

**China's Flexigemonic Approach and Non-Interference in South
Sudan**

Master Thesis

Political Science: International Politics

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Abstract

This research project sets out to evaluate China's involvement within South Sudan between 2005 and 2014. The areas of focus will be China's economic interests of resource extraction, specifically oil and arms trade. China's increased political and military involvement in South Sudan will be explained by applying the model of Flexigemony. Utilizing the concept of non-interference, one of the guiding principles of Chinese foreign policy, the scope conditions under which China decided to increase its political and military influence in South Sudan will be studied. By studying China's engagement to South Sudan this research project will attempt to capture China's changing engagement towards the African continent and its partner states. In addition, the argument will be made that China's increased military and political involvement in South Sudan stemmed from the primacy of economic interest and China's attempt to adjust its foreign policy in regard to the domestic situation in South Sudan. In effect, this resulted in the deterioration of the non-interference policy.

Keywords: Flexigemony, non-interference, resource extraction, China, South Sudan, arms trade.

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Introduction

Sudan has long been plagued with armed conflict, poverty, genocide and instability. In 2011, due to continued ethnic and religious violence, the country was split into two. The divide saw the creation of South Sudan, currently the youngest country in the world. However, despite its secession from Sudan, unrest and instability have continued to be major inhibitors of South Sudan's development. Currently, "South Sudan [...] faces grave political, economic and developmental challenges, with some of the worst global social indicators, a fragmented government, militarized society, limited governance capacity, huge numbers of refugees, and widespread corruption." (Bradbury, 2012, p. 394) Some scholars have pointed to the presence of oil in the country as one of the main factors negatively influencing the political, social and institutional stability of the country (Patey, 2010, p. 617)

China, due to its ever-expanding need for resources to sustain economic growth (Patey, 2007, p. 1010), has become a prominent influence on domestic affairs within Sudan and South Sudan. Oil has been the central building block for Sino-(South) Sudanese relations, through which bilateral investments and diplomatic ties have developed. This has resulted in China quickly becoming the largest trade partner (Patey, 2007, p. 1010). Between 2004 and 2008 "[o]il has represented [...] roughly 90 percent of Sudan's total exports" (Patey, 2010, p. 620). Incidentally, this makes Sudan's government more reliant on the revenues from this sector than any other country in the world (Shankleman, 2011, p. 11). In addition, China's sale of arms to Sudan is another significant component of the economic cooperation between the two countries.

Despite internationally established embargoes, designed to stop weapons entering Sudan, China has continued the sale of arms in its pursuit of economic interest abroad (Taylor, 2007b, p. 19).

South Sudan becoming an autonomous region within Sudan (after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005) and South Sudan's secession from Sudan have presented China with major challenges. "The geographic situation of oil in the South, oil infrastructure in the North, and China's presence, create a triangulation of mandatory, if uneasy, relations between the three counties" (Bradbury, 2012, p. 394). China, in an attempt to safeguard its economic interest in the region, had to develop and sustain bilateral ties with both Sudan and South Sudan. This balancing act became crucial in order to facilitate continued oil imports from the region (Large, 2007). However, it also meant that China was forced to increase its political and military commitments to the region (Large, 2009, p. 619). This was problematic for China due to the fact that it had long proclaimed that the principles of non-interference and sovereignty should form the foundations of international relations (Carmody, 2010, p. 504). Effectively, China's increased involvement in the political affairs of South Sudan and Sudan has resulted in a weakening of China's non-interference policy. In turn, this has resulted in scholars posing the question whether or not it is tenable for China to secure its economic interests based on an ideology of non-interference (Power, 2012). The case of Sino-South Sudanese relations is seen as pivotal in understanding the changing nature of China's involvement in Africa, showing that "strategic expediency trumps principle and rhetoric" (Bradbury, 2012, p. 398). China's foreign policy and its guiding principle of non-interference will further be elaborated upon in the theoretical framework of this thesis.

Research Question and Objectives

The goal of this thesis is to analyze the bilateral ties between China and South Sudan. The model of Flexigemony, as developed by Carmody and Taylor (2011), is used to explore the changes in China's engagement to South Sudan. This model, which will be discussed and evaluated in detail in the theoretical framework of this thesis, "is first and foremost about economics and the politics required to support China's continued economic ascent." (Carmody, 2010, p. 512) It theorizes the primacy of economic interest in China's foreign policy over political and security concerns. Moreover, it allows for the possibility of China diverting from its long-standing policy of non-interference in order to safeguard economic interests. Flexigemony states that China "uses a combination of economic, political and military levers in flexible strategic combinations to ensure continued raw material supplies" (Carmody, 2011, p. 79). However, the model fails to specify under which conditions China is willing to divert from its traditional approach of non-interference. This thesis will attempt to identify the scope conditions present within the case study of Sino-South Sudanese relations that resulted in increased political and military involvement of China in South Sudan.

This research project will set out to achieve several goals. The first objective is to elaborate upon the model of flexigemony by applying it to a case it has not been applied to before. Due to the contemporary nature of the case at hand, a lack of empirical studies exists. The importance of the case at hand is iterated (Alden, 2010, p. 6) and theorized by scholars yet little scholarly work on China's involvement in South Sudan is generated thus far. One of the aims of this proposed research is to be added to the body of research pertaining Chinese relations

to South Sudan in order to fill this gap. Furthermore, the case will be used to specify the scope conditions under which China has increased its political and military involvement in South Sudan. Secondly, this research aims to analyze the Sino-South Sudanese bilateral ties to uncover the changing nature of China's engagement to African states. Thirdly, by utilizing the case of Sino-South Sudanese relations this thesis aims to illustrate discrepancies between China's rhetoric of non-interference, sovereignty and 'South-South cooperation' as opposed to its practices of oil diplomacy, arms trade and increased military and political involvement.

In line with the aforementioned goals, the following research question is proposed: *'To what extent does the flexigemony model explain the political and military intervention of China in South Sudan between 2005 and 2014?'*

To answer this question, chapter one will provide historical background of the Sino-South Sudanese relationship. Chapter two will, through applying the model of flexigemony, analyze China's engagement to South Sudan. Chapter three will focus on the weakening of China's non-interference policy and the sale of arms within the context of bilateral ties between China and South Sudan. Together, these chapters aim at uncovering China's changing approach to South Sudan in its continued pursuit of economic interest. Lastly, in the conclusion the research question will be answered.

To limit the scope of this research project, the case of South Sudan will be analyzed between 2005 and 2014. The CPA between Sudan and South Sudan was signed in 2005, making South Sudan an autonomous region within Sudan. From this year on China started developing diplomatic and economic ties with the region (James, 2015, p.13). In line with the research question, this project will evaluate the dynamics of the bilateral ties between the China and South

Sudan until the United Nations peacekeeping mission in 2014, where China sent 700 troops (Bariyo, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

In this section the theoretical considerations, concepts and approach will be discussed. First, China's approach to Africa will be discussed. This is done by laying out China's foreign policy, comparing it to the Western model and elaborating upon its appeal for recipient African states. Second, the model of flexigemony will be discussed and operationalized by evaluating relevant components of the theory. Specifically, China's pursuit of economic interest regarding oil and arms trade will be considered.

First of all, China's foreign policy and its engagement to Africa will be discussed. China's foreign policy, formulated in 1954, has been based on "[t]he 'five principles of *pancheela* [...]' These were as follows: 'respect for territorial integrity; nonaggression; non-interference in each other's internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit in relations; and peaceful coexistence'" (Power, 2012, p. 41). China's economic growth could not be sustained with natural resources that were present domestically (Manyok, 2016, p. 1). Therefore, in order to ensure continued economic growth it became a necessity for China to import natural resources from abroad (Meyersson, 2008, p. 2). The African continent, holding massive quantities of untapped resources such as oil and timber, provided a unique opportunity for China to build bilateral trade relations with many African states in order to provide the necessary resources for continued

economic development. As of 2005, there are more than 800 Chinese companies in 49 African countries (Alden, 2010 p. 14).

China has carefully framed its engagement to African states as mutually beneficial economic cooperation, in which “sincerity, equality and mutual benefit; solidarity and common development” form the foundation on which bilateral ties are built (Alden, 2010 p. 15). In part, China’s quick ascent into African markets was made possible due to its “deliberate promotion of a foreign policy of ‘no political strings’ which, when coupled with Beijing’s willingness to provide aid and concessionary loans, has proved to be tremendously appealing to African leaders.” (Alden, 2010 p. 8) Furthermore, China proclaims to utilize a model of development that is distinct from the approach taken by the West (Nassanga, 2014). Branding Western development efforts as normative and intrusive, China aims to provide aid without interference in domestic affairs of countries. “[T]he Chinese have been much more focused on growth and productive investment as opposed to the ‘software’ of governance that might underpin economic development. This is much more about mutual benefit than a discourse of charity or of ‘catching up’.” (Power, 2012, p. 135) Many African states found China’s approach to be an appealing alternative as opposed to Western conditional aid (Taylor, 2004, p. 85). This is especially true for African states that have been unwilling to adhere to Western regulations regarding the improvement of human rights and democracy (Nassanga, 2014). “[B]oth China and Africa believed themselves to have experienced and to continue to face common enemies, namely imperialism and neo-imperialism from the developed world.” (Taylor, 2004, 41 p. 86) Since many African leaders view the Western model of engagement as intrusive and normative, it is

no wonder that China's proclaimed focus on building mutually beneficial economic partnerships was welcomed (Taylor, 2004, p. 86).

However, continued adherence to non-interference together with increasing involvement in Africa (especially in both Sudans) has proven to be a challenge for Chinese policy makers (Bradbury, 2012, p. 375). In order to uncover the conditions under which China is willing to abandon its non-interference policy the model of flexigemony is used. The flexigemonic model allows for China diverting from the non-interference policy. However, the scope conditions leading to this diversion are not specified. This research aims to assess the case of Sino-South Sudanese relations in order to establish the conditions under which China moved away from its policy of non-interference. The economic interests of oil extraction, arms trade and diverting from the non-interference policy together form an intricate image of Sino-South Sudanese relations. The model of flexigemony is selected in order to incorporate these intertwined factors in the larger context of this model.

Power (2012, p. 245) argues that: "non-interference has always been a flexible practice, depending on the circumstances, and also that such a principle necessarily cannot be permanent." China, in its search for oil on the African continent, has signed multiple agreements with various authoritarian regimes. In turn, to ensure continued resource extraction, it became of vital importance for China to protect these regimes. This strategy of protecting continued oil extraction from African states, first observed and incorporated within the flexigemony model by Carmody and Taylor (2011), is executed through "different strands of engagement and modes of governance: clientelism, proxy force and hegemony." (Power, 2012, p. 245) Flexigemony, or 'ruling at a distance', attempts to capture this Chinese strategy to African states. It distinguishes

itself as a model from other research that has explained China's pursuit for oil abroad as a form of 'soft power'. Flexigemony refutes this idea, arguing that China supplying military training, support and equipment to many of its partner states illustrates China's willingness to use hard power to secure its economic investments (Carmody, 2010, 499). China's support for Khartoum's government and its investments in Sudan's military can be seen as an example of China's use of hard power and proxy force to ensure its investments in Sudan's oil industry (Bradbury, 2012). In addition, Manyok concluded that "as Sudan's oil exports to China increase; Sudan's arms imports from China increase as well." (Manyok, 2016, p. 3) On the one hand flexigemony explains China's sale of arms as a pursuit of enlarging its export market while on the other, as a tool to ensure continued resource extraction. Chapter three will address the contradictory issue of purely economical arms sales within the context of flexigemony and elaborate upon its interfering consequences.

The following components are inherent to the model of flexigemony: first of all, flexigemony refrains from "seeking a societal transformation" rather it focuses on "natural resources and the cultivation of support constituencies" (Carmody, 2011, p. 79). This component will be discussed in *chapter one*, where the historical background of the development of bilateral ties between China and South Sudan is examined. Secondly, flexigemony states that economic interests take primacy over political and security considerations. In *chapter one and two* of this thesis case-specific information on Sino-South Sudanese relations will show how economic interest takes primacy over political and security concerns. Thirdly, "a combination of economic, political and military levers" must ensure sustained resource extraction (Carmody, 2011, p. 79). A discussion of this component can be found in *chapter three*, where, by assessing

non-interference and arms trade, China's pursuit of resource extraction is analyzed. Fourthly, economic power and proxy sub-contracting, rather than direct military force, are used to secure interests. Fifthly, China's flexigemonic approach strengthens the sovereignty of its partner states, both internationally and domestically (Carmody, 2011, p. 79). This component of the flexigemony model can be considered a contentious point within the specific context of China's engagement of Sudan and South Sudan. A discussion on this component can be found in *chapter two*. There it is argued that China's engagement towards South Sudan strengthened South Sudanese sovereignty whilst it weakened Sudan's sovereignty both domestically and internationally. Lastly, flexigemony is "reinforced by frequent high-level state visits as a form of public diplomacy and to build inter-state trust" (Carmody, 2011, p. 80).

Flexigemony is a flexible approach, where China adjusts its strategy to each African state individually, taking into account historical and geographical factors (Carmody, 2016, p. 4). The fact that China is considered to divert from its strict adherence to sovereignty and non-interference in the context of South Sudan is a testimony to the adaptive nature of the flexigemonic approach. Incidentally, diverting from these long-standing principles of foreign policy in South Sudan has allowed continued and intensified territorial and political instability (Bradbury, 2012, p. 398).

Having considered the relevant theoretical concepts and having provided a context within China's engagement to Africa can be analyzed, the historical background of Sino-South Sudanese bilateral ties will be discussed in the following chapter.

Research Design

In order to structure the proposed research project a qualitative research method will be used. The research of this single case study will focus on China's pursuit of economic interest in the context of bilateral ties with South Sudan. This is done in order elaborate upon the model of Flexigemony and to explore the case of Sino-South Sudanese relations to gain new insight in the case at hand. Agreeing with George and Bennett, the goal of this case study is "the detailed examination of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events" (George, 2005, p.5). With the case study this thesis aims to capture the changes in China's engagement not just to South Sudan but to the African continent. This is done by exploring the fundamental (economic) interests of China in regard to its engagement to African states while also exploring China's changing approach in its attempt to satisfy these interests. These goals of the research project align with the heuristic case study, where a particular case is selected in order to derive more general propositions (Levy, 2002). In the context of this research project this means that the Sino-South Sudanese relation is analyzed to explore the changes of China's engagement to African states.

To answer the proposed research question a method of establishing the causal narratives is applied. The dependent variable is China's decision to send 700 peacekeeping forces in 2014, effectively increasing its military involvement in South Sudan. The independent variables, as previously elaborated upon in the theoretical framework, will be the economic interest of 'Arms Trade' and 'Oil Extraction'. In addition, the principle of 'Non-interference' will be used as a variable to further paint the picture of why China decided to increase its political and military

involvement within South Sudan. The objective of this research is to analyze the foundations on which China built its bilateral ties with South Sudan by using the model of flexigemony. Furthermore, since the case study spans from 2005 to 2014, this research will analyze the changes in China's ties with South Sudan by offering case-specific explanations as to why these changes took place.

Data Collection

In order to answer my research question the following data is collected. First of all, a large body of academic research exists on the topic of Chinese relations with African states. These sources, including numerous books, publications and academic articles, will be used to evaluate: China's non-interference policy, China's role within the international community, the effects of arms trade for Sudan and South Sudan, and China's oil diplomacy and engagement to Sudan and South Sudan. Together, these secondary sources will also be used to answer the research question and to put the Sino-South Sudanese relationship in the greater context of Chinese relations with Africa. The collected data will be used to explore the theoretical considerations of the flexigemony model through its application to the Sino-South Sudanese relationship. The data collected will serve to provide an answer regarding the question of why China has become involved both politically and militarily. However, an analysis regarding how this involvement is conducted is largely omitted as it is beyond the scope of the research question. While the case of South Sudan has not been analyzed by other scholars through the model of flexigemony, data regarding specific indicators of the model is present both within the

primary and secondary data. Primary data will be drawn from reports on arms sales (Leff, 2014), the CIA World Factbook, reports on South Sudan's oil industry (Shankleman, 2011), and a special report from the UNSC (United Nations Security Council, 2006) regarding arms in Sudan and South Sudan. While the reports on arms sales indicate the involvement of China, they remain opaque regarding the precise numbers and figures due to the fact that this data could not be collected. This does not present a direct problem for the argumentation of this thesis since the reports, in combination with secondary literature, manage to convey the considerable implications for Sudan and South Sudan regardless. Newspaper articles will be used to refer to certain crucial events between 2005 and 2014, such as the independence of South Sudan in 2011 and the military intervention of 2014. Furthermore, Chinese officials (introduced in the thesis) will be quoted on occasion to illustrate the Chinese position.

Chapter 1

The development of bilateral ties between China and South Sudan

In this chapter the development of bilateral ties between China and South Sudan will be discussed to provide the context within which China's involvement can be analyzed in the following chapters. Furthermore, the Sino-South Sudanese ties discussed in this chapter will be evaluated in the context of the flexigemony model.

Many scholars agree that China's relation with Sudan and South Sudan can be seen as a testing ground for China's future endeavors in Africa (Alden, 2010, p. 7) (Patey, 2007, p. 1008). "Sudan is [...] a defining case in China's changing relations with Africa, and a key illustration of

transition and convergence in China's international politics" (Large, 2008, p. 105). Furthermore, "Sudan is seen as the geopolitical territory where Beijing faces the challenge of accommodating its established and ideological policy with the complexity of African politics" (Bradbury, 2012, p. 363). The relevance of this research thus partially stems from its goal to analyze the changing nature of China's engagement to South Sudan. In turn, the findings of this thesis can contribute to the body of work pertaining to the changing relations of China to the African continent as a whole.

In order to analyze the case of Sino-South Sudanese relations within the proposed time frame of 2005 to 2014, this paper will also address the bilateral ties between China and Sudan. Since the founding of South Sudan is deeply tied to the conflict it arose from and Chinese activities on either side should always be seen in this context, it is important to consider Sudan's role within the case study. Furthermore, before South Sudan's independence in 2011, it was an autonomous region within Sudan after the signing of the CPA in 2005. Because of this, Sino-South Sudanese relations are inextricably tied to Sudan. Therefore, when necessary, Sudan's role and its ties to China will thus be dealt with as well. The author deems this a necessity to provide an answer to the proposed research question.

China's oil industry in Sudan

The China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) initiated operations with Sudan during the 1990s, while South Sudan and Sudan were still unified. Sudan's support for Saddam Hussein during the first Gulf War in 1991 (Large, 2008, p. 96) resulted in the US placing Sudan on its list of "state sponsors of terrorism" (Patey, 2014, p. 269) in 1993. In addition, the US

imposed economic sanctions on Sudan in 1997, effectively ending the possibility for US companies to invest in Sudan (Patey, 2014, p. 269). These actions by the US government presented an opportunity for the CNPC to move into Sudan, in an attempt to build an oil industry (Large, 2008, p. 96). Sudan's government, now isolated from the US and European countries, saw China's unconditional willingness to invest as a welcome alternative to conditional Western investment. Therefore, while Western companies were moving out of Sudan due to conflict and human rights violations, China replaced them (Taylor, 2006, p. 950). "If any foreign government had an influence on Chinese [...] national oil companies investing in Sudan, it was not Beijing [...], it was Washington." (Patey, 2014, p. 269)

China's engagement to Sudan had been minimal prior to China's investments in Sudan's oil industry. The start of bilateral ties and Chinese investments clearly originated from China's need for oil (Large, 2009, p. 613), which aims to serve China's annual growth rate of 8% (Looy, 2006, p. 14). China's investment in Sudan resulted in Sudan's ability to build an oil industry that was able to start exporting oil in August 1999 (Large, 2008, p. 97). As mentioned before, Sudan's political elite welcomed China's engagement and investments due to the fact that it entailed the developing of bilateral ties based on economic interests. Sudan's human rights abuses and civil war resulted in its alienation within the international community. With sanctions ensuring that many Western states could no longer invest, it is no wonder that China's eagerness to invest was met with enthusiasm in Khartoum. It is important to note that Sudan, due to its domestic situation, was unable to diversify its foreign relations. In turn, this contributed to Sudan's dependency on China (Reeves, 2018, p. 978) Furthermore, China's approach to African states, and specifically Sudan, is especially appealing for the political elites of these countries.

Due to the fact that the engagement “supports prevailing distributions of power and patterns of neopatrimonial governance [...]. Thus, paradoxically while seeking to replace Western “hegemonism” China is, in part, a status quo power in terms of domestic governance patterns and modalities in Africa” (Carmody, 2010, p. 500) This is a key component of flexigemony, where China aims to develop bilateral ties with specific constituencies within African states in order to gain access to natural resources. The impact of these bilateral ties can be summarized as: a way “to intensify a resource extraction political economy while further concentrating wealth in the hands of the elite at the expense of the periphery” (Bradbury, 2012, p. 373). The analysis of the effects of China’s support for Khartoum’s government can be found in chapter three, where the argument will be made that China’s engagement constituted a form of interference within Sudan and South Sudan.

In 1989, General Omar Al Bashir overthrew the civilian government and became president of Sudan. During this time Sudan was in the midst of fighting a long civil war between northern and southern Sudan. China’s engagement with Bashir resulted in “a toxic oil-for-arms relationship” (Wenar, 2015, p. 128). The revenues gained from Sudan’s oil industry were used by Khartoum to buy Chinese arms, which were used in Bashir’s violent campaigns into the oil-rich region that is now known as South Sudan (Manyok, 2016, p. 1). Violence between north and south (temporarily) ended with the signing of the CPA in 2005. The CPA saw the creation of southern Sudan as an autonomous region that would hold a referendum six years later to vote on South Sudan’s independence (Shankleman, 2011, p. 6).

China's shifting focus to South Sudan

China's focus on economic interests over previously established political ties became apparent when South Sudan seceded from Sudan in 2011. Diplomatic engagement between South Sudan and China started after the CPA was signed. From that moment on, Chinese officials made visits to Juba and South Sudanese officials came to Beijing to build bilateral ties. A shift in focus of diplomatic engagement from Sudan to South Sudan can be seen during the period post-CPA. South Sudanese territory holds most of the Sudanese oil fields, so when it became an autonomous region China understood it needed to build diplomatic ties in order to ensure continued resource extraction (Patey, 2014) Furthermore, China's decision to become increasingly involved in South Sudan stems from the fact that the state owned 'National Petroleum Corp.' "holds a 40% stake in a joint venture that operates in South Sudan's vast oil fields" (Bariyo, 2014) (Alden, 2010, p. 12). From their onset, bilateral investments and increased diplomatic ties between Chinese leaders and the South Sudanese political elite have revolved around oil, which plays a central role in relations between the states (Dent, 2010, p. 94).

China caught in the middle

Initially, Chinese engagement was viewed with skepticism within South Sudan. This was due to the fact that over the years China had supported Sudan's regime both domestically, by supplying it with arms, and internationally, by using its position within the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to prevent intervention (Large, 2011) During the years leading up to South Sudan's independence, China insisted on adhering to Sudan's sovereignty and used its position to argue against further sanctions targeting Khartoum (Bradbury, 2012). In chapter three

the changing nature of China's role within the international community will be evaluated further in relation to China's policy of non-interference. Multiple groups within South Sudan, heavily affected by China's arms sale practices and unwavering support for Sudan, had identified China as their enemy (Bradbury, 2012, p. 384). However, the South Sudanese government decided for a pragmatic approach towards China. It realized that forcing China out of its territory would create uncertainty in regard to its oil exporting capabilities. South Sudan realized its volatile security climate did not make for an appealing investment opportunity and was afraid that no one would step in to replace China. Instead, South Sudanese officials threatened to nullify existing oil contracts with China and the CNPC in order to gain a strong bargaining position that would allow them to make changes to the contracts (Patey, 2014).

China was trapped in an uneasy triangular relationship where South Sudan held the majority of oil reserves and Sudan had the infrastructure to transport the natural resource. In order to ensure continued oil extraction China had to enter uncharted territory that required increased political involvement. During this period China arranged a number of official state visits to both Juba and Khartoum in the hope of brokering a deal that would allow for the continuation of oil exports from the region. However, South Sudan and Sudan were locked in disagreement over transit fees that South Sudan was supposed to pay for using Sudan's pipelines used to transport oil. South Sudan threatened to shut down its oil production completely in response to the disagreement and eventually did so from January 2012 until August 2012. The decision to shut down the production of oil completely was remarkable considering South Sudan government generated 98% of its budget from oil revenues. In the following years, China's unofficial role as a mediator between Juba and Khartoum continued (Patey, 2014). We can see

here that China started to carefully use its political position and power (a flexigemonic trait) in order to continue an uneasy balancing act between the two parties. This remains necessary to satisfy China's economic interest of continued oil extraction from the region.

Initially, after South Sudan's independence, it produced nearly 75% of Sudan's total oil output. This amounted to about 500.000 barrels per day (Cia.gov, 2018). Sino-South Sudanese trade now entails 12 billion dollars annually, of which 92% is exported by South Sudan. Furthermore, China is South Sudan's largest source of investment, amounting to 5 billion dollars total (Richard, 2017). South Sudan's dependency on oil revenues becomes apparent when considering the fact that oil revenues account for 98% of government revenues. Moreover, it makes up for 80% of its gross domestic product. Currently, oil production of South Sudan averages about 130.000 barrels per day (Cia.gov, 2018).

Chapter 2

The model of Flexigemony and China's involvement in South Sudan

In this chapter China's approach and involvement in South Sudan will be assessed and explained through the model of Flexigemony. Firstly, an integral part of the model of flexigemony is the importance given to economic interests, trumping both political and security concerns. In this chapter a discussion will be held whether China's conduct in Sudan and South Sudan aligns with this hierarchical structure of interests. Pursuit of economic interest, as is argued in this chapter and the previous one, constitutes the foundation of China's conduct in

South Sudan. Secondly, flexigemony states that, through the development of bilateral ties, sovereignty (both domestically and internationally) will be strengthened. Moreover, a discussion on the strengthening of South Sudan's sovereignty fits within the flexigemonic context due to the fact that economic considerations formed the foundation for China's enhancement South Sudan's sovereignty. In turn, as will be explained in this chapter, South Sudan's increased sovereignty, due to China's support, tarnished Sudan's sovereignty.

China's need for oil

China's foreign policy has changed over time. The founding 5 guiding principles established in the 50's have long dictated China's official approach to its trading partners. However, with an increased commitment to growth of GDP and the ever-increasing need for natural resources to sustain this growth China has adjusted its foreign policy in order to align with its economic development (Reeves, 2018). The importance of resources is exemplified by China's shift from being Asia's leading exporter of oil to becoming the "second largest world consumer and the third largest global importer" (Alden, 2009, p. 4) in little over a decade's time. China has doubled its consumption of oil from 1999 to 2009 and is projected to double its consumption again by 2030. Estimates of China's oil consumption by 2030 are around 15 million barrels per day (Alden, 2009, p. 5).

Security considerations

In 2007, the ministry of Foreign Affairs and Commerce of China, together with the National Development and Reform Commission, published a document called 'The 2007

Guidelines for Investment in Overseas Countries' Industries'. In it, Sudan was removed from the list of countries in which Chinese companies would receive government support. This was due to the increased frequency of security incidents involving Chinese companies abroad. Interestingly enough, despite Sudan's removal from this list, the CNPC decided to continue efforts of resource extraction in the region. This points to a divergence of policy approach between China's government and the CNPC, a state-owned (but not state-controlled) company (Patey, 2014). The CNPC continued its efforts of establishing the infrastructure it required to boost oil extraction from Sudan in the midst of a civil war. The CNPC "demonstrated a willingness to side with Khartoum entailing complicity in state-sponsored violence: while the Nuer nationality was being depopulated and its villages razed to the ground in Unity State in the relentless search and exploitation of oil, the Chinese continued their work as if nothing was happening" (Large, 2008, p. 97).

The fact that China has continued the effort of establishing an oil industry within Sudan and South Sudan amidst an ongoing civil war is a testimony to the primacy of economic interest. Chinese workers in South Sudan have been subjected to attacks from rebel groups that aligned China's involvement in the oil sector with Khartoum's use of violence towards its own population. The link between China's business operations and Sudan's use of violence is made evident by the fact that Sudan has used the revenues from its oil exports to purchase Chinese arms. In turn, South Sudanese armed groups have identified China's complicitness in the continued instability of South Sudan's security climate (Wenar, 2015, p. 128).

Political considerations

In China's search for natural resources within the African continent it has engaged with many authoritarian regimes. In fact, China's partner states "almost ubiquitously score within the bottom percentile of the World Bank's 2015 worldwide governance indicators" (Reeves, 2018, p. 978). Western countries have increasingly used their voice to classify certain regimes as 'rogue states'. This has led to international scrutiny towards numerous regimes that have been accused of crimes against humanity and other abuses. China, however, has decided on a distinctly different approach, where it refuses to label countries as 'rogue'. This has allowed China to indiscriminately pursue its economic interest, dubbed as China's "blind support for rogue states" (Woods, 2008, p. 1207). In the case of Sudan and South Sudan, China's engagement with the political elites has been to the detriment of the populace. China's non-interference policy combined with its investments in Sudan's oil industry have allowed Sudan's government to use these funds unconditionally and without restrictions (Bradbury, 2012, p. 387). In fact, China has demonstrated "its willingness to look the other way when sovereign states commit genocide and persecution of its citizenry, if it serves China's national interest [...] - access to oil." (Power, 2012, p. 245)

China's engagement to authoritarian regimes has always been framed by China as mutually beneficial partnerships in pursuit of business opportunities. However, investing in economic enterprises controlled by authoritarian political elites cannot be devoid of political implications. China defends its conduct by pointing to an artificially demarcated line between business and politics (Bradbury, 2012, p. 373). This thesis argues that the unambiguous separation of the economic and political domain is not possible, especially not in the context of

Sino-South Sudanese relations. Chapter three will continue to elaborate upon this argument by analyzing the changes in China's non-interference policy while also addressing the effects of Chinese arms sales to Sudan.

Strengthening domestic and international sovereignty for partner states through bilateral ties

When laying out the specific characteristics of the model of Flexigemony, Carmody states that China's approach to building bilateral ties is revolving around natural resource extraction whilst refraining from "seeking societal transformation" (Carmody, 2011, p. 79). These theoretical statements regarding Chinese foreign policy line up with the initial approach of China to Sudan and South Sudan. However, this section will argue that China adjusted its approach to Sudan by accepting the secession of South Sudan.. China did not seek to transform Sudan's societal structure, rather it adjusted its own approach by supporting South Sudan's independence. The relationship that started with the signing of the CPA between China and South Sudan is a testimony to the primacy of economic interest over political considerations. China realized it needed to tailor its foreign policy to the specific historic reality of this region (a flexigemonic trait) and understood that, in order to ensure continued oil extraction, it needed to support South Sudan's secession from Sudan (Bradbury, 2012, p. 388). This was in stark contrast with China's proclaimed commitment to sovereignty for its partner states. This decision was based on pragmatic considerations, where economic interest trumped China's rhetoric of respect for territorial sovereignty (Large, 2009).

China was among the first countries to officially recognize the Republic of South Sudan in 2011. The referendum deciding on this issue of independence saw 99% of the voters in favor

of secession from Sudan (Rice, 2011). Part of the decision of China to support secession stems from its realization that Khartoum's government was not able to control large parts of its own territory. This presented a problem for China, were it to continue its resource extraction. China realized its continued support of Sudan's government would be counterproductive to its economic interests in the region. If China would decide to stay its course by continuing support of Khartoum it would risk to alienate South Sudan. This was a risk that China was not willing to take, especially due to the fact that 75% of proven oil wells in Sudan were present in the region that is now South Sudan (Large, 2011, p. 30).

Interestingly, China's support for South Sudan's secession did not only negatively impact Sudan's sovereignty (which China had stated it would protect), it also made China engage with a government that emerged from a rebel movement. China, while pushing for the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001, specifically articulated its desire to combat the 'three evils' of "religious extremism, ethnic separatism and international terrorism" (Yuan, 2010, p. 856). China's decision to support South Sudan's secession and its political engagement to the newly established government in Juba do not square with China's rhetoric regarding its goals for the erection of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. We can thus see that China's approach to foreign policy in the end is not based on ideology or even its own proclaimed respect for territorial sovereignty. Rather, it should be viewed as a flexible approach, prone to change when economic interests have to be safeguarded. These observations fit neatly into the model of flexigemony, which states that China's flexible approach is adapted to its partner states in pursuit of economic interest.

Chapter 3

Chinese non-interference and arms trade in South Sudan

Chapter one and two analyze China's involvement in Sudan and South Sudan through the application of the flexigemony model. Chapter three will elaborate on the specific conditions present within the Sino-South Sudanese bilateral ties that have changed the nature of Chinese engagement to South Sudan. Firstly, in order to provide focus, this chapter will assess the changing nature of China's long-standing foreign policy of non-interference in regard to South Sudan. In addition, China's role within the international community, and specifically the UNSC, will be linked to China's relations with Sudan and South Sudan. Secondly, the issue of arms trade and its implications for Chinese ties to South Sudan will be discussed. Together these points will show the changing nature of China's role in South Sudan and the effects of Chinese involvement for the region. Furthermore, this chapter aims at exploring the flexigemony model by describing when and why China's approach to South Sudan changes. The flexigemony model states that economic, political and military levers can be utilized to ensure continued resource extraction. By assessing the variables of 'non-interference' and 'arms trade' this chapter intends to show when which lever is used.

China's approach to non-interference

Non-interference "rhetoric encourages the impression that China is not imposing its political views, ideals or principles onto recipient countries and reinforces the perception that

China is now ‘non-ideological’ and pragmatic, since its concerns are for securing resources rather than transforming hearts and minds.” (Power, 2012, p. 245) Carmody argues that China’s flexigemonic approach of prioritizing Chinese economic interests over other considerations is obscured by framing bilateral ties with African states as “South-South cooperation and “win-win” scenarios.” (Carmody, 2010, p. 503) The flexigemony model can be used to shed light on the discrepancies between the official Chinese foreign policy to South Sudan and the outcomes of this approach. Bradbury (2012), Power (2012), Carmody (2010), and Large (2008), amongst others, agree that the case of (South) Sudan and China is key in understanding the changing nature of China’s non-interference policy. “Sudan is seen as the geopolitical territory where Beijing faces the challenge of accommodating its established and ideological policy with the complexity of African politics” (Bradbury, 2012, p. 363). The dynamics present in the country have resulted in China softening and changing its stance on the non-interference policy (Large, 2008, p. 105).

Non-interference in domestic political affairs and respect for state sovereignty have allowed Chinese investors to engage with authoritarian regimes that have used Chinese money for committing crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and fueling conflict (Power, 2012, p. 216) (Bradbury, 2012). Despite the legitimacy of these criticisms on China and its oil companies it is important to that, as brought forward by Patey, investments in unstable countries is not confined to Chinese companies but rather a trait of oil companies worldwide (Patey, 2014, p. 269).

The triangular relationship between China, Sudan and South Sudan, as explained in chapter one, resulted in the need for China’s involvement in political affairs in order to ensure

the continuation of resource extraction. China's focus on economic interest results in the need for long-term stability in the regions it decides to invest in. In light of this realization, it becomes clear that a policy of non-interference is untenable in securing economic interests in the long run (Power, 2012, p. 245). Increased political and military involvement might prove to be the necessary tools China requires to protect its overseas investments and economic interest (Large, 2008). China did this by maintaining ties with both Khartoum and Juba through official state visits and the use of special envoys, in its attempt to mediate the uneasy balance between Sudan and South Sudan. China used its political influence to push for an agreement on the use the Sudanese infrastructure to ensure continued oil extraction from South Sudan (Patey, 2014). This approach resulted in China's political involvement, which did not align with its rhetoric of non-interference. However, China's pragmatism and the primacy of economic interest have shown to trump ideological considerations and thus China's political involvement became a fact. In the next paragraphs China's changing role within the international community, which led to China's military involvement, will be discussed.

China and the international community

China's role in the ongoing civil war in Sudan became exposed and scrutinized internationally by American lobby groups in 2006. The Olympic games of 2008, hosted in Beijing, would come to be known as the 'Genocide Olympics', in an effort to raise awareness of China's role in Sudan. China received criticism for its support of Khartoum's government, which was financing the civil war in Sudan and the violence in Darfur with funds received from Chinese investments in the oil industry (Power, 2012, p. 245). Western countries have pointed to

China's continued bilateral engagement to Sudan as a factor that has inhibited Western countries from pressuring Sudan into ending violence in Darfur (Woods, 2008, p. 1207). Furthermore, Beijing has repeatedly used its position within the UNSC to block international sanctions from being imposed upon the Sudanese government. In 2004 China used its veto power to block multiple resolutions of the UNSC that were aimed at ending the violent civil war in Sudan. Meanwhile, China's arms trade to Sudan continued in spite of arms embargoes. These actions taken by Beijing effectively limited the ability of the international community to attempt to end violence in Sudan (Bradbury, 2012, p. 371). China defended its actions by insisting on Sudan's sovereignty (Power, 2012, p. 246).

However, in recent years, the nature of China's role within the international community has undergone changes. This was, in part due, to the fact that China wanted to establish the image of a responsible actor. China realized that its policy of non-interference would not fit within this context (Large, 2008, p. 105). China's voting behavior within the UNSC on matters concerning Sudan and South Sudan are a testimony to this fact. The shift of China's position can be seen when in 2012 China voted to approve UNSCR 2035, effectively China's signing of the resolution meant it admitted to the state-sponsored violence present within the conflict in Darfur (Bradbury p. 382). This was a break from China's approach, where Beijing had previously had been unwilling to internationally condemn Khartoum's conduct. Furthermore China's changing role within the international community and its deepening involvement within Africa have made it change its position on peacekeeping missions. Whereas before China would have argued that peacekeeping mission are an extreme form of interference and a way for the West to impose its ideology on developing nations, from 2008 onwards China has showed a larger willingness to

cooperate with the United Nations and military interventions (Large, 2009). With China's rise as a global actor, its role within the UNSC has changed over the years. "As China has become a more assertive participant in Council deliberations, UN peace operations have come to more closely align with its principled and causal beliefs." (MacLeod, 2017, p. 395) Intervention within states can now be condoned by China if the intervention adheres to certain conditions. First of all, intervention must be initiated with United Nations authority whilst respecting the sovereignty of target state. In addition, the use of force can only be applied when other means to achieve the United Nations mission have proven to be ineffective (Carmody, 2010, p. 504).

In 2014 China became involved in the volatile regional dynamics of South Sudan by sending 700 peacekeeping forces. This was done in order to "ensure the safety of its workers and assets in Africa and guarantee a steady flow of energy for domestic consumption." (Bariyo, 2014) This decision, once again, reflected the primacy of economic interest in China's foreign policy. China's change regarding non-interference was made complete with the decision to become militarily involved in South Sudan. China now find itself in a position where it is involved politically in maintaining an uneasy balance between Juba and Khartoum in an attempt to safeguard its economic interest of resource extraction. While, in cooperation with the UNSC, China has diverted from its long-standing principle of non-interference through its military involvement in the region.

In the last section of this thesis a discussion on China's arms trade will be used to further elaborate upon the discrepancy between China's official policy of non-interference and the reality of China's engagement to South Sudan.

Arms Trade

“Business is business”

- Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Zhou Wenzhong (Taylor, 2007b, p. 21)

Intentional or not, China’s oil diplomacy and its weakening stance on non-interference in Sudan and South Sudan, as discussed in the previous paragraphs, have had serious political, military and economic consequences for the region. In the years prior to South Sudanese independence China cultivated bilateral ties with Khartoum’s government, oil extraction being the primary concern within the Sino-Sudanese relation. In order to ensure continued resource extraction, Sino-Sudanese relations were built upon an infrastructure of personal relations between key government officials, and cooperation and interaction between Sudan’s National Congress Party and the Chinese Communist Party. In addition, military cooperation and arms sales solidified relations between China and Sudan (Large, 2009, p. 616). It is this aspect of arms trade, within the context of Sino-(South) Sudanese relations, that will be discussed here. In the upcoming paragraphs arms trade will be explained through the model of flexigemony, whilst also addressing its impact. This section will argue that the sale of arms should be considered as a form of interference, carrying serious consequences for politics and stability.

China has justified its involvement in South Sudan and Sudan by arguing that its investments were aimed at building an oil industry that provided the necessary resources for increased political stability. Pointing at the fact that these investments have shifted both Sudan and South Sudan from oil-importing countries to oil-exporting countries. However, this line of

argumentation omits the destabilizing effects of arms sales (Power, 2012, p. 246). Alden contributes to this point by stating that China's arms have had measurable and significant impact in various conflicts in Africa. specifically Sudan (Alden, 2010, p. 25).

Carmody and Taylor argue that China's willingness to arm countries such as South Sudan with military technology and capabilities can be understood through the model of flexigemony, rather than assessing Chinese involvement in terms of hard or soft power (Carmody, 2010, p. 499). Flexigemony defines economic interest as the primary concern of China in its dealings abroad. Furthermore, the official policy of non-interference allows China to frame its conduct abroad solely in terms of economic interest and mutual benefit. This approach has resulted in criticism from various countries and international organizations (Power, 2012, p. 216). However, when confronted about arms trade in Sudan, China's Deputy Foreign Minister Zhou Wenzhong said: "Business is business. We try to separate politics from business...I think the internal situation in the Sudan is an internal affair'." (Taylor, 2007b, p. 21) However, in reality this artificial separation of business and politics does not exist in South Sudan.

As discussed in the previous part of this chapter, China increased its diplomatic involvement in the civil war in Sudan in an effort to end the conflict. Meanwhile, evidence of Chinese arms sales in Sudan and South Sudan has been uncovered by various organizations and research projects. The money generated from oil trade with China has been used by Sudan's government to sponsor violence and ethnic cleansing in Southern Sudan (Taylor, 2007b p. 20). A United Nations Panel of Experts, created under Resolution 1591, concluded that "most ammunition currently used by parties to the conflict in Darfur is manufactured either in the Sudan or in China" (United Nations Security Council, 2006, p. 37). China's indiscriminate sale

of arms can continue unhindered due to China being the only “major arms exporting power that has not entered into any multilateral agreement setting out principles, such as respect for human rights, to guide arms export licensing decisions.” (Taylor, 2007b, p. 19)

Officially, according to Sudan’s government, 58% “of small arms and light weapons, their ammunition, and ‘conventional weapons’ [...] originated in China” (Leff, 2014, p. 24). South Sudan did not report any imports of weaponry to the United Nations. It is important to note that information regarding arms imports remain opaque and that the statistics do not reflect the total amount of imports from China. Arms trade and its scope and effects in South Sudan and Sudan have been “deliberately shrouded in mystery” (Leff, 2014, p. 108). However, the report concluded that: “weapons and ammunition produced in China, Iran, and Sudan have increasingly found their way to non-state users in Sudan and South Sudan’s various conflict arenas.” (Leff, 2014, p. 108) This continuous supply of arms to both Sudan and South Sudan is positively correlated with violence in the region, for both organized and individual use (Leff, 2014, p. 108). China’s arms sales to Sudan provided the means for Khartoum to wage war in the southern Sudan. This can be seen as “perhaps the most dramatic form of interference in internal affairs” (Carmody, 2010, p. 511).

China’s focus on economic interests and its arms sales cannot be considered devoid of political implications. Bradbury states that “Chinese arms sales directly worsened conflict and insecurity, and led to numerous violations of human rights - as defined by Beijing as well as international humanitarian law” (Bradbury, 2012, p. 380). In addition, it is argued that Chinese arm sales to Sudan and South Sudan can be interpreted as a way to protect oil investments whilst further exposing China’s contradictory stance on non-interference (Large, 2008) (Carmody,

2010, p. 511). Maynok (2016) published a quantitative study which supported this argument, stating in his findings that a positive correlation exists between Chinese oil imports and arms exports to its partner states. Effectively, China's investments to build Sudan's military capability can be interpreted as a way for China to protect its extractive industry in Sudan. China's support for Khartoum has allowed the government to stay in power while giving it the means to violently oppress opposition movements (Manyok, 2016, p. 3). Currently, no indication can be found of China's willingness to "reassess its indiscriminate arms sale practices in Sudan" (Power, 2012, p. 247). This assessment of China's arms sales further deteriorates China's commitment to its policy of non-interference (Carmody, 2010, p. 512).

This section has pointed to discrepancies between the proclaimed aim of non-interference and the effects of Chinese arms trade with Sudan and South Sudan. It aims to serve the argument that the business model pursued by China, focusing on oil diplomacy, bilateral ties and arms trade, carries severe implications for politics and stability within Sudan and South Sudan. The softening of China's non-interference policy and its continued focus on ensuring oil extraction and arms sales together paint a picture of Sino-South Sudanese bilateral ties. One where the pursuit of economic interests results in an increased political and diplomatic commitment of China in order to ensure resource extraction. These political commitments have resulted in China's weakened stance on non-interference whilst arms trade, stemming from China's focus on economic interests, has resulted in the worsening of (political) stability within South Sudan.

Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to provide an answer to the following question: *To what extent does the flexigemony model explain the political and military intervention of China in South Sudan between 2005 and 2014?* In order to answer this question the model of flexigemony was utilized as a theoretical framework, outlining China's approach to developing bilateral ties with South Sudan. Flexigemony is a model developed to analyze China's engagement in African states. It captures the primacy of economic interest over political and security considerations while exploring China's approach towards acquiring natural resources such as oil. Chapter one analyzed the development of bilateral ties between China and South Sudan by providing the economic incentives that shaped the relationship. The chapter showed that China, were it to ensure continued oil extraction, had to adjust to the regional dynamics between Sudan and South Sudan. Chapter two continued with the application of the flexigemony model by analyzing how economic considerations rather than political or security considerations shaped China's ties to both Sudan and South Sudan. The third chapter explored the implications of Sino-South Sudanese bilateral ties and China's relationship towards the UNSC by assessing China's changing stance towards its own policy of non-interference. Furthermore, the chapter discussed the consequences of arms sales within the context of Sino-South Sudanese relations.

Together, these chapters clearly show China's motivations for engagement to South Sudan. They show that China, in its pursuit of continued oil extraction, favors pragmatism over ideological considerations regarding its policy of non-interference. Using the rhetoric of non-interference allows China to focus on that what matters most: the building of economic ties.

However, as was shown in this thesis, non-interference is reduced to mere rhetoric when China's economic interests are threatened. China's continued exposure to the South Sudanese political climate has resulted in increased political and military involvement. This proves that China is willing to increase its political and military commitment when its economic interest is under threat. This finding can be extrapolated towards China's conduct in other African states, clearly showing that China's decisions revolve around the simple logic of protecting its overseas investments. As the flexigemony model states, China formulates its foreign policy to gain access to natural resources, which it needs to sustain its growth rate. China's engagement towards South Sudan shows how far China is willing to divert from its own guiding principles of foreign policy to actually achieve this goal. While this case study does not specify how China will adapt to the specific dynamics present in each African state it fosters bilateral ties with, it does show that China's foreign policy is largely based on the pursuit of economic interest. The model of flexigemony is able to elucidate this foreign policy approach and manages to structure China's development of bilateral ties within a hierarchical structure of interests, one where rhetoric and principle make way for China's desired path to economic development.

Furthermore, this study addressed the role of arms trade within the context of bilateral ties, pointing at the negative implications for political stability in South Sudan. This analysis suggests that arms sales can be understood as fulfilling the flexigemonic component of economic interest as well as a method of protecting China's investments and its investment partners. Future studies could be invaluable in confirming or denying these findings. Determining the place of arms sales within the model of flexigemony would certainly be important to the understanding of China's engagement to Africa.

This research project has analyzed the specific dynamics present within the relation between China and South Sudan that resulted in China's increased political and military involvement. One limitation of this thesis is the fact that the political and military involvement of China has been established but not sufficiently analyzed in order to evaluate its true extent. A follow-up study regarding the scope of China's involvement, both politically and militarily, would be of value, providing insight into the continuous development of Sino-South Sudanese relations. Another limitation of this research project is the lack of insight in the decision making process of China. Because of this, the thesis has largely evaluated the case study based on output. However, assessing how the foreign policy of China is constructed could be a most valuable addition to the debate concerning China's engagement to Africa. With more knowledge on the decision-making processes of the Chinese government, further research could attempt to analyze the limitations of China's willingness to engage both politically and militarily. Furthermore, a study of bilateral ties between Angola and China could be of importance due to the fact that 51% of China's oil imports from Africa originate in Angola. It would be of value for the development of the model of flexigemony and understanding of China's engagement to Africa to understand how bilateral ties between Angola and China developed. This research would especially be relevant if compared to the case of Sino-South Sudanese bilateral ties, in an attempt to uncover differences and similarities in China's approach. This would further show the adaptive nature of China's flexigemonic approach whilst addressing the changing nature of China's engagement to Africa.

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