground, mainly as a result of the requirements of Chinese diplomatic rules of engagement, the U.S. and western sanctions and embargos slapped against Sudan, the status of Sudan in the United Nations, the indictment of President Omar el-Bashir at the ICC, and the requirements for membership in both the League of Arab States and the African Union.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the China's principles of peaceful coexistence are an effective set of principles, the application of which led China to its successful interaction with the rest of the world. Out of these principles, China formulated a comprehensive interactive interface characterized by various seemingly western concepts, but practiced with Chinese characteristics. The Western world's 'China Threat Theory', was used to disseminate a paranoiac Eurocentric interpretation of Chinese economic growth and military development, and was based on western solipsist belief that China was obsessed with hegemonic ambitions, and that the western way of thinking is the only way capable of engendering development and generating useful knowledge. This study has opened a way of looking into, understanding and analysing Chinese conduct through a perspective that is different from the western perspective that misinterprets and misrepresents non-western concepts, ideals and actions. The study has expanded and clarified the understanding of the Confucian-Taoist origins of Chinese praxis. One recommendation of this study is that the application of the principles of peaceful coexistence should be made a standard in all international interactions as they are built upon values that encourage peace, coexistence, respect and understanding among states. The study also recommends that these principles be applied in solving the Abyei question and the border dispute between Sudan and South Sudan.

## Competing interests

The authors declare that no conflict of interest exists.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors sincerely thank all those who contributed to this paper and the thesis from which it is derived.

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