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## **The fine line of Chinese recognition:**

### **A case study on Somaliland and South Sudan**



## Abbreviations

AAA	Addis Ababa Agreement
AU	African Union
CDB	China Development Bank
CNPC	China National Petroleum Company
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPR	Chinese People's Republic
EU	European Union
Exim bank	China Export Import Bank
FOCAC	Forum of Chinese and African Cooperation
GoS	Government of Sudan
GoSS	Government of South Sudan
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IGAD	Inter Governmental Authority on Development
LAS	League of Arab States
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NIF	National Islamic Front
OUA	Organization of African Unity
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China
SNM	Somali National Movement
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SOE	State Owned Enterprises
SRC	Supreme Revolutionary Council
TNG	Somali Transitional Government
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
WTO	World Trade Organization

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# 1. Introduction

In much of the literature, the recognition of a (new) country can be seen as the ultimate sign of support from one country to another (Hechter 1992: 267). This recognition, as well as the interpretation of positive international law, can be approached in three different ways: politically, morally and legally. Based on China's historic attitude against the secession of Taiwan and its firm and explicit stance against the secession of Kosovo in 2009, it might be that China's rejecting stance towards secession applies to *all* cases of secession, both domestic and foreign. China has always remained quite independent from the West in its evaluation of foreign problems and international security issues. It is well known that China holds a strong attachment to the concepts of inviolability of state sovereignty and territorial integrity in its foreign diplomacy, more than any other cultural norms or values (Strauss 2009). However, on July 6<sup>th</sup> 2011, China was one of the first countries to recognise South Sudan after its secession from Sudan. This went against China's former antiseccessionist attitude and its general approach towards its foreign relations. Meanwhile, not far from South Sudan in the Horn of Africa, another strong case for international recognition has remained unanswered for more than two decades: In 1991, Somaliland has withdrawn itself from its former union with Somalia, created in July 1960 after both countries gained independence from their former colonies, Britain and Italy respectively (Farley 2010). Despite Somaliland's attainments in its democratic and economic development of the last two decades and the seemingly present basic elements of statehood, it still does not enjoy China's recognition to this day. Even when a constitutional referendum in 2001 reaffirmed the support of ninety-seven percent of the population in favour of independence, China did not react (Eggers 2007). Therefore, the question of this thesis is: *'what factors explain China's shift in attitude towards secession in the most recent example of South Sudan, whilst not recognizing the previous secession of Somaliland?'*

In this case study, the secessionist initiatives of Somaliland and South Sudan will be examined to determine which factors influence China's change in its foreign policy with respect to recognition. A closer look will be given to China's initial view on secessionism, to determine China's motives against secession. Secondly, China's increasingly complex and realistic approach to its foreign diplomacy will be used as a critical viewpoint on the two different processes of secession in the case study. Thirdly, an examination of China's political and economic interests in both countries is utilized to see how this might have affected China's involvement in both cases. And finally, a wider understanding of China's growing power in the international arena is necessary to determine if China's attitude is changing. Other authors have argued that China's normative attitude in the international arena might be converging towards foreign cultural values

(Kerr and Xu 2014; Shambaugh 2011).

This in-depth case study will provide more insight on the weight and relevance of China's political attitude versus other factors that could have an influence on China's recognition of a secessionist state. This insight might also contribute to a wider understanding of China's possible changing position within the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), now that its international power is growing alongside its economy.

## **2. Literature Study**

This literature study will consist of three sections. The first part will address China's view on secession in general. China's view on positive international law with respect to *secessionism* and its implications for *political* recognition will be explained with China's stance towards domestic secessionist groups. Secondly, China's growing involvement in Africa will be discussed in chronological order. This involvement will be discussed through a political and economic perspective. And lastly, China's growing status as a world power is scrutinized for its possible implications for China's stance towards secessionism.

### **2.1 China's view on secessionism**

A topic of political science literature is to discuss to which extent secessionism differs from the liberation of host states after colonialism. After the wave of decolonization in the 1950s en 1960s, new movements kept emerging, aspiring independence and sovereignty; increasingly based on ethnic recognition or the pursuit of self-determination (Silva 2014, p. 1). These demands for secessionism, defined by Hechter as '*formal withdrawals from a central political authority by a member unit on the basis of a claim to independent sovereign status*' (1992, p. 267), were problematic for the international political system since the separation from a central political authority politically and legally differed from ending the political control from a colonial host state (Kreuter 2010, p. 369). These new claims for independence lacked an internationally accepted legitimate motive, and violated the sovereignty of a host state. Moreover, many constitutions had not yet made specific provisions for such eventual cases of secessionism, so secessionism neither complied nor violated international law (Jamar & Vigness 2010, p. 914; Christopher 2011, p. 126). The question remained when a state was justified to call itself a state for others to recognize.

In October 1970, all members of the UN General Assembly, including the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan, adopted the Friendly Relations Declaration in the UN Charter, which implied that the principle of self-determination from then on was to be perceived as a human right

under international law<sup>1</sup> (General Assembly resolution 2625). Consequentially, the right for self-determination was no longer an entitlement exclusively for post-colonial states, but a human right for *all* people (Vidmar 2012: 544). At that time, the People's Republic of China (PRC) had no seat in the United Nations, after the US-supported Kuomintang (KMT) had fled China's mainland for Taiwan in 1949 when the Communist Party of Mao Zedong had won the Chinese Civil war. Therefore, the PRC could only disagree and protest from a distance with the newly adopted resolution, including its so-called 'fundamental principle' of self-determination for *all*. The KMT had renamed Taiwan the Republic of China, which already had had a seat in the UN before the war. Backed by the US, it claimed to be the only legitimate government of China after the war, despite the fact that the PRC already ruled over China's mainland by then. Not surprisingly, when the PRC eventually became a member of the UN in 1971, taking over the former seat of the ROC a year after the declaration was signed, it quietly agreed upon the Friendly Relations Declaration as only being legitimate in cases of self-determination after colonial subjugation, the argument being that, the declaration was written in the historical context of decolonization (ICJ 2009). In addition, the final paragraph of the declaration underlined the importance of sovereignty, which would function as a political disclaimer for China from there on.<sup>2</sup>

Claiming the right for self-determination or independence are however not the end of a successful secession process. To be just 'independent' is not an entitlement under international law (Vidmar 2012, p. 544-545). It is the *notion of a state* according to the Westphalian state principles –which are still embedded in the international system- that remains the highest ultimate authority in the international system (Silva 2014, p. 13). How to define a state, has been agreed upon in the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, during the Seventh

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Friendly Relations Declaration.

[...] "By virtue of the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, all peoples have the right freely to determine, without external interference, their political status and to pursue their economic, social and cultural development, and every State has the duty to respect this right in accordance with the provisions of the Charter." [...]

[...] "The establishment of a sovereign and independent State, the free association or integration with an independent State or the emergence into any other political status freely determined by a people constitute modes of implementing the right of self-determination by that people" [...]

[...] "Every State has the duty to refrain from any forcible action which deprives peoples referred to above in the elaboration of the present principle of their right to self-determination and freedom and independence. In their actions against, and resistance to, such forcible action in pursuit of the exercise of their right to self-determination, such peoples are entitled to seek and to receive support in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter" [...]

<sup>2</sup> [...] "Nothing in the foregoing paragraphs shall be construed as authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States conducting themselves in compliance with the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples as described above and thus possessed of a government representing the whole people belonging to the territory without distinction as to race, creed or colour." [...]

International Conference of American States in 1933.<sup>3</sup> Article 3 of the convention, known as the *declarative theory of statehood*, stated –much like the later UN Charter- that political existence of a state was independent of recognition by other states (Montevideo Convention, 1933, Article 1-16). However, according to the historically far longer institutionalized *constitutive theory of statehood*<sup>4</sup>, a state becomes a legal person once other states recognize it as such (Kreuter 2010, p. 366). Diplomatic external recognition is thus fundamental to become a legal state in the modern state system (Rich 2009, p. 159).

However, there are different forms of secessionism to which the international rules apply on different levels. Kreuter (2010, p. 370-371) summarizes these different forms or methods of secession as follows:

1. The first method is the use of domestic law to secure secession. This is also known as bilateral secessionism. It is a clear expression of democratic will by those wishing to secede, which is answered through peaceful negotiations between the secessionists and the parent country. This form of secessionism is often answered by international recognition. Unfortunately, in reality, in many cases the parent state is not willing to negotiate the wish for independence. And so, bilateral secessionism is often simply impossible due to conflicting opinions and sometimes even violent situations. Therefore, many secessionist movements have not been recognized by the international community and have encountered international condemnation and even diplomatic and military interventions opposing their aim (Christopher 2011, p. 126).

2. A second method of secessionism is unilateral secession. This form is justified when those wishing to secede are “a people”, when they were subject to serious violations of human rights at the hands of the parent state, and when no other remedies were available to them. Here, the recognition of the secessionist case clearly relies on a more moral consideration (Rubin 2000). In a way, the state of Israel could be an example of this.

3. One can also speak of simple declarations of independence. This can occur without negotiations or without the blessing of the parent state. Such *de facto* secession is the most difficult to justify in the international arena. The only possibility for justification in that situation occurs through recognition of the secessionist state by other nations. However, external recognition in this case is often more politically motivated than it is legally supported, since no legal framework applies to the undermining of a sovereign country (Kreuter 2010, p. 372).

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<sup>3</sup> The four basic legal prerequisites necessary for statehood were described in Article 1: (1) A permanent population, (2) a clearly defined territory, (3) a government, and (4) the capacity to engage in relations with other states (Eggers, 2007, p. 214).

<sup>4</sup> Recognized by 39 European sovereign states during the Congress of Vienna in 1815.



### 2.1.1 China's domestic situation

When China became a member of the UN in 1971, it ensured its newly gained recognition and prohibited the recognition of Taiwan by confining all UN Members to acknowledge the 'One China' principle. This implies recognizing the government of the PRC as the sole legitimate government of China and recognizing Taiwan as a province of China (Zou 2005; Williams 1998). It is plausible that China's sensitivity towards self-determination and the recognition of secession thus originally stems from its struggle for its own international recognition between 1949 and 1971. However, many argue that its domestic issues with separatist regions in Xinjiang and Tibet were and still are a great motivation for its rigid and negative stance towards secessionism as well (Alden 2007; Zhu and Blachford 2005).

Xinjiang, the most vast province in China's North East has been conquered by the Chinese in 1945 for different geopolitical reasons (Bovingdon 2010, p. 11; Ong 2005). Currently, the region is principally in the news for the terrorist attacks that are conducted by separatist Turkish Uyghurs. Due to the increasing population of Han Chinese moving into the area, which was originally inhabited by Uyghur people, and the strict rule by the Chinese government and its harsh treatment of Muslims in Xinjiang, many Uyghur feel oppressed and discriminated for their ethnic background. This has led to a somewhat unorganized movement within the Uyghur population that aspires an Uyghur nation, independent from China. Most Uyghur aspire a peaceful secession, whereas just a small younger group put their hopes in gaining independence through more violent acts. Both the Uyghurs themselves as the Chinese government thus condemn these attacks (Yee 2003; Bovingdon 2010).

As for the Tibetans, who were independent from China until the end of Chinese civil war in 1950, similar cultural and religious differences lead to violent oppression,<sup>5</sup> destruction of monasteries, including a ban of Buddhist religion and of Tibetan cultural values. Zhu and Blachford (2005, p. 247-249) underline that for both these cases, next to the secessionist aspirations, the attributes and distinctive elements of the ethnic groups such as their internally homogenous cultures, languages and traditions, enforce the perceptual threat to the central Chinese government. Since the Dalai Lama, leader of the Tibetan Buddhists, has always answered this oppression with peaceful non-violent protest since the 1960s, China has been heavily criticized in the international arena for its violations of human law. For this, China responded by stating that the issue of human rights is an internal affair of a country, which should be addressed only by the government of that country. In addition, it very much promotes common ground and promotes claims of inclusivity as a tactic to curb negative attitudes. Both Xinjiang and Tibet are now part of "*the great family of the Chinese nation*" (Bovingdon 2010, p. 45). China has been

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<sup>5</sup> The Lhasa uprising in 1959 had an estimated 86.000 casualties.

implementing special policies in both ethnic regions; enforcing both Tibet and Uyghurs to work together with Han Chinese in local autonomous government cadres.

Meanwhile, since 2005, China has also faced considerably more difficulties with the political “secession” of Taiwan. As a reaction to the government in Taiwan, which is increasing its pressure and determination to secede officially from the mainland, the PRC enforced an unprecedented Anti-Secession law in 2005, directed against Taiwan. This would make Taiwan’s further efforts to secede from China, not possible under PRC’s law (Zou, 2005). China has namely stated that it will use military force to prevent Taiwanese independence, as this is included in the anti-Secession law (Posner and Yoo 2006, p. 3).

Prior cases of domestic secession may illustrate that China’s recognition of a seceded state is eminently a politically sensitive consideration, which China backs with its own interpretation of relevant legislation (Mancini 2008, in Christopher 2011, p. 127; Kreuter 2010). China’s most radical answer to its domestic secession regions is making secessionism illegal by constitution. However, as the UN Charter is a very relevant international legislation that also applies to China’s domestic situation, as well as for secessionist cases abroad, the following hypothesis is formulated:

**Hypothesis 1:** *China’s attitude towards secessionist cases abroad is influenced by its stance towards the Friendly Relations Declaration of the UN Charter.*

### *2.1.2 Principles under discussion*

Previous cases of China’s domestic secessionist movements are thus believed to influence China’s foreign policy in relation to secessionism. Despite the fact that China’s foreign policy formulations remain opaque, it holds on to guiding rules called the ‘Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence’. These principles were originally formulated to solve a trade dispute in the Tibet area in 1954, and consequentially became the guidelines for Beijing’s relations with India (Taylor 2006, p. 68). But by the 1970s these principles were applied to China’s relations with all states. They foremostly stress the importance of sovereignty and the principle of non-interference.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the fact that these principles are addressed as cornerstone policy, they are under

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- (1) Mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty,
- (2) Mutual non-aggression,
- (3) Mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs,
- (4) Equality and cooperation for mutual benefit, and lastly
- (5) Peaceful co-existence.

constant discussion within China's domestic discourse when applied to the question whether China should become engaged in international affairs and to what extent China has a responsibility in the international arena. Shambaugh (2011) distinguishes seven different lines of thought that have emerged in the discussion during recent decades, which are: the Nativists, Realists, Major Powers, Asia First, Global South, Selective Multilateralists, and Globalists. China's Nativists for example distrust international institutions and think China should withdraw itself from many of them in order to preserve China's identity. The Globalist school on the other hand of the spectrum, believes China should cooperate and contribute to global issues just like other major powers. This dynamic discourse mainly takes place on the Internet amongst Chinese netizens. Despite the fact that most foreign policy decisions are made without taking into account this public opinion, Chinese officials know that dissatisfaction amongst the public can instigate a critic on the Party's ability to rule (Jakobsen and Knox, (2012, p. vii). In fact, it has happened several times that leaders were constrained in their actions by the public when issues related to Taiwan and Tibet came under international attention.

However, not only unofficial circles, but also semi-officials (who?) and official circles are actively debating China's new opportunities, risks and responsibilities. China's short- and long-term policies have never been a product of one specific model, but always have been formed by compromises amongst elites, bureaucrats, and interest groups (Kennedy 2010). However, on a government level, China's official policy lines through which foreign policy were always conducted have become even more fractured. Initially, the nine-member Politburo Standing Committee was perceived as the highest decision-making organ of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in relation to foreign policy. However, its agenda and deliberations are not made public and neither do they have an official policy portfolio, which makes every new agenda point subject to different interested actors (Jakobsen and Knox 2012, p. 15). This has instigated an increasing, new voice of the re-emerging People's Liberation Army (PLA), which propagates the need for a more aggressive stance to protect China's interests (Jakobsen and Knox, 2012, p. vii).

Shambaugh (2011) calls this the realist front or realist school of thought, which is the most popular and widespread voice or school of thought within China's domestic discourse today. Realism is deeply rooted in China's way of thinking. Like other realists, they regard the nation-state as the unit of analysis and they reject all arguments that challenge the transcendence of national borders. State sovereignty is considered sacred. Moreover, Western arguments that China should be more involved in global management are perceived as a pitfall in which China has to give up a share of its resources and potentially even slow down the pace of its growth. Although the Realists are pessimistic about China's external engagements, they also do not want China to be isolated; just clearly defined national interests, as a domestic issue to be protected.

In other words, as granting diplomatic recognition is more a political consideration in the case of unilateral secessionism, it thus depends to what extent a nation believes that countries can interfere in other countries' businesses; and, to what extent state sovereignty is an unchallengeable concept. China's 'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence' and the dynamic domestic discourse related to these principles are important indicators for China's stance towards sovereignty, and indirectly for its stance towards secessionism. Also, China's more Realistic way of approaching its foreign relations, with an increasing 'hard-line realist' voice from the PLA, may change its prerequisites of granting official recognition or not.

**Hypothesis 2:** *China's attitude towards secessionism is indirectly influenced by its principles of sovereignty and non-interference.*

## **2.2 China's role in Africa**

### *2.2.1 History*

At present-day China can be seen as a donor, a market, a financier, an investor, a contractor and a builder to many sub-Saharan countries. This is the result of a gradual increase in mutual interests that started in the 1950s, a few years after Mao Zedong came to power. As the political troubles with Taiwan -that claimed its secession from China's mainland in 1949- were fairly recent, the first formal relations between the PRC and various African countries were established to promote and gain diplomatic recognition for the principle of 'One China'. In addition, China already began to spread the concept of a multipolar world by presenting itself as being part of the non-aligned developing world during the first Asian-African conference at Bandung, Indonesia (Tull 2006, p. 467; Strauss 2009). After the first cracks in the Sino-Soviet relation in 1956 over differences in the interpretation of Marxism, which eventually led to the Sino-Soviet split in 1961, this concept would gradually become more important.

During the first major tour to Africa in 1963, Chinese premier Zhou Enlai visited various countries to promote China-Africa relations, including Sudan and Somalia. At the time, China mainly focussed on movements that fought for independence and that engaged in anti-colonial activities (Gill and Reilly 2007, p. 37; van Dijk 2009, p. 9). During the state visits, Zhou addressed aspects of China's foreign policy that still apply to it today: respect for state sovereignty, friendly relations grounded on equality, support for anti-colonial movements, non-conditional development assistance and support of self reliance (Strauss 2009, p. 781-782). At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, China heavily started to promote Maoism, as a turn against the post-Stalin Soviet Union, and as an ideological foreign policy in Africa. However,

Maoism was not taken well amongst most African leaders, who feared losing their positions as a consequence. Maoist ideology namely heavily preached for taking a critical stance towards rulers, to the point of fighting for the removal of incompetent ones. Furthermore, Maoism promoted the building up of a strong working class, which in most parts of Africa was completely absent. However, due to the lack of positive response from African leaders, and the contradiction of propagating Maoism as an “exporting revolution” with the principle of non-interference in international affairs, China ended the Maoist diplomacy during the late 1960s. Instead, China started to provide aid to Africa that was free and unconditional and more often started to support socialist regimes (Van Dijk 2009, p. 9). This ending of the critical Maoist diplomacy into an ideology-free diplomacy gradually recovered the majority of African bilateral relations (Li 2007, p. 91), and would become the glue in the structure of bilateral involvement of China’s official and semi-official coverage of China-African affairs in later decades. Although China’s diplomatic tone would never lose the initial Maoist rhetoric entirely, as Strauss (2009, p. 779) points out in his research on China’s rhetoric and diplomacy.

In the post-Mao era in the late 1970s, Deng Xiaoping and other Chinese leaders tried to make it their first priority to recover and modernise the Chinese economy and to gradually maximise access to foreign markets (Mohan and Power 2008, p. 30; Zhang 2012). While China implemented the adjunct ‘Opening Up’ and ‘Reform’ policies, many African states gained independence from their former colonial superpowers. Since both China and the newborn African countries focussed primarily on their own independent political development, bilateral relations mostly relied on mutual political support, with anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism at its diplomatic core (Zhang 2012). However, economic China-African relations were not particularly intensified (Tull 2006, p. 462).

In the 1980s, when both China’s ‘Opening Up’ and ‘Reform’ policies already started to show results, China turned to the industrialised West to gain more knowledge and experience in relation to economic development, for which it still had much to learn. And by the end of the Cold War, China was working towards a ‘socialist market economy’, a market economy model with Chinese characteristics. Or, as the official explanation of the model stated: “*A socialist market economy is an economy based on socialist public ownership in which the government executes macroeconomic regulations and the market fulfils its basic role in the distribution of resources*” (Yasuo 2003, p. 2). On the basis of this structure, China’s state-owned enterprises were thus beginning to gain more importance for China’s economic development path. Additionally, and most importantly, China’s foreign policy underwent a transformation into a more active stance to establish and emphasize non-Western diplomatic relations outside East Asia. According to Tull (2006, p. 460-462) this more outward view and need for allies, had three different reasons.

Firstly, after the aggressive military interventions against the separatist movement in Lhasa in 1959, China's new military aggression against the peaceful pro-democracy protesting students in Tiananmen Square in Beijing in June 1989 flared up negative reactions and sanctions of Western countries aimed at Beijing. These sanctions pushed China towards other allies (Zhu & Blachford 2005, p. 244). During the three years after the clashes on Tiananmen Square, Chinese foreign minister Qian Qichan paid a visit to 14 African countries to establish new diplomatic relations. These new diplomatic ties would function as a shield for Beijing from further Western criticism about the government's reaction to the students' protest within many multilateral organizations, like the UN Security Council, and later the United Nations Commission of Human Rights (Tull 2006, p. 467)

Secondly, the growing international hegemony of the US in the post-1989 period and the changing references to China by US leaders, from 'strategic partner' to 'strategic competitor', contributed to the fact that China started to address the concept of *multipolarity* even more than before. This worldview aspires a stable distribution of power in which more than two nation states have an equal amount of cultural, military and economic power and international influence. Within this paradigm, China perceived itself to become one of the power poles, next to the US and Japan (Yasuo 2003, p. 30).

The third reason for the expansion of diplomatic ties with Africa was the Asian financial crisis in 1997. The Chinese leadership realized that China's domestic situation, including its social tensions and the established monopoly of the Communist Party, was also subject and vulnerable to external influences. This urged Beijing to diversify its trade relations and become more independent from external economic shocks within the Asian region. And so, a year later, the Chinese government and the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade introduced China's new 'Going Out Strategy' (van Dijk 2009, p. 17). This policy push generated support for Chinese companies and State Owned Enterprises (SOE's) to expand their businesses to international markets. This would create a more steady pace for economic development. But it also intensified China's diplomatic advances towards different countries in the world, including the ones located in the sub-Saharan African region.

However, many experts in the field state that the expansion towards sub-Saharan Africa was part of China's realistic geo-economic strategy and mostly focussed on investments that secured long-term access to natural resources (Economy, 2010, p. 145-147; Gill and Reilly 2007, p. 38; Tull 2006, p. 465; Large 2009). In 1998, president Jiang Zemin and the Chinese Ministry of Defence declared that energy security had to become the main focus for China's overall security position. China's increasingly wealthy population, its urbanization, and the many industries within its rapidly growing economy, asked for more natural resources, mainly crude oil, than

China could provide for itself. Moreover, at the time, global energy politics already became more intense and competitive. As a result, many Chinese state owned oil companies then started to increase their oil import by securing new oil markets (Mohan and Power 2008; Tull 2006; Alden and Hughes 2009).

Nevertheless, there were more reasons for China to be involved in Africa, aside from its search for natural resources. Africa is not only an exporter of natural resources; it also has become a good sales market for Chinese products (Eisenman 2012, p. 800). In the last two decades China produced most of the world's low-tech and low-priced products in local state-built economies of scale. Large Chinese "boomtowns", specializing in mass-producing just one or two different products have made Chinese products highly competitive in the world market. Although much of China's capital flows (Figure 1) are not disclosed publicly, estimates are that the capital going into Africa has grown 400% from in 2007, since 1991.

**Figure 1.** China's capital flows by region over time (US dollars billion)

Region	1991	1995	2004	2005	2006	2007
Latin America	33.1	1.3	40.8	70.9	40.4	54.9
Eastern Europe	-6.6	10.3	130.7	204.0	228.2	236.1
Africa/M.East	7.4	9.9	7.7	25.2	29.8	30.9
Asia/Pacific	26.6	60.4	165.8	218.1	254.5	223.0
<b>Total private flows</b>	<b>70.5</b>	<b>81.9</b>	<b>345.1</b>	<b>518.1</b>	<b>552.9</b>	<b>544.9</b>

Source: Van Dijk (2009)

### 2.2.2 Current situation

Since 2000, further political and economic integration between China and African countries was further boosted with frequent high-level reciprocal visits, and has intensified through the establishment of the Forum of China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), which is held every third year since 2000 (Zhang 2012). Receiving a great deal of coverage in the media, this platform facilitates collective political dialogue and win-win solutions that stimulate economic cooperation between 51 African countries and China. New important topics that improve China-African relations are big infrastructural projects, promotion of Chinese private enterprises presented as partners of China's development and investment goals for Africa, cancellation of debts, setting up of special economic zones, and the setting up of an Africa development fund (Strauss 2009, p. 791). In 2005, an African Chamber of Commerce was established in Beijing. And at the Beijing

Summit of Forum on FOCAC in 2006, China released a White Paper on its Africa Policy in which it expressed to aspire the development of more friendly relations and cooperation with African countries based on the 'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence'. Hu Jintao called this a "new type of strategic partnership" (Alden and Hughes 2009, p. 564, 565).

With the 'Going out' strategy still in force today, China currently tries to maintain embassies in every African country to support its Chinese companies, apart from the six countries that have ties with Taiwan (Tull 2006, p. 462). The main function of these embassies is to guide Chinese businesses in their pursuit of entering the African economy. China's government controls many of these corporations; and so China's national interests are plausibly factored into the business strategy. Whether it is this government-controlled structure, or China's indifference to human rights abuses (both forms of illiberal capitalism), China-African economic engagements are increasing (Taylor 2006; Alden 2007). Sino African trade volume increased from \$12 Million in 1950, to \$200 Billion in 2012 (Zhang 2012). And China's investments have grown exponentially (Appendix 1). And most of the African oil that was imported by China in 2006 came from two African niche markets; one of which was Sudan (Tull 2006: 479). And, since 2009, China has become Africa's largest trading partner.

China's trade with African countries is often only part of the deal. China provides most African countries also with unconditional aid to establish good relations. Despite political and social tensions and escalations in various African countries, China assists African countries with their development through three different forms of aid: grants, soft loans, and debt relief (van Dijk 2009, p. 15). China's grants and soft loans are facilitated by two government-controlled banks, namely: the Export-Import Bank (Exim Bank), and China's Development Bank (CDB). The Exim Bank primarily focuses on expanding Chinese trade. Whereas the CDB, which has more assets than the World Bank; the Asian Development Bank; and the African Development Bank combined, promotes Chinese economic and infrastructure development (Jakobson and Brix 2012, p. 28).

China's grants often come in the form of construction works and infrastructure projects that are carried out by Chinese companies, and thus financed by the CDB. The first project in Africa in the 1970s was a 1,860km railway track from Tanzania to Zambia. Later came hospitals in Luanda, Angola; sport stadiums in Benin and Sierra Leone; a water supply project in Mauritania; and so on. The loans provided by Exim Bank and the CDB are under the framework of the FOCAC and thus have the purpose of broadening the financing channels of African small to medium enterprises (CDB Sustainability Report 2012). Although the CDB states that it follows market rules, these loans are known for their below-market rate interests, long repayment periods, or refund in the form of a lucrative trade deal. Lastly, China has helped many African countries



with debt relief; diminishing the debt that was built up throughout the years via state loans. This enforces China's motive of being a partner in development.

Although China's aid is far from the amounts that Western nations provide African states, in comparison to Western aid, it comes with very few moral or political strings attached. China sticks to the principle of national sovereignty, and therefore does not impose other political attachments to its aid, like the anti-corruption measures that Western nations often use as prerequisites. African leaders have found that China's support and critique on Western interference in other states' domestic politics, has generated leeway to diminish the pressures of the West on the liberalisation of their political systems (Tull 2006, p. 461). According to the US and many international organs, China is thus ignoring corruption and breaches in human rights and is only pursuing its economic aims. Therefore, China does not contribute to gradual economic development in these African nations and does not take enough responsibility.

Mohan and Power (2008, p. 70), among others, call the Chinese involvement in Africa ambivalent for this reason (Large 2009; Alden 2009). This unconditional aid and China's non-interference policy however, could not only lead to the so called 'resource curse' in oil-rich countries, which staggers development in the country and favours the status quo, it could indirectly lead to risky situations where Chinese corporations and SOE's are working in unstable and even dangerous situations (Jensen & Wantchekon 2004). Although Beijing does not want to interfere with other countries' businesses, the Chinese government might have less choice in the future. The more it invests in unstable African countries or rogue states, the more China might want to protect its own assets and investments and thus might have to take more responsibility.

**Hypothesis 3:** *China's recognition of South Sudan and not of Somaliland is subject to China's political and economical interests in its bilateral relations, which are increasingly economically motivated.*

## 2.3 China's peaceful rise

*“Rich countries assume a huge responsibility. [...] The more successful development China achieves, the more people expect China to reach out to help those small or poor countries and deal with difficulties with them. In the same manner, as China gains higher status geopolitically, her share of responsibility in world security shall increase as well.”*

Koffi Annan, United Nations Secretary General (Yan 2006, p. 7)

China's international power image has risen considerably in the last few decades, partially due to the promotion of its fast economic development. However, China's perception on normative power and the related idea of soft power differs from that of the West. China finds that normative power is related to cultural soft power and not to cultural norms that apply to quality of authority. Where the West focuses on good governance, human rights and democratic values, China focuses on modernisation. Where the UNSC follows the legislation of the International Court of Justice as the highest legal organ in the world, China has refused to submit to ICJ's jurisdiction or even appear before it for a long time (Posner and Yoo 2006, p. 7).<sup>7</sup> China believes that the ICJ is biased in favour of the US; therefore China does not feel itself bound to Western interpretations on the rules of the UN Charter. However, due to China's rising power status, cooperation and interplay with other nations may determine or influence its stance towards some foreign policy issues. The question thus sets to what extent the international arena may influence China's attitude towards secessionism. Russia however, shares with China its distrust in relation to the aforementioned international organs. Considering both countries' ideological background, we can assume Russia may have an influence on China's future decisions in the international arena.

Posner and Yoo (2006, p. 7) overly state that, so far, China and the US have taken different sides in every war in the hope of containing a new ally in their rivalry. However, Kerr and Xu (2014) argue that the different notions of normative power between East and West might be gradually converging in relation to security issues. An important difference in approaching security issues lies in the fact that China has always adhered to the norms of sovereignty, non-interference and territorial integrity, which on their turn might undermine Western efforts and which lacks a feeling for responsibility outside domestic borders. But there are other differences: Western countries or organizations are more focussed on normative interventions when it comes to security situations. China on the other hand pays attention to views of regional organizations

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<sup>7</sup> China supports the principles of the ICJ, when individuals are brought to justice over violations of human rights. However, it has argued that no-one has the right to challenge the sovereignty and immunity of a head of state. Source: (Attree 2012, p. 18)

and grants these organizations more responsibility to solve the problem, before positioning itself. This may be enforced by the fact that Africa's bargaining power is increasing as well. China exports technology and helps to build Africa country's necessary infrastructure for self-sustaining economic development, following the 'China Model'<sup>8</sup> (Eisenman 2012, p. 801). However, Zhang (2014) explains that Africa's growing influence is also translating in recovery of other bilateral relations, which could marginalize China's role in Africa in the future. In some cases, it is therefore necessary for China to take other bilateral relations and other powers into account while choosing its political stance. However, relevant actors and attached relations differ from state to state.

However, simultaneously, during the last decade China has become too powerful to be offended. China's relative growth in comparison to the US raises concerns, since the economic growth makes it possible for China to spend more on its defence. And global analysts identify Chinese goals to be increasingly prone to constrain Taiwan from independence with a hard realist approach (Posner and Yoo 2006, p. 5). At the same time, no country wants to risk its economic relations with China over moral disagreements. This might have an influence on how China reacted on secession, a sensitive subject, at different moments in time. During Somaliland's secession China was not yet perceived as the new global superpower, but during South Sudan's secession it increasingly was. Therefore the following hypothesis is followed:

**Hypothesis 4:** *China's stance towards secessionism is influenced by its growing power in the international arena.*

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<sup>8</sup> China sets its development model as an example for other development nations.

### **3. Methodology and Research design**

To illustrate whether the prior findings on China's position on secessionism in general have been consistent and have remained consistent over time in different cases of foreign secessionism, light will be shed on two separate yet very similar separatist cases in Africa: Somaliland and South Sudan. China has never recognized Somaliland, which declared its independence in 1991, but it has formally recognized South Sudan in 2011.

#### *3.1 Variables*

In this case study the dependent variable is China's attitude towards secessionism. More specifically, the focus will be on China's recognition of the new government of South Sudan, and its refusal to recognize the democratic government in Somaliland that aims to secede from Somalia. The independent variables with which these two cases will be compared stem from a grounded literature study on both China's foreign policy and its relations with African countries in general, as well as from literature that is specifically focussed on the two analysed African regions.

The first independent variable is China's view on secessionism in general. This variable is measured by comparing China's statements about the Friendly Relations Declaration in the UN Charter with how both case studies apply to this declaration. Another indicator that could contribute to China's view on both secessions is to what extent China's domestic issues with respect to secession had been subject to international scrutiny at the time of the secession. This might explain China's sensitivity to granting the external recognition or not.

The second independent variable that could explain China's different reaction towards South Sudan compared to Somaliland, is how China's foreign policy principles with respect to state sovereignty, non-interference and territorial integrity apply to both secession processes. More importantly, China's actual emulation of these principles in both cases is compared. After explaining the chronological process of the secession, both cases will be evaluated on the basis of Kreuter's (2010) typology in which he distinguishes three types of secession. Indicators that are part of these types of secession processes are: the nature of the previous relations between the parent state and the seceding state (e.g. violations of human rights, fair cooperation, war), which thus implies the level of violence that was generated through or before the secession process, Further indicators are the use of domestic law that has been used during the secession process (e.g. mutual agreements), whether there are any alternative solutions available other than

secessionism, and the variety of the ethnic groups within the seceding region. The variety of the ethnic groups within the seceding regions could be relevant when their case is similar to one of the two problematic ethnic regions within China itself. The more sensitive the timing, the less likely it is that China will interfere in its diplomatic relations with the parent state, at the advantage of the secessionist case. Better understanding of the implications of these principles might provide more insight into why South Sudan was recognized and Somaliland was not.

The third independent variable is China's political and economical involvement with both host- as secessionist-states at the moment that the secessionist movement claimed or attempted to reclaim its own territory. Expected is that the higher China's involvement is, the higher the chance that China's recognition of the secessionist movement could interfere with its relation with the parent state, and consequentially could harm its own interests. For the political aspect of China's involvement, indicators are the establishment of important political organs, China's behaviour within important multilateral organizations with respect to the secession, the amount of political visits that are paid by official delegations of both countries, and the height of China's aid, which in general is seen as a political catalyst for good business contracts (Alden 2009, p. 569).

Furthermore, the relative importance of the mutual trade in both regions will be measured with economic indicators such as official trade statistics. Some authors argue that the intensity of China-Africa bilateral economic and political relations are far more heavily dependent on the *type of products* that are being exchanged, rather than the similarity of the political structure of both countries (Eisenman 2012, p. 794, 795). Some types of products like raw materials or arms, are considered more important than others, like manufactured consumer goods or capital equipment. To confirm China's increasing realist behaviour, the fact that China supported South Sudan, and not Somaliland will be discussed with respect to the extent to which China benefited or contributed to its own future interests in both cases.

The last independent variable is the influence of China's international growing power that presumably contributes to China's changing role towards secessionism. According to Kerr and Xu (2014) China's role in the UNSC is changing due to its normative convergence with respect to security situations. This is part of the literature that will be discussed about the normative opinion that growing power entails a growing responsibility towards other countries. An indicator for this variable is how proactively China reacts to the situations in both secession cases, politically and military. However for a weighted judgement on both cases, literature that spills a more negative view on China's presence in Africa will also be addressed. This can be traced back through China's attitude towards (and engagement in-) different institutions like the African Union, the UNSC, and the FOCAC.

### *Research design*

The following case studies will address China's position on the secessionist initiatives of Somaliland and South Sudan. For this, current literature on the history and political affairs of both countries will be used to create a chronology of events, but also to gain more understanding of the process of secession within these countries and China's economical and political involvement there. To replicate logic to establish external validity, the same hypotheses and theory will be applied for both cases.

### *Case selection*

According to Mill's "method of difference" it is a key challenge to find cases that are as similar as possible, but that differ in their outcomes for they have all but one different independent variable. The cases of South Sudan and Somaliland have many similarities including, their relatively recent gain and loss of autonomy, their British colonial past, and their geographical position, but most importantly their (aspired) secession from another state after suppression and war. Aside from this, the outcomes of both cases differ, as one case has been recognized by China, while the other has not. Since there are also many differences between the two cases, it is not a perfect example of cross-case comparison. However, as this is never possible for case comparison in the field of political science, the second challenge is to demonstrate that the difference in the value of the independent variable of interest between the two cases is the one accounting for the difference in outcomes, rather than the residual differences between the two cases identified by rival hypotheses.

An important difference between the two cases is the timeframe during which both secessionist regions aimed to secede and asked for recognition from the international arena. Somaliland tried to become independent from 1991 onwards, whereas South Sudan officially made its first efforts in 2005. In the meantime change may have occurred respect to the prior mentioned independent variables used to compare the two secession cases. Therefore, a chronological order of events will be attained, meaning Somaliland will be discussed first, followed by South Sudan.

### *Data collection & Methods*

The key method for the comparison of two similar cases is process tracing, which will be used in this case study. To compare the two cases, an inductive method will be used by testing the prior formulated hypotheses against findings retrieved from the scientific political theory literature and relevant primary or statistical data. Most of the independent variables in relation to the secession process will be measured with help from secondary sources such as the general political science

and international law literature, as well as economic and diplomatic reports (mainly online through e.g. embassy's websites).

To obtain a clear view of China's attitude towards secessionism in general official statements will be used that can be retrieved from different organizations or news sources on the Internet. One of the primary sources in which China expresses its attitude towards secessionism, will be a court hearing of the International Court of Justice from 2009. In addition, general literature about China's foreign policies and domestic secessionist issues will be used. Since both are extremely sensitive subjects for Beijing, most of the literature stems from Western experts in the field. However, it seems that China's International legal scholars have more freedom of expression than their political science counterparts. According to Kim (1987: 7) this is due to the fact that International law is seen as an instrument for International Relations or International politics. As a consequence, international law is a less sensitive perspective for Chinese scholars to discuss China's foreign policy. This is also why a relatively large portion of the chosen literature is related to international law. As the first two hypotheses theoretically highly intertwine and both apply to the aforementioned data, they will be discussed in a common chapter in the case study.

China's political and economical involvement within the two cases will further be analyzed using official statements from key Chinese institutes that are involved in China's activities in Africa, such as the FOACAC, relevant ministries of foreign affairs, relevant trade organizations, China's embassies, and as an example, China's Development Bank. In addition, reports of relevant NGO's in the field may provide more details. For the opaqueness of China's money flows, the height of China's aid will be measured with available data from AidData, which is an open data source that registers China's aid projects.

To measure the influence of China's growing power with respect to granting recognition to a secessionist state, first light will be shed on the international perception of China's power at the time of the secession. In addition, relevant political science theory literature will be advised to explain China's conduct with respect to other nations. Most content that will be advised for the case studies will consist of secondary sources, namely relevant political articles, media reports and statements on official government websites.

## **4. Case studies**

*Somaliland*

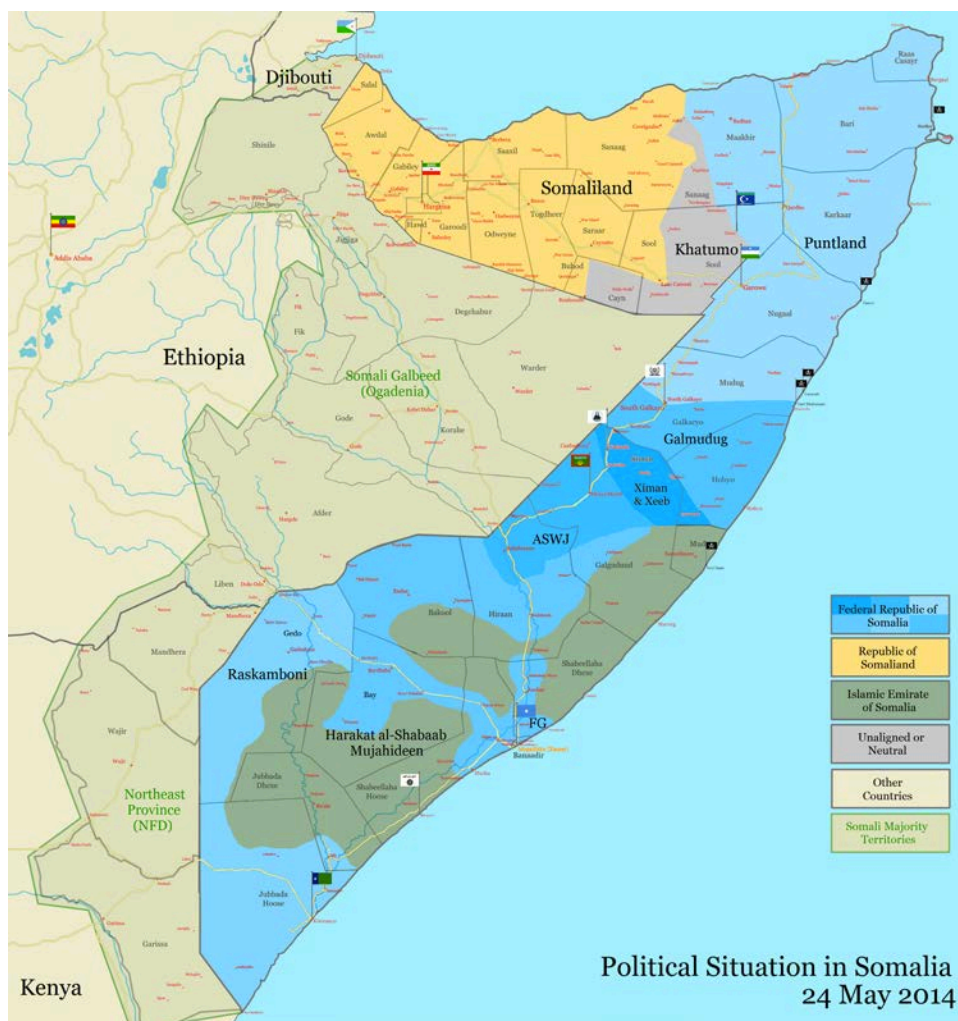
**&**

*South Sudan*



## 4.1 Somaliland

Somaliland is internationally recognized as an autonomous northern state within Somalia. It is located in the northern top of the Horn of Africa. Somaliland shares its borders with Ethiopia in the south, Djibouti in the north, the Gulf of Aden and the autonomous Puntland region of Somalia in the East. Its capital is Hargeisa. The country has three and a half million inhabitants, and covers a geographic area of 137,600 square kilometres (Jhazbhay 2003, p. 79). The main religion since the 14<sup>th</sup> century is predominantly Islam. In the middle ages the local clan system evolved when extended Islamic families from Arabia fled to Somali regions and economically beneficial relationships were established through interethnic marriages with locals. The largest ethnic clan today are the Isaaq, but numerous smaller clans are present as well (website: Country Facts, UN permanent mission, n.d; website: UNPO, Somaliland, 2008).



Source: Wikimedia Commons (James Dhal, 2014). Available from: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Somalia\\_map\\_states\\_regions\\_districts.png](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Somalia_map_states_regions_districts.png) [28 May 2014]

### *4.1.1 History*

Within a week after Somaliland's -internationally recognized- independence from Britain in June 1960, Somaliland decided to join its neighbouring country Somalia, which declared its independence from Italy on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Despite a short political struggle caused by issues over the new representation, still motivated by a nationalistic pursuit of a "Greater Somalia", the territories managed to form a new unified and rather peaceful Somali Republic at least its first decade (Kreuter 2010, p. 375). However, in October 1969 Somalia's second president Abdirashid Ali Shermarke was assassinated by one of his own bodyguards for reasons unknown. Major General Mohamed Siad Barre took advantage of this sudden power vacuum and took power in a bloodless and unopposed military coup d'état. Siad Barre was a member of the Marehan Darod Clan, from the south west of Somalia. As leader of the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC), he immediately began reforming the country. Firstly, the Somali Republic was renamed in the Somali Democratic Republic. The SRC arrested former government officials, banned all political parties, and dissolved the Parliament, Supreme Court, and the former constitution. Despite Barre's promises to eradicate tribalism and decentralise power, all the important economical and political institutions were planned to be located in the Southern region of the Somali republic, where members of his clan could influence and support his rule (Forti 2011, p. 15). This generated great political and economical advantages for that region over other more distant regions, like Somaliland, which ultimately provoked northern resistance.

In an effort to protect the northern clans' interests, a guerrilla movement was established in 1982, named the Somali National Movement (SNM). This movement, or political organization mostly consisted out of members of the northern Isaaq peoples (UN permanent mission, n.d.). While promoting 'Somali values of cooperation rather than coercion', the struggle still escalated between May 1988 and March 1989, when the SNM tried to control northern towns through its newly established bases. Siad Barre's government brutally answered the SNM's achievements by flattening out the northern capital Hargeisa and other major cities with artillery, South African mercenaries, and a bomber aircraft. Tens of thousands of civilians were killed and more than half a million citizens were forced to flee to neighbouring Ethiopia. This escalation was the beginning of the Somali Civil war. Soon after the attack on Hargeisa, more opposition against the central government emerged from the south. A coalition of two southern-based clans of the Isaaq peoples and more armed actors joined the SNM in their efforts, until Mogadishu, the Somali capital, was taken over in 1991 and Barre fled the country (Bryden 2004, p. 24).

With the collapse of the government and the overthrow of dictator Said Barre in 1991, Somaliland declared itself independent for the second time, but now from its former union

partner, Somalia (Bryden 2004, p. 23). This was nothing more than a formal revoking of the act of union, but it was interpreted differently by international organizations (Jhazbhay 2003, p. 78). Especially the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the League of Arab States (LAS) opposed Somaliland's aspirations (Bryden 2004, p. 25). Having no choice, Somaliland started to rebuild itself without help from any other nation or organization. A modest economic and democratic development, with financial support from the Somaliland diaspora that fled the country during the civil war, eventually led to the establishment of a stable democratic society with fair elections and even a democratically approved constitution in 2011. At present, on the basis of its institutions and its respect to human rights, Somaliland should be able to call itself a righteous member of the nation of states (Jhazbay 2003, p. 80). However, to this day Somaliland is not recognized officially by any other nation. And so, fair or not, the Somaliland Republic is now often typified simultaneously as a 'break away' state, and as 'the African state that could' (Jhazbay 2003, p. 771 Poore, 2009). To better understand China's position in relation to Somaliland's secession, first the process of secession will be examined. Then, a closer look will be given to China's view on the case.

#### *4.1.2 China's attitude towards the secession*

During the war against Barre (1988-1991), the Isaaq Somali National Movement (SNM) had decided with the two southern fighting fronts, that the Somali Democratic Republic would remain unified under a federal system after Said Barre was overthrown (Bryden 2004, p. 22). However, when Barre's government collapse became a feasible prospect, Somaliland's clan elders and SNM senior officials, who had respected positions within Somaliland's traditional society, started to invoke all Somalilanders to end violence and mobilise support for an independent northern territory. Already in 1969, when the murder of Somalia's first president's was followed by a military coup, scepticism emerged amongst Somalilanders towards the viability of their union with Somalia. By 1990, this scepticism had further deteriorated because of Somaliland's ethnic underrepresentation in the political structure of the country, an unequal distribution of the country's revenue earned with livestock exports and national resources, and by the suffering of ethnic discrimination in the form of clan-based persecution and violence during the bombings on Somaliland's northern cities (Forti 2011, p 17). Many of the fighting Isaaq from the SNM believed that their fight was for the eventual independence of Somaliland. For them, the rulers in Mogadishu could bring nothing more than discrimination, oppression and genocidal violence (Bryden 2004, p. 24). So, when General Barre eventually fell, and months of deliberations in major conferences between different parties and segments of society followed to establish peace and a ceasefire, the northern separatist lobby was also present.

During the second of two major conferences, respectively in Borama and Bur'oo, in which a transitional administration for the northwestern regions of Somalia was to be discussed amongst traditional Somali leaders, mass demonstrations erupted throughout Isaaq regions. On May 18<sup>th</sup> 1991, one day after one of these demonstrations had even entered the building where the conference was held, the formal union between Somaliland and Somalia was entirely unexpectedly unilaterally revoked. The independence that Somaliland had previously enjoyed for five days in 1960 was now suddenly reinstated (Jhazbhay 2003, p. 79). Somalia's central government however was caught up in a war and so did not respond to the secession; in anticipation of this response, this also put international responses to the secession on hold, including China's. Moreover, Somaliland's unilateral declaration of independence did not fall under secession after colonial subjection, a reason for secession that China undoubtedly would have supported. Breaking up a self instigated union meant far more complex implications for the secession process. China had not signed the Friendly Relations Declaration in 1970 and did not support the International Court of Justice in many cases. In contrast with opinions of many other UN members, the right to self-determination did not fall under the umbrella of human rights in China's perception and would thus not be answered with political recognition (Zhu and Blachford 2005, p. 250). This is also leaving aside the missing internal recognition from Somalia's central government that would be necessary for external recognition in case China would have seen the right to self-determination as a human right for all peoples.

On a political level, Beijing therefore avoided direct comment on the status of Somaliland since its unilateral declaration of independence, stating that the issue was an internal affair of Somalia. And by this China showed its preferred approach to bilateral relations (Lanteigne 2012, p. 293; Zou 2005). In addition, China's diplomatic ties with Somalia's government in Mogadishu were already established decades before Somaliland's secession, meaning these ties functioned as China's bilateral starting point. Not recognizing Somaliland at the time was thus also an example of China's boundaries for its perceived responsibility in its foreign policy. Following its 'Five Principles of Coexistence', China would have to respect Somalia's territorial integrity and sovereignty, and would therefore not interfere with its domestic affairs, as it is expecting the same in return (Taylor 2006, p. 68).

In fact, China has nowadays become one of the important voices within the UN to seek attention for the increasingly chaotic situation in Somalia. With the international aid this has generated, China tries to help Somalia's central government to regain power within its country (Farley 2010).

### *4.1.3 China's involvement*

China's involvement in the Somali Republic, prior to Somaliland's unilateral declaration of independence in 1991 was very characteristic for its third-world foreign policies at the time. After Stalin's death, and Nikita Khrushchev's revisionist denunciation of Stalin's crimes in 1956, Mao chose to take a different and more independent path from then on. China started to support more socialist regimes in Africa, one of which was the new Somali' socialist regime. In the first few years after China had established relations with Somalia on December 14<sup>th</sup> 1960, its foreign policy towards Somalia –as for other African countries-was full of Maoist ideology. China needed support for the restoration of its seat within the United Nations and tried to spread its influence by distributing ideological ideas that had worked domestically. Somalia pursued a foreign policy of nonalignment at that time. Therefore, to avoid harming the relationship, China omitted Maoist reform ideas in subsequent bilateral dialogues (Somali Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.).

When Said Barre took power in 1969, China started to promote the idea of China as a leader of all developing nations. Having its own history of anti-colonial struggle and underdevelopment, and being an 'old civilisation' China had a more legitimate reason to cooperate with African countries than the west (Strauss 2009, p. 779). The relation with Somalia was reinforced by the fact that Said Barre's political philosophy was already inspired by 'Scientific socialism' during Soviet military trainings, which followed the ideas of Karl Marx. He mixed the implementation of this ideological thought with several typical Chinese reforms, such as the road-building and the re-education of his people. To improve bilateral relations, China started to provide economic assistance and aid in the form of non-military funding for various projects (Van Dijk 2009, p. 9; Shambaugh 2011). China's aid started to bear fruit, and as a formal reimbursement for its acquired aid, Somalia submitted a motion to the General Assembly of the UN for the restoration of China's seat in the UN and actively contributed to the needs of the PRC within the UN (Somali Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.). And as a result, China regained its seat in 1971.

The relations between China and Somalia in the 1970s can be partially described by how the Chinese media reported on an official state visit of Barre to China in Beijing on May 1972. During this visit, Premier Zhou Enlai spoke about the struggles against imperialism, colonialism, and neo-colonialism, and he mentioned the social progress that was growing throughout the world. Siad Barre spoke about the friendly relations between China and Somalia, and he thanked the Chinese government for the aid that was given to Somalia and China's support for the liberation movements in Africa and the rest of the third world (Peking Review, 1972, p. 4,5). China's involvement in Somalia during the decades of Siad Barre's rule seemed to be thriving,

and primarily symbolic and politically motivated.

In 1974, Somalia became the first African country to establish relations with the Soviet Union. In 1976 the Supreme Revolutionary Council transformed itself into the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party, which was a one-party government. However, after having just three years of peaceful relations with the Soviets, Said Barre made a great strategic mistake in 1977. He had thrown Somalia in an unsustainable conflict that was started by his nationalistic aim to secure the Ogaden plain in Ethiopia, a cherished aim in the pursuit of a 'Greater Somalia' of the Somali nationalist movement. However, Ethiopia had recently turned towards Marxism, and garnered support from the Soviets. According to Brind (1983: 76) it has been argued that the Soviet Union favoured Ethiopia for it was a better base to maintain power in the region. As a reaction of Barre's attack on Ethiopia, the Soviets cut their aid to Somalia and Barre's expansionist aspirations were answered by massive armed support to Ethiopia, by the Soviet Union and of Cuba (Mayall 1978, p. 336). Somalia then converted to the anti-Soviet camp, and ended the Treaty of Friendship with the Soviets a few months later. Now, Barre had hoped to gain US-support instead, but failed to comply with necessary prerequisites for aid. Due to the chaos of war, the lack of financial assistance and a following drought, a severe famine and subsequently more discontent towards Barre's government spread in the country.

In 1976, after Mao's death and the Gang of Four was arrested, Deng Xiaoping had started to lead China with a less ideological and more economic view. This clearly impacted its foreign policy, including its view on bilateral relations. Diplomatic relations would become less politically motivated and more focussed on development. Deng Xiaoping even had a less radical view on Sino-Soviet relations than Mao had had before. However, the Soviets were no longer leading China's taste of 'picking friends' and the multipolar world order was still considered a real scenario for the future. Especially after the Soviets' rejection of Somalia's regime, it seemed to become clear that China was pursuing ideology-free diplomacy and that it found trade relations and mutual development to be more important; China took over the aid projects that the Russians had left behind (Washington Post, 1978), and more official visits from China to Somalia followed.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, two 'Economic and Trade Agreements' were signed by the two countries in 1978 and in 1980 on 'Economic and Technological Cooperation' and 'Trade and Payment', respectively. China's exports to Somalia consisted mainly of light industrial products; textile;

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<sup>9</sup> Website: FOCAC, *Chinese Foreign Ministry*, 2006: First Vice President and Defense Minister Mohamed Ali Samater (May 1979), Foreign Minister Abdurahman Jama Barre (April 1979, December 1984), Second Vice President Hussein Kulmie Afrah (April 1982). Chinese leaders who visited Somalia: Premier Zhou Enlai, (February 1964, accompanied by Vice Premier Chen Yi), Vice Premier Chen Muhua (July, 1978), Vice Premier Geng Biao, (November 1978), Vice Foreign Minister He Ying (October 1979), and Yang Jingren, Vice Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (October 1984), President Li Xiannian (March, 1986).

medicine; hardware and small-sized machinery, and China's main imports from Somali were myrrh; frankincense; and leather. Several cultural exchanges and small-scale health care projects were arranged as well. And up until the civil war in 1990, China and Somalia even retained friendly military relations, which resulted in several military exchanges<sup>10</sup>. Due to the separatist situation in the north, and the various striding and coexisting warlords in central Somalia ruling the country after 1991, the Chinese embassy, its medical team and relevant experts left Somalia, for safety reasons. Despite the physical absence of Chinese officials, China still maintains diplomatic contact with Somalia (FOCAC, Chinese Foreign Ministry 2006).<sup>11</sup>

Online Aiddata, which tracks Chinese aid to Somalia through official media reports, showed that, in 2002, a commercial Chinese exploration ship arrived in Berbara, a northern city in Somaliland, to search the region for oil. The implementation and the present status of this project is however vague, with costs and profits unknown (Coastal Oil Exploration, 2002). Aiddata also showed that China has paid an unknown amount of Foreign Direct Investment to Somalia in 2002 as a means to voice interest in exploring oil fields in Mudug, the central province of Somalia, which lies south of Somaliland. The finding is backed by a report from a local news agency in Somalia, which states that Britain (BP) is now taking the lead in the bid (Mudugmedia 2012).

It is unclear whether China knew there was a possible presence of oil fields in Somalia, and whether that might have influenced its perceptions on its bilateral relations with Somalia. In addition, it is hard to say whether a Chinese oil corporation is commercial or government driven. Many indicators that have been discussed in the methods section have unfortunately been hard to find, due to the opaqueness of China-Somalia relations, and the lack of the registration of their trade exchanges. The Chinese Foreign Ministry website even states that most of the trade between China and Somalia was paid with cash transactions (FOCAC, Chinese Foreign Ministry 2006). However, what can be said about China-Somalia relations is that it has been mostly political and symbolic, especially around the time of Somaliland's secession.

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<sup>10</sup> Website: FOCAC, *Chinese Foreign Ministry*, 2006: Lieutenant General Mohamed Ali of Defense Minister of Somalia in May 1979, Major General Aden Abdullahi Nur in 1988, and Liu Kai, Assistant Chief of General Staff of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) in April 1980.

<sup>11</sup> For support of the statements with respect to Somalia's export products, no figures could be retrieved from the World Trade Organization, since Somalia is no member.

#### 4.1.4 *China's growing power*

Jhazbay (2003, p. 79) and Posner and Yoo (2006, p. 11) argue that Somaliland's problem lies mostly in its geographical size. It is simply too small to garner the right amount of attention to gain recognition from foreign countries and organizations. They argue that it is even not important enough for a foreign intervention. This might play a part in China's attitude towards the case. Kreuter (2010, p. 372) argues that secessionist movements in less influential nations must also gain the approval of a powerful nation in order to gain legitimacy. It thus depends on the will and the motives of one powerful nation to receive more attention and support. However, on May 18<sup>th</sup> 1991, when Somaliland declared its independency from Somalia, China was not seen as a big influential international power yet (Yan 2006, p. 6). In fact, when Somaliland unilaterally declared its independence, China's international status could have played a part in China's decision of not recognizing Somaliland and remain loyal to Somalia. Just two years earlier, China had been under great criticism for its violent military reaction to the student protests on Tiananmen Square. China clearly needed support from its existing diplomatic relations within multilateral organizations like the UNSC, the WTO and the IMF (Tull 2006, p. 467). As Somalia had previously helped to regain China's seat in the UN at the cost of Taiwan, China could not betray this relation for a new state that did not have a seat within the UN or any other international organization, setting aside that this would entirely be against China's foreign policy principles of sovereignty and non-interference. Currently, China still supports what is left of Somalia's central government, and has become a big advocate to Somalia's problems within the UNSC.

Moreover, in case of a security emergency, China also pays attention to the views of regional bodies before it takes a stance towards the case (Kerr and Xu 2014, p. 2). The relevant regional body in this case, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), predecessor of the African Union (AU), did not agree on Somaliland's new terms (Jhazbay 2003, p.75). The OAU was established in 1963 as the first supranational organization in Africa to promote the unity of African states by creating one African voice. Next to the coordination and intensification of cooperation between African states in order to raise living standards of Africans, the OAU was there to protect the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of its member states by settling arguments between member states with diplomacy and peaceful negotiations. Unfortunately, the OAU did not have the means or assets to protect its members' territories in an active manner when disagreement between member states would escalate. Because of this, the former colonial borders, despite their often ill-fated placements, became nonnegotiable for their risk of flaring more unrest (Murithi 2009, p. 91; Williams 2007). Not unexpectedly, the disagreement between the OAU and Somaliland arose over the question whether the official colonial boundaries were set



after the act of union between Somaliland and Somalia, or before. According to Somaliland, the country did not part from a pre-independence bond with the south, and therefore did not violate colonial boundaries, all the more since it was even recognized as an independent state in 1960 (Jhazbhay 2003, p. 79). However, as the organization was established three years after both Somaliland and Somalia gained their independence and had merged together, the OAU had no official record of it. The leadership of Somaliland had not explicitly expressed its desire to secede from Somalia yet when Somalia became a member of the OAU.

At the time, China's political relation with the OAU was not yet officially established. In fact, the African Union was admitted as a full member in the FOCAC in October 2011, yet only as an Observer (African Union, n.d.). However, around Somaliland's secession the organization - being the highest African multilateral organization- had the potential to become a very important actor for Africa, and indirectly also for China's political and economic relations with African member states. China would have put itself in a risky position if it had questioned the OAU's adjudication of the matter. Moreover, interfering with their agenda would resemble previous Western ways of cooperation, which did not rhyme with China's diplomacy of a separate and better non-conditional development model than the West had to offer (Strauss 2009, p. 780).

Bound by its own problems, it was not China that could have changed the international view on Somaliland at the time. The international powers that could have had this influence were constrained by the fact that Somaliland's secession process did not comply with international law. Moreover, most of the international attention (around the time of Somaliland's secession) that was directed towards the Horn of Africa was mainly focussing on the civil war; making Somaliland's case of secondary importance. A World Bank project support graph (Appendix 2) and an IMF balance (Appendix 3) show that all of the running aid projects were cancelled and put on hold when the civil war broke out; despite the relative peace in Somaliland, in which aid projects could have worked out as planned.

#### 4.1.5 Conclusion

The fact that China still supports Somalia's government -despite the fact that it is essentially a failed state- is in line with the fact that China tends not to support secession movements when the secession is not from a former colonial subjection. Furthermore, China supported the former Mogadishu-based government of Somalia since the 1970s, having stable bilateral relations. Somalia actively helped China to regain its seat within the UNSC, and in return China provided unconditional aid (Strauss 2009, p. 780). As the fall of Somalia's central government was the signal for Somaliland to declare itself independent, which made the secession a simple declaration of independence and not a bilateral one, recognizing it would mean undermining relations with Somalia (Kreuter 2010). China's 'Principles of Peaceful Coexistence' made this loyalty towards Somalia practically an obligation.

In addition, recognizing Somaliland could also have consequences for China's relations with other African countries or official government bodies. From an economic point of view, China had strong aspirations to intensify its political and economical relations with all African countries. An important way of doing this was by establishing a good relation with the OAU (Zhang 2014). As the OAU argued that Somaliland's secession was illegal, this could have influenced China's perception on the case. Maintaining a credible and steady foreign diplomacy was a part of that as Strauss (2009) explained.

At present, the chaos the country receded into since 1991 is eminent to the point that it prevents China amongst many others to take a stance on the future of Somalia and Somaliland (Lalos 2011). Therefore, the secessionist case of Somaliland has remained unresolved to this day. Although Somalia's interim government, the Somali Transitional National Government (TNG) expressed to have the same transitional democratic aspirations as Somaliland, but in August 2000 during a conference in Djibouti it became clear that it still fails to take on its duties or even influence the daily affairs of the country (Bryden 2004, p. 28). The TNG only has control in parts of Somalia's capital Mogadishu. Due to the chaos in the country, larger parts of Somalia are now ruled by clans, pirates and are host for terrorist organizations like Al-Shabaab, a fundamentalist Muslim terror group linked to Al-Qaeda (Kreuter 2010, p. 377). Even despite the fact that Somaliland meets all the requirements of international law to become an internationally recognized state and that it already has *de facto* control over its own territory for more than three decades independent of Somalia (Rich 2009, p. 162).

## 4.2 South Sudan

South Sudan is a landlocked state in the north east of Africa. Its current capital is Juba. It shares its borders with Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Congo and the Central African Republic. South Sudan has approximately 8 to 10 million inhabitants that form multiple ethnic groups: the Dinka, the Nuer, the Bari, and the Azande. Among these ethnic groups, the Dinka and the Nuer are the largest. After gaining independence from Sudan in 2011, South Sudan has become an internationally recognized country and has become a member of the United Nations and the African Union. While southern Sudan has a rich soil and favourable rainfall patterns, the South's historic and political marginalization has resulted in an underdeveloped of the natural resources industry (ISS working paper, 2005).



Source: <http://ultrarunnergirl.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/map.gif> [20 June 2014]

### *4.2.1 History*

The split of territory that Britain had instigated between Egypt and Sudan during their colonial rule (1899-1956) had provoked Egyptian nationalists who wanted the British to recognize a unified Islamic Egypt and Sudan. When Britain officially left Sudan in 1932, British military forces remained in place to protect Sudan for a potential nationalistic invasion from Egypt. Meanwhile, during colonial rule, large differences emerged between the north and the south of Sudan. And so, shortly before Sudan's independence in 1956, a civil war between the north and the south broke out. The new northern government pursued one single Sudanese nation where it had not existed before. During their colonial rule, the Brits had sent Christian missionaries to the south, Anglicising most of the education. Sudan's north remained mostly Muslim and spoke Arabic so the country was divided on the basis of ethnicity, language and religion (Christopher 2011, p. 127). Programs to unify the country through 'Arabisation' or 'Islamicisation' caused a southern reaction for the preservation of their identity. During this civil war, over two million people died and many others fled to neighbouring countries. Relative peace only emerged after the Addis Ababa Agreement (AAA) in 1972. This agreement granted the south regional autonomy for the first time (Salman, 2011, p. 155).

However, when president Nimeiri imposed Shari' a law over the south for a second time, and massively violated human laws and breached the Addis Ababa Agreement in several ways, the second civil war erupted in 1983 (Christopher 2011, p. 127). The South responded with the foundation of the Sudan People's Liberation Army / Movement (SPLA/SPLM), led by John Garang De Mabiorm, they fought for a united, but democratic secular Sudan where all would benefit from future socio-economic development (Hutchinson 2001, p. 307). Second in command was Salva Kiir, who was more in favour of a south Sudanese secession (Jooma, 2005). In 1989, the National Islamic Front (NIF) of Omar al-Bashir gained power in Khartoum, but found no other foreign sponsor due to America's containment policy and international sanctions against its repressive behaviour. China saw in Sudan a country full of business opportunities and a future oil reserve. Among many other factors, this state of affairs would contribute to China's role in later developments of the Sudanese conflict (Large 2009, p. 611).

#### 4.2.2 *China's attitude towards the secession*

In the decade before South Sudan's declaration of independence, China had shown a strong stance against secessionism twice. In 2005 China adopted a rare domestic Anti-Secession law, which meant for Taiwan that its separatist notions not only politically but also legally conflicted with Beijing's view on the island (Zou 2005). And in 2009, only a few years before the official referendum was held for South Sudan's independence, China had made a strong stance against the secession of Kosovo from Serbia, by taking its arguments to the International Court of Justice<sup>12</sup> (ICJ). Many state that China's anti-secession view was more explainable by China's perceived threat of its domestic secessionist cases, than its stance towards the importance of domestic non-interference in general (Alden 2007). Enforcing this assumption was China's quick shut down of all discussions applying Kosovo's secession to Tibet, Xinjiang or Taiwan (Jamar and Vigness 2010, p. 919).

However, next to explaining its stance against the former adopted right of self-determination for all people, China's official counterarguments in the case of Kosovo particularly articulated its stance against domestic interference (Vidmar 2012, p.544). With Resolution 1244, which China had objected in the UNSC, the UN had legitimized an interim government and a NATO intervention in Kosovo, which would later facilitate Kosovo's independence. China's main concern was this military intervention and that the former resolution between Yugoslavia and Kosovo had purely envisioned the UNSC's support in a fair political process; and not taking the lead in relation to the process' outcome or the future status of Kosovo as a sovereign nation. Moreover, China also denoted that the legal status of Kosovo's secession was actually illegal by international law, since Serbia and Yugoslavia, being the parent states, did not agree with the unilateral declaration of independence and a secession would mean a violation of its territorial integrity. Furthermore, China argued that "remedial self-determination" like the secession of Kosovo, should not be an exception to this principle (ICJ Advisory Opinion 2009, CR 29). As both Kosovo and South Sudan were under foreign supervision and gained independence from their parent state (and not from a former colonial state) through 'remedial self-determination', following expectations, China should have made its arguments against Kosovo's case count for South Sudan's secession in 2011.

However, South Sudan's secession process also differed from Kosovo's secession in many ways. Negotiations between the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) and the Central Government of the Republic of Sudan (GoS) had started to gain ground, after the Inter

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<sup>12</sup> Public sitting on Resolution 1244: *'the Accordance with International Law of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo'*, 7 Decembre 2009, Ambassador Xue Hanqin

Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) had stepped up as a mediator in 1994. The IGAD is an international organization for economic cooperation consisting out of delegations of neighbouring East African countries<sup>13</sup> (Jooma, 2005). It would mediate the negotiations until the implementation of the final CPA together with the US, Norway and the UK as observer states. The first basic agreements were signed in 2002 in Machakos, Kenya (Johnson 2008, p. 8). Both parties were aware of the lengthiness and the casualties of the war and signed the Machakos Protocol after one-and-a-half month of negotiations on the terms, the transition process and even the right to self-determination of the south.

The agreed principles comprised the right for the Southern Sudanese to control and govern affairs in their region, and equal participation in the National Government, the right to self-determination through a referendum determining South Sudan's future status at the end of the interim period, and further cooperation on: a fair democratic system that would serve the needs of its people in terms of social, political and economic justice; negotiations and implementation of a ceasefire to end the suffering of the Sudanese people; a development plan to address the needs of the Sudanese people; and a design to make the unification an attractive prospect for the southern Sudanese. The transition process was formulated as a six months pre-interim period in which the institutions, the mechanisms, the monitoring and international assistance would be established to make the Peace Agreement and the referendum at the end of the interim-period possible. Next to that, agreements on freedom of religion, customs and beliefs and on the new infrastructure of the government were signed. Lastly, the structure for the referendum, the pre-transition period and the relevant monitoring actors involved were agreed upon as well (*Machakos Protocol* (CPA) 2005).

Further following important protocols for the CPA, related to 'security arrangements'; 'wealth-sharing'; 'power-sharing'; and resolutions on several conflict areas were signed in 2003 and 2004 (Comprehensive Peace Agreement 2005). The oil infrastructure of pipelines, refineries, and export facilities were all located in the north of Sudan, and so extensive negotiations – interrupted more than once over disagreements- for the CPA were directed towards this problem. Both regions namely heavily relied on this source of income (United Nations Mission in Sudan, n.d.). Eventually, in January 2005 the Interim National Constitution of the Republic of Sudan contained the main clauses of the CPA, such as the governance principles and institutions that would set in during the following 6-year interim period (Salman 2011, p. 154). One could say that the nature of relations between the two parties was thus simultaneously hostile, yet cooperative, constructing domestic law in the interest of future peace in case of a future secession. In addition, the CPA implied internal recognition when South Sudan would secede, since northern Sudan

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<sup>13</sup> IGAD Member States: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda (and currently also: South Sudan).

agreed on the prerequisites of the secession. Recognizing South Sudan would thus practically not interfere with Sudan's affairs, since Sudan *ex ante* had agreed with a possible secession.

Before the agreements of the CPA came in force in 2005, a South Sudanese delegation led by Salva Kiir paid a visit to Beijing to discuss future economic opportunities.<sup>14</sup> A friendship agreement was signed soon after. In 2008, a Chinese consulate even opened its doors in Juba (Salman, 2011: 155, 156; Large 2009). From China's perspective, this was still on the basis of non-interference since the government of Sudan (GoS) and South Sudan had agreed upon this new division of territory. This could be explained by the fact that the southern SPLM was legally incorporated in the northern Government of National Unity as was agreed upon in the CPA. Because of this, it was politically and legally possible for Beijing to establish a direct relation with Juba as well. Since it thus already had an indirect relation with the SPLM. Large (2009, p. 621) typifies China's approach to Sudan around that time as 'one Sudan, two systems', hinting to China's domestic governing structure with respect to Taiwan.

Moreover, South Sudan would eventually not secede with help of any external military force or as a result of an externally imposed idea, like the UN had done in Kosovo's case. The secession and recognition of South Sudan therefore was perceived as a lesser threat to China's domestic status quo. The secession process included a mutual agreement, which in China's case would never be reached. And, the secession process was less insinuating to any potential chance of foreign intervention in China.

When the CPA was signed in July 2005, it was clear that South Sudan, presenting multiple ethnic groups, did not have one uniform society. Several struggles continued despite the ceasefire. However, the results of the national elections in 2010 showed a clear split between the north and the south. 71,1% of the Sudanese voted for the northern National Assembly, whereas 22,0% voted for the Southern Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), the political branch of the SPLA in the south. Since these results almost exactly matched the relative demographics of both regions, now two one-party states had emerged and the secession of South Sudan became a serious prospect. Under the supervision of the UN and the African Union, the final referendum was held in January 2011. With a legally binding required minimum of 60 percent voting for the secession, 99,57 percent of the southern Sudanese and 98,55 percent of Sudanese abroad voted for independence (Jooma 2005). This showed that a unified Sudan had not become a more attractive status after 2005 for the southern Sudanese. After South Sudan's actual secession in July 2011 as was agreed upon in the CPA, the Republic of Sudan officially announced its recognition of South Sudan on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July 2011 (Reuters 2011).

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<sup>14</sup> John Garang de Mabior, former leader of the SPLM, had suddenly died in a plane crash weeks after the CPA came in force. Salva Kiir was now taking his role.

During the six years in which the CPA was in force, China stabilized its contact with the SPLM with incremental steps of gaining trust, since it formerly had supported South Sudan's enemy during the war (Large 2008; Large 2012). Therefore, within a few days of South Sudan's successful unilateral declaration of independence from Sudan, China's foreign minister officially gave a diplomatic approval for the birth of the new state. In the Sudan Tribune of July 10<sup>th</sup> 2011, the official statement with respect to China's recognition of South Sudan by Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi was as follows: *"The Government of the People's Republic of China announces its recognition of South Sudan, and from now on with the establishment of diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level. China is ready on the basis of peaceful coexistence, with the development of friendly relations and cooperation in all areas of South Sudan."*

### 4.2.3 China's involvement

Diplomatic ties between the PRC and Sudan were established in 1959, three years after Sudan's independence from Britain. At the time, the PRC needed new connections to gain more international support and recognition. Like many other new political relations initiated in Africa, China's diplomatic glue mostly promoted a common history of suffering under colonialism, and related on a manipulated story about the origin of interstate links. China-Sudan relations allegedly were going back to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the British General Charles 'Chinese' Gordon who played a great part in the repression of the Taiping rebellion<sup>15</sup>, was murdered by a Sudanese man during his time as governor of Sudan (Strauss 2009, p. 784). In 1964, relations were consolidated during Zhou Enlai's first big tour to Africa. During his visit to Sudan he propagated China's fraternity on the basis of colonial history, and their willingness to help overcome this history, politically and economically (Strauss 2009, p. 783, 784). Bilateral ties however remained mostly symbolic and low-level. The principles of non-interference and sovereignty kept China neutral towards the civil war that had broken out, even before the establishment of the relation with the northern government of the war-torn country.

Relations got more serious after Sudanese president Gaafar Nimeiri visited China in 1970. After this visit, China provided Sudan with its first non-conditional and interest-free loan. China also financed the building of the Friendship Hall in Khartoum, which is still a major landmark today, and sent their first foreign medical team to Sudan. In return, Sudan could repay its loan

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<sup>15</sup> Mao Zedong glorified the Taping rebels against early examples of heroic resistance against a corrupt feudal system. The imperial yellow jacket that was given to Gordon for his services by the Qing emperor, now hangs in the Khalifa museum (Sudan) and is still used as a standard stop for Chinese delegations that visit Sudan to this day.



with crops and started exporting cotton to China. After a failed coup against the Sudanese president Nimeiri by Sudanese army officers that had close ties with the pro-Soviet Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) in 1971, Sudan-China relations became even closer. China benefited from the blame that was put on the USSR and provided Sudan with a second interest-free loan and offered to take over the training and equipment of Sudanese armed forces, which was the former responsibility of the USSR (Shinn and Eisenmann, p. 251).

After the Addis Ababa Agreement (AAA) led to peace in 1972, Western oil companies Shell and Chevron were the first to profit from anti-Soviet sentiment in the government, and began their first oil drillings in the Red Sea. Two years after the first oil was discovered in the Bentiu region in 1978, president Nimeiri divided the South into three separate regions, creating a new state in the South where the oil was found, called Unity State. However on the map attached to the decisive bill, the Unity state was now part of northern Sudan. This caused commotion amongst southerners. Subsequent oil discoveries in the region made the power struggle over the south and the oil regions more aggressive. Earnings from future oil extraction in the south would benefit the central government directly. The central government namely initiated development of oil refineries in the North and not in the South where the oil was found, and the oil-export through the northern harbour Port Sudan generated a 'division of labour' between the north and the south. Due to the establishment of this new oil infrastructure (Figure 2), the north would benefit in a highly unequal manner compared to the South. As a reply, the SPLM/A started to attack oil installations and (mostly Western) oil companies that were assumed to be working with the central government in Khartoum (Jooma 2005, p. 11). This continued during the second civil war, which broke out in 1983.

The traditional political China-Sudan relation became more strategic after 1989. Around the same time, the National Islamic Front (NIF) of al-Bashir seized power in Sudan. This new Sudanese government faced much adversity and outside critic as it was violating human rights in a still ongoing and brutal civil war.<sup>16</sup> Al-Bashir therefore turned to China for financial assistance. After he had suggested China to develop Sudan's petroleum reserves, China's oil investments started to rise as well as Sudan's oil exports (Figure 2). In addition to investing \$6 billion in the oil sector, China provided more soft loans for hydroelectric power stations, agricultural schemes, dam constructions, and infrastructure projects (Jooma 2005, p. 12). Soon, operations for the first pipeline towards Port Sudan followed by the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC). After the pipeline was finished in 1999 and went in operation by the CNPC, who was also 40%

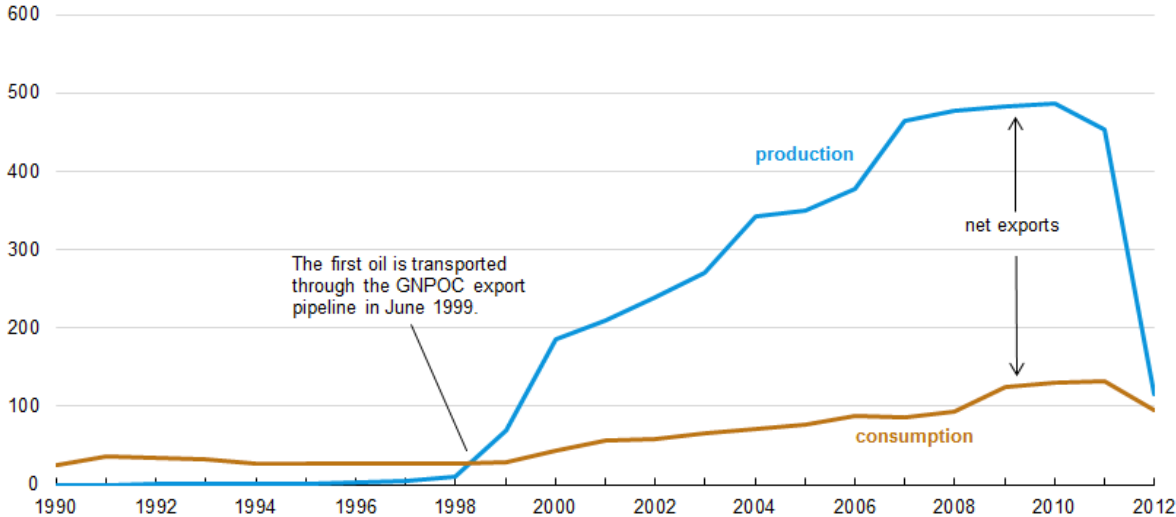
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<sup>16</sup> In the 1990s, amongst many other oil corporations, Chevron suspended its Sudanese operations after the abduction and killings of some of its expat workers, due to the conflict situation between the SPLM/A and the central government of al-Bashir. And after Sudan failed to pay the World Bank for loans and special sanctions were in force against Sudan, U.S. companies were no longer allowed to invest in Sudanese oil after 1997.

stakeholder (Appendix 4), the first oil shipments could leave Port Sudan. This resulted into China becoming Sudan’s most important oil importer.

However, China also exported a fair share of goods to Sudan in return (Appendix 4), among which small arms (Figure 3). China’s maintenance of principles of non-interference and sovereignty received much pressure, for it was dealing these arms to the National Islamic Front (NIF), which was at war with the SPLA (Large 2009, p. 611). China initially denied and later argued, it was only one of the actors that were giving the NIF active military support despite an UN embargo<sup>17</sup>. When the UNSC finally condemned Sudan giving its central government a month to retreat its militias in 2004, a measure for which China abstained from voting due to its strong bilateral relation, Sudan’s central government did not respond (Straus 2005, p. 124-126).

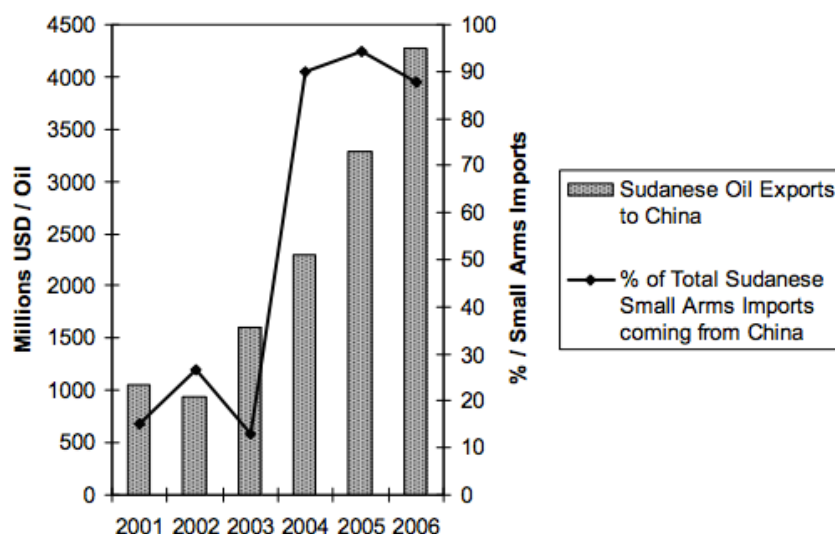
**Figure 2.** Crude oil production and consumption in Sudan and South Sudan, 1990-2012 (1000 b/d)



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Available from: <  
<http://www.eia.gov/countries/analysisbriefs/Sudan/sudan.pdf>> [6 June 2014]

<sup>17</sup> Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Arms transfers to Sudan: (1997-2010): Russia (\$751m); China (\$210m); Belarus (\$118m); Iran (\$44m); Poland (\$12m); Ukraine (\$7m).

**Figure 3.** *Sudanese oil for Chinese Small Arms*



Source: Human Rights First, Available from: < <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/080311-cah-arms-sales-fact-sheet.pdf> > [7 June 2014]

However, during the negotiations between the north and the south that eventually led to the CPA, a war broke out in Sudan’s western Darfur region in 2003. Locally, an ethnic conflict over resources had evolved since the 1980s between ethnic Africans and ethnic Arabs. Due to the fact that the fighting parties in Darfur were never represented in peace talks, which were held between the north and the south around that time, the government in Khartoum quickly responded to the violence by arming the Arab tribes to eliminate the rebellion. The original fight against two rebellion groups<sup>18</sup> led to uncontrolled killings of black “Africans” from three tribes. When the war in Darfur still continued when the ceasefire of the CPA came in force, the international community, especially the US, hesitated to call the violence genocidal, as it would not be able to fulfil its moral plight to military interference. This gave more leeway for violence. However, due to the fact that 90 percent of the light weapons used in Darfur were traced back to China, the international community started to exert pressure on China to stop its weapons trade and to pressure al-Bashir to stop the violence. With the Beijing Olympic Games in sight, China increasingly complied and started to encourage the GoS to curb its militias and to accept the presence of a hybrid African Union-UN peacekeeping mission in Darfur in 2006 (Attree 2012, p. 18; Human Rights First, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Rebellion groups: ‘the Sudan Liberation Army’ & ‘Justice and Equality Movement’.

At first sight this change of behaviour would not be relevant for this case study, focussing on the secession process of South Sudan. However, when the CPA came in force in 2005, and China established relations with the GoSS, CNPC was the main economic actor for the oil exploitation in the South. When the first oil fields were discovered in southern Sudan, China had invested heavily in the oil extraction development, including the financing of the pipelines towards the northern harbour Port Sudan (Appendix 5). Since 75 Percent of the Sudanese oil reserves were located in the south, providing an estimated 95% of the total income of the Government of South Sudan (GoSS), China's investments would largely be under GoSS' control after a future secession. With this insight, peace between the North and the South would contribute to the safety of China's oil extraction companies. China therefore started to mediate negotiations between the north and the south, as it urged both parties to "adhere to peace and to restrain themselves" (Attree 2012, p. 18), simultaneously, soothing both relations with increasing aid assistance (Appendix 6).

When South Sudan's independence neared in 2010, the GoSS still explicitly pointed out, that if China wanted to hold its oil assets in the south it would have to recognise the outcome of the future referendum on South Sudan's secession in case of a decision for independence (Attree 2012: 17). South Sudan had never trusted China, as it was seen as Khartoum's ally for its arm trade during the war. Clearly, this distrust had not entirely healed, despite the establishment of formal relations. Attree (2012) argues that this was an important reason for China to be one of the first to recognize the new country in 2011. However, looking at China's prior friendly stance towards the GoSS, and China's pressure on the GoS during the negotiations and Darfur, this demand would probably not have been necessary if China would not have had its formal stance against the Friendly Relations Declaration in the first place.

#### *4.2.4 China's growing power*

After an accidental air raid on the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade during the NATO intervention in Kosovo, China and Russia made a pact in 1996 to support each other against future unipolar US and NATO aggression. From a military viewpoint, both countries considered the NATO attack to be an aggressive act against sovereign Yugoslavia outside NATO's area, and not a legitimate NATO intervention, as it was not backed by China and Russia in the UNSC. In addition, both countries agreed that the NATO attack was asymmetrical in terms of military strength and that this war was therefore a dangerous precedent for the future; even more so, since both countries expected more ethnic and regional conflicts on their own territory in the future. Therefore, as its military power was inferior to that of the US, China's military leadership started to review and

increase its defence budget (Yoshiaki and Katsuhiko 2002, p. 1-4). This increase generated Western perceptions on China as a future threat to the international world order. Nurturing this threat was the fact that after 2005 the US and China got into a race for oil (Zhao 2008, p. 97) (Appendix 7). And, that China was trading arms to el-Bashir. Supporting an unpopular regime and selling it weapons was a controversial move. According to Alden and Hughes (2009, p. 568), China always wanted to maintain a low-profile role in Sudan's case. It is at least remarkable that even prior to the international notion of China being a world power, Zhao Ziyang's Africa tour in the 1980s, and Jiang Zemin's tour in the mid-1990s did not pay a visit to Sudan. It is unclear whether this was due to the risky situation in Sudan, or China's awareness of its own reputation.

However, as China accomplished so much in terms of its domestic economic reforms in the last few decades, Western countries increasingly expected that China assumed more international responsibilities, like Western countries with similar power statuses did (Yan 2006, p. 7). Western negative judgements on China's lack of taking responsibility could have been due to overestimating China's power at the time, but it is hard to argue that China could not foresee foreign criticism on its arm deals with the government in Khartoum during the Sudanese civil war. Along many other sceptics, Alden and Hughes (2009) argue that China's subsequent diplomatic claims to contribute to a harmonious world are doubtful. It was a consequence of China's growing need for oil resources and its clinging on to its principles of non-interference and state sovereignty while investing in a relation with a suppressive regime, were the region that China had gotten caught up as one of the eventual crucial actors for the solution of the Sudan's civil war.

When it became clear for China that it had to cooperate with two conflicting actors after the CPA came into force, it increasingly urged the SPLM and the GoS to adhere to the peace option (Carlson 2011). As China was the only international actor that had good relations with al-Bashir -although under increasing pressure, China took on a mediating role in line with the African Union and the UN Security Council, cooperating with the international community (Attree 2012, p. 18; Large 2009, Large 2012). Although the conflict in Darfur continued until a ceasefire in 2010, China increasingly played an important part in pushing el-Bashir to comply with Western demands with respect to the situation in Darfur. Two external factors have contributed to this change in behaviour. Firstly, international pressure on China had pushed it towards a more active stance in the security situation. As Sudan's foremost oil importer since 1995, China was required to take more responsibility especially in case of Darfur where China's weapons were used against civilians. This escalated to the point where the international community threatened to boycott China's Olympics in 2008.

Secondly, following Zhang's (2014) argument that China laid importance on the opinion

of local governing organs before it took its own position, the African Union might also have had an influence on China through its own call to end the violence in Darfur. African Union-China relations were naturally of strategic importance for China's economic interest. In 2002, the African Union had adopted the principle of 'non-indifference' in the African Union's Constitutive Act (Williams 2007, p. 254). The Chair of African Union Commission directly invoked this principle when the deployment of peacekeeping troops in Darfur began, after China's encouragements to el-Bashir (Strauss 2009, p. 794).

#### *4.2.5 Conclusion*

Initially, China-Sudan relations developed from a state-to-state engagement into a state-supported economic engagement operating in public, while following the basic guiding principles for its foreign relations. The closeness of the relation with the government in Khartoum was a direct result of China's need for more foreign oil sources and the American-led containment policy, which comprised international sanctions against Khartoum (Large 2009, p. 615). However, we can argue that after the CPA, China breached its principle of sovereignty to a certain extent, even if this was consistent with a political arrangement (Carlson 2011). China also broke with its principle of non-interference by pushing both parties into negotiations. However, China's recognition of South Sudan was due to simultaneous internal and external pressures. Internally, China had to recognize South Sudan to secure its oil investments, which were mostly located in the south and were produced by over a decade of economic engagement. This was such a large percentage of China's total oil imports that China had to interfere when the North failed to contain the situation, putting China's oil workers in increasing danger (Large 2009). Peace would thus also benefit China due to its investments in the border transcending oil infrastructure, which had been under fire multiple times. However, China's official recognition came after South Sudan's threat to ban China's oil companies if China would not recognize the country.

The external pressure on China to contribute to the peace came from different directions. China came under pressure from the West due to its arms trade with Khartoum and its unique relationship with Khartoum. With the Beijing Olympics in sight, the West had important new leverage. In addition, the African Union –an important organization for China- also wanted to stop the violence in Darfur.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Both South Sudan and Somaliland have a colonial pedigree related to the former British Empire, pursued former colonial borders after suppression from their central governments, and both their parent states had good diplomatic relations with China since the 1960s. Their unilateral declarations of secession from their non-colonial parent states, Somalia and Sudan, respectively, however received very different response from China. As was first hypothesized, China's stance towards the Friendly Relations Declaration of the UN Charter would have an influence on China's stance towards secessionism; as self-determination is the first step towards secession (Hechter 1992). China's statements against the UN Charter indeed largely justified China's reaction towards the Somaliland secession, as it was no secession after colonial subjection. Moreover, at the time China had just received international criticism due to its repressive response to domestic uprisings. Then again, China's domestic separatist groups in Xinjiang and Tibet, and the secessionist government in Taiwan are still present to this day, which have possibly made China's stance towards secessionism, even foreign, even more sensitive (Zhu and Blachford 2005). Therefore, China's recognition of South Sudan is contradictory, as the secessionist territory was just as valid as Somaliland's secession relative to the content of the UN Charter, and it can therefore not be explained by China's stance towards the Charter.

Self-determination is however not enough for a new state to function within the international arena. New states often need aid or assistance to built up their country, which will only be provided when being perceived as a member of concerning international organizations like the UN (Kreuter 2010). *External recognition*, a necessary prerequisite to be seen as a legal state, is according to international law only legal after *internal recognition*. China's approach to this law has always been very strict due to its principles of sovereignty and non-interference in other state's affairs. The 'five principles of co-existence' worked as a mutual and reciprocal understanding, and recognizing a secessionist state would undermine these principles. Moreover, as both countries have had very good relations with China, having helped China in its pursuit to regain its seat in the UN and with the support of the 'one China' principle, China's recognition of Somaliland and South Sudan would undermine these supportive relations. On that account, internal recognition of the host state was thus a necessary prerequisite for China to consider granting its recognition.

Alden (2009, p. 564) however argued that China's "new type of strategic partnership with Africa", illustrates how China's state-centric principles of foreign policy are adaptive in comparison to its internal policies with respect to sovereignty and secessionism. This might be backed by China's recognition of South Sudan. Why China abandoned these principles during its

close relations with Sudan's central government in Khartoum, could be explained by the fact that the deliberations between el-Bashir as head of the National Congress Party and John Garang as leader of the SPLM had generated a mutual agreement for the structure of the CPA. As this agreement entailed the possibility of secession after a trial period in which the north would get the chance to make unification attractive, the odds were higher that an eventual secession would be internally recognized, and thus would become 'authorized' under international law (Vidmar 2012, p. 545). This would make the future recognition of a sovereign South Sudan a lesser breach with China's relation with Sudan and therewith China's own principles of sovereignty and non-interference. However, the ambivalence of China's political role in Sudan is illustrated on the one hand by the height of its aid, which China had to put in to maintain good relations with both parties during the CPA. On the other hand, China's (still) ongoing arms trade with both the GoS and the GoSS thus is in complete contradiction to the aforementioned.

In Somaliland, deliberations on independence between different parties occurred before its declaration of independence, but without relevant actors from the central government in Mogadishu. The government had become completely absent after Barre's fall, even to this day. Moreover, no proper assessment was made prior to the declaration of Somalilands' independence on the time, the scope, the depth and the durability of the separatist sentiment. Differently put, neither an official referendum, nor a preceding trial-coexistence period was held to assess the internal legitimacy of the declaration. The support for the secession came primarily from the Isaaq clan, who were the majority of the population in Somaliland. Representatives of other clans, the few of whom were present during the conference in Bur'o and who actually did formally support the declaration, later claimed they only did so in order to keep the peace (Bryden 2004, p.24). Comparing the two secession processes thus showed how the principles of China's foreign policy differently applied and therefore differently affected China's eventual decision to recognize South Sudan and not Somaliland.

According to Shambaugh (2011) the People's Liberation Army has an increasing influence in China's foreign policy. This has made China less passive when it comes to its own interests and more willing to make risks in its pursuit. The third expected reason for China's different reactions to both cases, which may have been due to the different timings of both secessions, was China's political and economical involvement with the host state and the secession state prior to and during the secession. As became clear from the case study, China's relations with the Somalia and Sudan were both typically politically motivated from the beginning. As Somalia's underdevelopment was also reflected in the development of its national resource extraction, China's motivation to cooperate with Somalia was not based on potential and lucrative future oil contracts. It was only in 2002 when first signs of China's interest in potential



oil reservoirs on Somalia's territory became clear (Aiddata, n.d.). Until now, Somalia's main export product has always been livestock, a very low priority product on China's import list. However, Somalia was an important supportive actor for China in the regaining of its membership and seat in the United Nations. This had boosted the bilateral relation with diplomatic positivity in terms of mutual benefit and mutual development.

Despite the instability in the country, China's involvement in Sudan became much more intense and strategic in both political and economical ways, due to its economical initiatives in the 1990s and its increasing demand for oil (Zhao 2008). China's major oil State Owned Enterprises, particularly the CNPC, were largely responsible for setting up the oil infrastructure through which large amounts of oil would later be transported from the south to the north of Sudan. This led to China's unique relation with Khartoum. However, when the SPLM started to attack China's oil installations, because its government supported their opponent, China increasingly started to breach with its principles of sovereignty and non-interference (Carlson 2011). It took up a mediating role, stimulating both parties to negotiate and pursue peace and stability.

China played a very different part in both secessions as became clear by prior described circumstances, which may also be partially due to the different time periods in which these secessions have occurred. A gap of 20 years separates both secessions; a time in which China's global power has increased due to its fast economic development and its high expenditure on defence. The final expectation of this case study was that China's growing power also influenced its stance towards secessionism. A growing power would namely imply a lesser threat or lower pressure from the West on China's domestic cases of secession. Meanwhile, due to China's growing power, Western criticism on China's secessionist cases morphed into a discussion on human rights to establish a normative dialogue at least.

China's recognition of South Sudan was still under internal and external pressure. Internally, peace would contribute to a more efficient and safer oil trade. In addition, as has become clear, South Sudan still had to put pressure on China using China's oil installations in the south as a leverage, as it did not trust China even after the CPA came in force and friendly relations were established. Were it not for the previous ongoing violence between the two parties that instigated international pressure for peace, and which became a danger for China's oil interests, then South Sudan's secession would have been more similar to China's secessionist regions at home. Aside from this, China's recognition of South Sudan's secession also put less pressure on the Chinese government with respect to secession movements in Xinjiang, Tibet or Taiwan, since no mutual agreement with the host state would be possible in their cases. However, this approach oddly enough supports the will to fight of the more extreme separatist Uyghurs. External pressure for China's involvement in South Sudan's secession process was based on the

fact that China was the only foreign relation that could actually influence el-Bashir, and so within the UNSC China was pushed to step up as a mediator.

According to Large (2009, p. 626) China's behaviour in Sudan is the most controversial relation in China's recent rise in Africa. It is therefore harder to argue that the conclusions of this case study can contribute to further expectations in other African countries with respect to China's possibly changing stance towards secessionism as well as for previous cases like Somaliland. Based on the previous findings, it is plausible to state that China's economic interests are becoming more important than its principles of sovereignty and non-interference, although China may try to hold on to them for as long as possible. However, in that respect, Somaliland simply could not have enjoyed that advantage at the time, natural resources were not yet discovered and China was no world power yet, which have made a difference since (Appendix 8). The fact that no official trade data was available for China's trade with Somalia before and during Somaliland's secession, made the comparison even more difficult. However, clear is that China had no oil interests in the country at the time, and that may well have been the crucial difference between the two cases. For a more consistent support of this assumption, more comparative research must be done on other separatist movements in other African countries with relations to China. However, taking the prior case study into account, China's growing power might generate an even smaller chance that a secessionist case will be recognized by China in the future.

On the other hand, as Kerr and Xu (2005) argue, changes in China's foreign policy might still occur specifically with respect to security situations. According to Wheeler (2002) China's support in the UN has been strong in cases with violations of human rights in external conflicts with a more international character, thus only when the conflict is not a domestic affair of a state. China's position in the case of Darfur fairly illustrates this. China might thus be changing into a more stable, responsible international actor in a different way by providing more personnel to UN peacekeeper organizations in Darfur and South Sudan, although it still prefers peaceful negotiations to interventions (Large 2009). There are signs that China is working on improvements in the field of human rights (Xinhua, 2013), and that it is increasingly breaching with the principle of non-interference. During the writing of this thesis, news got out through various unofficial media reports that China is going to send 850 extra UN peacekeepers to South Sudan in an effort to contain the civil war that started last December. This is an intervention, as the first of its kind in terms of its magnitude. This might again only be for the protection of China's interests in the country, but which is still the same as taking more responsibility in security situations.

At present-day China still lacks a diplomatic strategy for its African relations, as its rhetoric through the years has not changed much. However, as the content of bilateral relations has changed with respect to growing bilateral interests, this strategy might be wise to develop (Strauss 2009, p. 793). The assumption that the OAU's opinion about Somaliland's secession, as well as the AU's 'non-indifference' principle with respect to the Darfur crisis influenced China's further reaction to the secessionist states, seems fairly grounded when looking at the present. The FOCAC, to which the AU is a member, has become an increasingly important institution for economic engagements. And in January 2013, China finished the building of the new \$200 million AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, as a 'gift to Africa' (UN Africa Renewal 2013). Due to the influence of the AU and its growing economic interests, China's view of its international responsibility might therefore still change.

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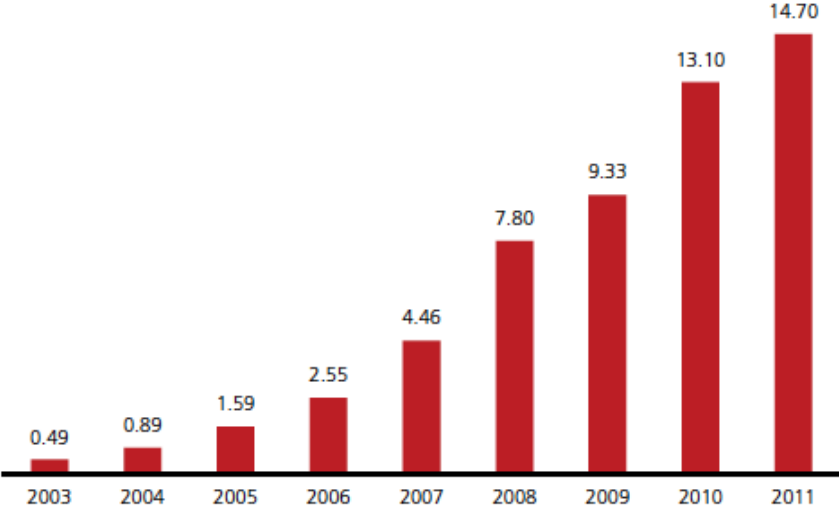
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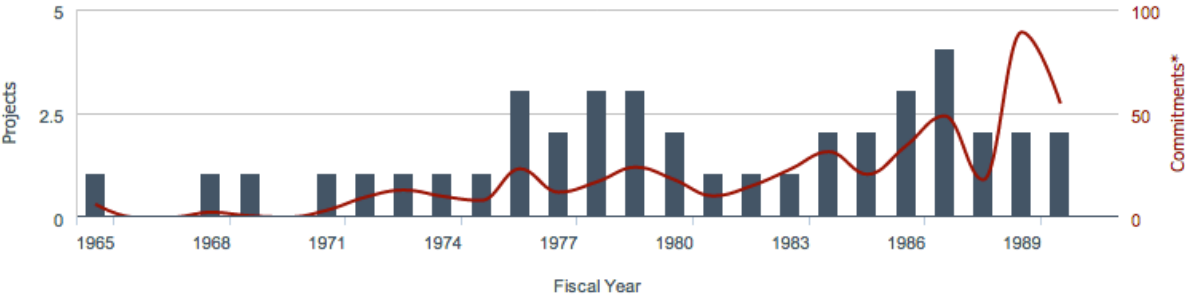


**Appendix 1. China’s investments in Africa 2003-2011 (billion USD)**



Source: Zhang 2012, Chinese Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM).

**Appendix 2. World Bank Project Support Somalia 1965-1990.**



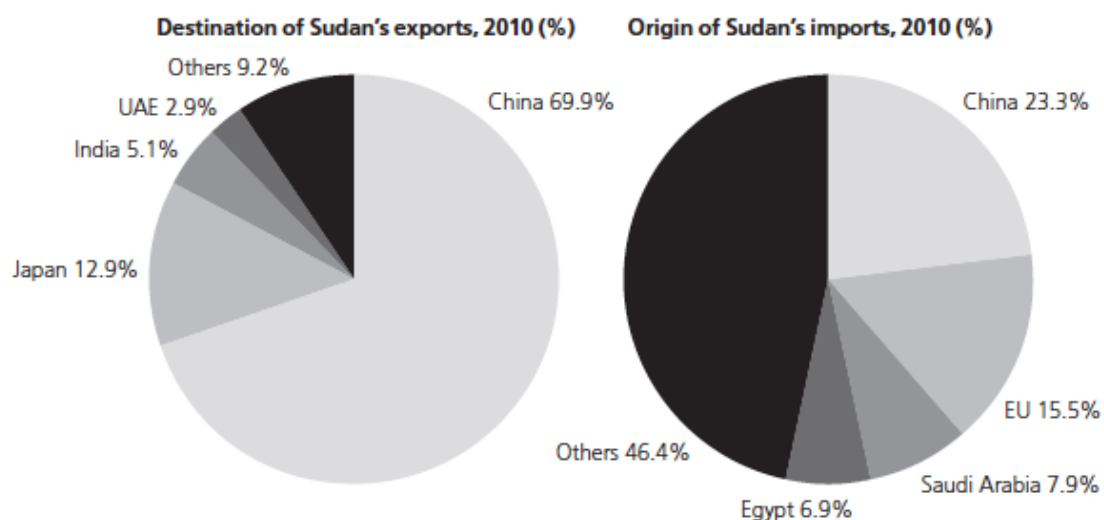
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### Appendix 3. Latest Financial Arrangements of IMF with Somalia

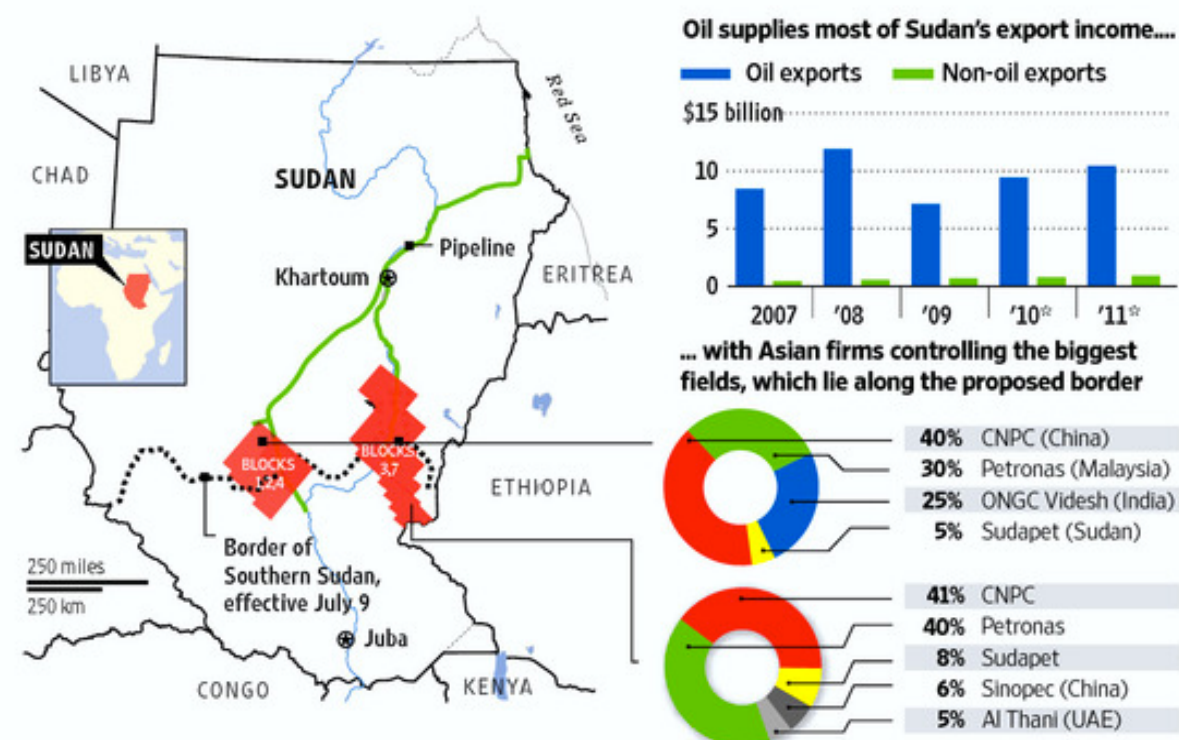
Type	Date of Arrangement	Expiration Date	Amount Approved (SDR Million)	Amount Drawn (SDR Million)
SAF	Jun 29, 1987	Jun 28, 1990	30.94	8.84
Stand-By	Jun 29, 1987	Jun 28, 1988	33.15	5.53
Stand-By	Feb 22, 1985	Sep 30, 1986	20.10	20.10

IMF, *Somalia: Financial Position in the Fund, as of April 30, 2014*, Available from: <http://www.imf.org/external/np/fin/tad/exfin2.aspx?memberKey1=870&date1key=2014-05-28> [28 May 2014]

### Appendix 4. Pie Charts Sudan exports and imports (% per country) (European Commission 2011).



**Appendix 5. China's oil interests in Sudan 2011. Greater Nile Oil Pipeline (green line) and oil blocks.**

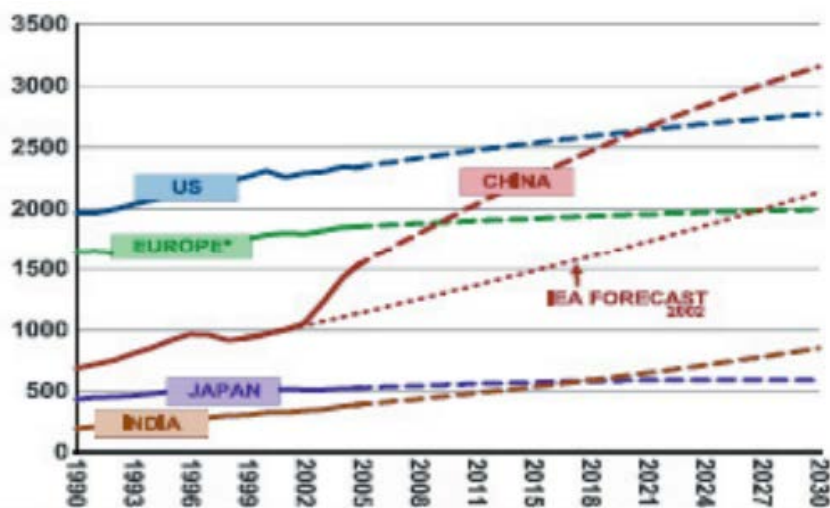


Source: The Wallstreet Journal, June 2011, Available from: <<http://geopolitics.blog.lemonde.fr/category/china/>> [28 May 2014]

**Appendix 6. China's aid to Sudan (Aiddata)**



**Appendix 7. China's growing oil demand.**



Source: Zhao 2008, p. 98.

**Appendix 8. China's aid to Somalia (Aiddata)**



