



**Behind the Veil of Non-Intervention
China's Changing Practice and Discourse**

Feng Can

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Betreuer: Prof. Dr. Gunter Schubert

Zweitbetreuer: Prof. Dr. Thomas Diez

Abteilung für Sinologie und Koreanistik

Lehrstuhl Greater China Studies

Wilhelmstraße 133

72074 Tübingen

Germany

Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

M.A. Politik und Gesellschaft Ostasiens

Behind the Veil of Non-Intervention

China's Changing Practice and Discourse

Name: Can Feng

Matriculation number: 5424472

First Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Gunter Schubert

Second Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Thomas Diez

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Abstract

In recent years, China has made pragmatic shifts from its dogmatic non-intervention principle. A representative region of this change is Sudan, which shares many of the characteristics typical of other high-risk areas. Through a discourse analysis of China's official foreign policy in the Darfur crisis and the civil war in South Sudan, this thesis aims to answer how adjustments of the non-intervention principle were articulated and discursively legitimized in these crises. The analysis will focus on the constitutive role of discourse and efforts to maintain the identity-policy stability.

Based on representations, this thesis categorizes three basic discourses and one variant, namely development discourse, humanitarian discourse, international community discourse and development-led peace discourse. The analysis identifies three common discursive strategies used by China to maintain its non-interventionary identity: (1) Emphasizing the leadership of international or regional organizations. China prefers to construct itself as a cooperative supporter rather than a proactive advocator. (2) Insisting the consent of the state concerned. By portraying the non-coercive outcome of an accepted intervention by the state concerned, China understates the interventionary process of persuasion. (3) Portraying a fully altruistic Self. By completely denying its own self-interest, China seeks to demarcate itself from the selfish Western Other.

Declaration

I herewith formally declare that I have written the submitted thesis independently. I did not use any outside support except for the quoted literature and other sources mentioned in the paper. I clearly marked all statements taken verbatim or in spirit from other works as such. This thesis was not examined or published before in the same or similar form. The submitted electronic version of the thesis matches the printed version.

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List of Abbreviations

AMIS	African Union Mission in Sudan
AU	African Union
GNPOC	Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IR	International Relations
PDA	Poststructuralist discourse analysis
SPLM	Sudan People’s Liberation Movement
UN	United Nations
UNAMID	United Nations-African Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur
US	United States

1 Introduction

Although non-intervention is a generally accepted norm among states, intervention has been a long-standing practice throughout history (Finnemore, 2003). Ever since China put forward the Five Principle of Peaceful Coexistence at the Bandung Conference, the principle of non-intervention has been serving as one of the cornerstones of China's foreign policy, distinguishing itself from traditional interventionary western powers. As a strong advocate of non-intervention, China has never changed its rhetorical adherence to it. However, some new patterns have emerged in China's foreign policy and raised doubts about whether they represent a shift of the principle.

The Darfur crisis erupted in 2003. Afterwards, China has not only changed its indifferent bystander position and worked as a messenger between Sudan and the United States (US), but also actively persuaded Sudan to accept a joint deployment led by the United Nations (UN). China sent a 315-men multi-functional engineering unit to Darfur, which was the first international batch accepted by Khartoum to be deployed in this region (Xinhua, 2007). Later, following the independence of South Sudan, the ongoing turmoil between North and South Sudan over oil interests made China aware of how regional conflicts can pose a huge challenge to energy security. As a result, in 2012, China clearly emphasized the importance of strengthening international cooperation to protect "the stability of the situation in oil-producing regions such as the Middle East" (Information Office of the State Council, 2012). In 2013, the South Sudan civil war broke out. A series of targeted violence once again posed threats to China's overseas interests and the safety of citizens abroad. Encouraged by the mediation experience in Darfur, China reacted more determined this time and took a more proactive stance in mediating. It actively brokered the ceasefire between the parties to the conflict. The year 2014 represents a change in the nature of Chinese peacekeeping operations when Beijing decided to deploy an infantry battalion to South Sudan. It was the first time that Chinese government deployed combat troops under the authority of Chapter VII of the UN Charter (Large, 2016).

Although China committed in its 1998 White Paper on National Defense to not "station any troops or set up any military bases in any foreign country" (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 1998), this attitude has changed.

In addition to the UN-led peacekeeping engagement mentioned above, China also modified its official documents accordingly to provide a legal framework for the changing pattern of military deployment. In 2011, participating in international disaster relief operations organized by the government and fulfilling international humanitarian obligations were defined as “unshirkable responsibilities” (yiburongci de zeren, 义不容辞的责任) for China’s armed forces (The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, 2011). In 2013, safeguarding overseas interests and protecting overseas citizens were incorporated into the main tasks of the Chinese Army (The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, 2013). In 2015, the White Paper stated that Chinese navy will gradually shift its focus from pure defense to the combination of “offshore waters defense” with “open seas protection” (The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, 2015). In August 2017, China officially put its first overseas military base in Djibouti into use, albeit with an emphasis on its function as a logistical support (Cabestan, 2020). In 2019, China proudly announced that it has become “the largest troop contributing country” among the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, 2019).

The above-mentioned changes in practice have revealed that the non-intervention principal is being carefully adjusted (Ren, 2021; Fung, 2019). Or, as China puts it, China starts playing a “constructive role” through its “creative application” of the principle of non-intervention (Liu & Fan, 2015). China is facing a different strategic situation nowadays and a new set of security challenges from those of previous generations (Grieger, 2019; Wang, 2018). With deepening overseas investments and changing international roles, China is more exposed to “the consequences of political unrest, economic upheavals, sectarian violence, and religious tensions throughout the region” (She, 2021, p. 303). Considering the globalization of China’s overseas interests, the sustainability of this principle has been put into question.

Existing academic studies have analyzed the necessity and possibility of policy adjustments by China, mainly based on a positivist perspective (Holslag, 2008; Yu & Wang, 2008; Large, 2008a, 2008b). However, few works have used the Chinese discourse as an object of study to analyze how China views and articulates its own controversial acts of intervention. This is of research value because a nation’s self-narrative and discursive construction provide the legitimacy basis for its policies. Since

China has always portrayed itself as a staunch defender of this principle and uses this principle as an umbrella for circumventing sensitive domestic issues, one has to wonder: how can China discursively legitimize its interventionary acts? In other words, how is the state going to get rid of its self-made, autobiographical “straitjacket” when there is a fundamental shift in some policies (Subotić, 2016)? The Darfur crisis and the civil war of South Sudan are two examples, which, although often seen internationally as an important point to examine China’s intervention shift in practice, are commonly described within China as successful examples of the defense of and adherence to the non-intervention principle. The discourse difference between Chinese and international perspectives in these crises and relative research gap are the initial motivations that lead to my research topic: *How are the adjustments of the non-intervention principle articulated in China’s discourse on the crises in Sudan?* Through discourse analysis, I base my research on the following sub-questions:

- How were the crises represented?
- What Others and Self were articulated?
- How did China discursively construct its controversial acts which had interferential features?
- How did China legitimize the policy choices rhetorically?

To answer these questions, I will focus on Chinese discourses on the Darfur crisis (2003-2007) and the South Sudan civil war (2013-2015). In terms of timing, I take the outbreak of the two crises as a starting point and conclude with the reference points respectively when the UN unanimously adopted the Resolution 1769 on hybrid deployment in 2007, and when China deployed infantry to South Sudan for peacekeeping operations in 2015. These two cases are significant not only because they reveal a shift from dogmatic principle of non-intervention, but also because they share many of the characteristics typical of other high-risk areas (Brosig, 2020). The research will be conducted based on a poststructuralist discourse analysis (PDA) approach. I aim to answer “how” rather than “why” China made certain policy choices, with a particular focus on the constitutive role of discourse.

Structure overview

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter 2 is literature review. I will first give a brief introduction to the concept of intervention and the historical trajectory of non-

intervention principal in China. I then provide a review of the existing literature on whether China should adjust its non-intervention policy. Moreover, I note that it is important to pay attention to the trend or attempts in China that are trying to create alternative concepts of intervention. Chapter 3 outlines the analytical framework I am going to apply in the research, including the theory of PDA and Hansen's framework of identity construction. The detailed analysis will be presented in Chapter 4. I first identified three basic discourses through common representations, based on which I further analyze the dynamic construction of China's identity/policy during the crises. I will conclude my findings in Chapter 5.

2 China and the Non-Intervention Principle

2.1 The concept of intervention

The principle of non-intervention is closely linked to the concept of sovereignty and the development of modern society. It is the changing form of international hierarchy that has shaped the practice of intervention as we know it now (Keene, 2013). First, in contrast to the historical orders of precedence based on lineage or title, the modern international hierarchy aligns the capabilities of actors with status, i.e., the ability of the great powers to intervene. Secondly, with the concept of sovereignty, a higher status does not come with superior rights, which means that even the great powers do not have the given prerogative to intervene. Last but not least, Keene (2013) points out that the rise of the grading of power, which quantified the capacity of states to determine the relative strength and status of each state in the international system, gave rise to a new hierarchy. The status of the great powers made them *de facto* unequal, giving them the capacity to intervene and the characteristic of not being interfered with themselves (Lawson & Tardelli, 2013, p. 1242).

Although intervention has been an enduring practice, its concept remains relatively ambiguous. Rosenau (1968, 1969) criticizes that this kind of vagueness often results in intervention being seen as synonymous with influence. With such a broad definition, intervention would lose its utility as an analytical concept. From the perspective of international law, intervention is defined as “forcible or dictatorial interference by a state in the affairs of another state, calculated to impose certain conduct or consequences on that other state” (Jennings & Watts, 1996, p.430). In order to establish that an act is an intervention, two factors remain necessary: not only that there is an intention to change the policy of the target state, but most importantly that the essence behind the act is coercion (Jamnejad & Wood, 2009, p. 348). That is, the act deprives the intervened state of control and free choice (Jennings & Watts, 1996, p.432). Although military measures are one of the most common ways of intervention, it does not only take the form of force. Depending on the degree of coercion, there are other common acts of intervention such as political and economic pressure, premature recognition of statehood and so on. As Rosenau (1969) puts it, “it is the compulsion and not its form that constitutes intervention” (p. 154). It must be acknowledged that

the line between conventional diplomacy and intervention in international dealings is blurred and highly controversial (Jamnejad & Wood, 2009, pp. 374-375). This ambiguity will prevail especially if we try to rely on identifying and analyzing the motivations behind, rather than focusing on the observable behavior itself (Rosenau, 1969).

In this regard, Rosenau tries to give intervention an operational definition. He goes beyond the intention of authority-oriented nature and emphasizes the convention-breaking character of intervention, which stresses the temporary and illegal nature of the intervention (Rosenau, 1968). The so-called convention breaking is intended to stress the illegitimacy of intervention and its finite and transitory nature (p. 167). In other words, intervention is a change of existing long-term patterns of behavior. This emphasis on the finite and temporary patterns of intervention is intended to distinguish it from influence. Furthermore, the intervention must be political in nature. That is to say, convention-breaking behavior is only deemed as interventionary when it is directed to the authority structure of the target. The requirement of the coexistence of these two features aim to “prevent all foreign policy actions (or inactions) from being treated as interventionary” (p. 170).

The state’s understanding of intervention is not static and lead to the change of behavior in the international system (Finnemore, 2003). Finnemore argues that “what has changed is *when* it will suit them - not the fact of intervention but its *form* and *meaning*. What have changed are state understandings about the *purposes* to which they can and should use force” (p. 2). The UN-led intervention authorized by the Security Council is a special kind of international action, whose legitimacy and legality are conferred by Chapter VII in the UN Charter (United Nations, 1945). This intervention is primarily based on humanitarian norms. The Genocide Convention not only gives legitimacy to the act of interference, but actually makes the act of interference obligatory (Finnemore, 2003, p. 76). In 2005, the UN accepted the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), which further broadened the scope and possibilities of intervention. The introduction of this concept elevates the discussion of intervention in large-scale humanitarian crises from a “right” to a “responsibility” and reflects a normative revision of absolute sovereignty (Wang, 2012).

Hodzi (2019) sees the limitation of using traditional Western intervention theories to analyze the interventions of rising powers, because it is difficult to explain the situation where China takes measures and imposes its strategic effects to make the recipient state consents (p. 58). One of the factors worth considering is the legitimacy of the consent, especially in those cases when the leader may no longer be able to effectively control certain controversial areas—it is then questionable whether the ruling government still necessarily represent the appropriate authority (p. 56). In addition, Hodzi emphasizes the role of multilateral institutions in interventions. Unlike traditional unilateral military interventions and economic sanctions often used by the Western countries, China tends to exert pressure on parties through multilateral institutions in order to protect its interests and influence the outcome of internal conflicts. These collective interventions through regional organizations allow China to maintain its identity as a non-interventionary power (p. 55). Hodzi's opinion of how to define China's intervention is illuminating and captures the specificity of these activities. Therefore, I will base my following discussion of China's changing interventionary practice on Hodzi's definition of intervention. That is, intervention can be actions or inactions, regardless of whether there is consent of the target state or not. The most important factor is that "its purpose is to affect the direction, duration, or outcome of an intrastate armed conflict" (p. 60).

2.2 Historical trajectory of China's non-intervention principle

Haunted by the experience of imperialist occupation, which is known as the "century of humiliation" (百年国耻, *bainian guochi*), China has long seen itself as a defender of sovereignty and non-intervention. Although China has always paid lip service to this principle, its understanding of the concept of sovereignty and the practice of non-intervention have shown a dynamic process of evolution.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai issued a statement on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence at the Bandung Conference in 1955, reaching a unanimous consensus with Asian, African, and Latin American countries. However, under the guidance of communism and in the face of anti-colonial movements, China also supported the armed struggle of revolutionary forces around the world. According to the definition of non-intervention principle

published in the Chinese official and party media in 1963, China's view of this principle was initially strongly anti-imperialist and anti-hegemonic:

“It was formulated for targeting the aggressive policies and war policies of imperialism. The basic principle of foreign policy for socialist countries is proletarian internationalism. This principle should include four terms: to develop friendly and mutually supporting states' relations in the socialist camp, to coexist with countries with different social systems, to oppose aggressive policies of imperialism under the Five Principles, and to support all revolutionary wars of the oppressed people and nations” (Editorial Departments of People's Daily and Red Flag Magazine, as cited in Ren, 2021, p. 51).

In other words, what China opposed was interventions from traditional Western countries which represented imperialism and selfish desires regardless of what the state concerned really needs. Mutual support between communist and developing countries was not considered to be an act of intervention, even if the aim of these actions were regime change.

This strongly revolutionary-oriented foreign policy has shifted considerably since Deng Xiaoping came to power. Deng put forward the diplomatic idea of “keeping a low profile” (韬光养晦, taoguang yanghui) and restressed the importance of “seeking common ground while reserving differences” (求同存异, qiutong cunyi). He placed greater emphasis on establishing official contacts with the government rather than the rebels to break the diplomatic blockade and promote economic contacts. Later, as China joined the UN and became more integrated into the international society, its perception of sovereignty and acceptance of international norms further adjusted accordingly. Cautiously, China began to participate in UN-led peacekeeping missions and tried to introduce alternative concepts such as responsible protection (负责任的保护, fu zeren de baohu) (Ren, 2021, pp. 45-59; Burton, 2020a, pp. 4-6; Reilly & Gill, 2000). In recent years, as sensitive issues such as Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong have become increasingly debated in the international community, the principle of non-intervention and the inviolability of sovereignty have once again become resident in Chinese diplomatic rhetoric. At the same time, opposition to intervention has often been linked to the narrative that China is no longer the weak state it was during the “century of humiliation”, and the doctrine has once again been injected with nationalist and anti-Western/defensive overtones.

2.3 Debates about the sustainability of this principle

Since reform and opening up, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have become important regions for China's "going out" strategy. China's regional policies in MENA focus mainly on economic cooperation with a clear pragmatic undertone, underlining the fundamental position of non-intervention in the partnership. However, this pragmatic approach has come under increasing criticism as China's investment footprint continues to expand. Critics accuse China of being a "free-rider", or a "shirker" (Burton, 2020b), who has little security input and sits on peace dividends from the US and Europe. Despite the increasing interests and escalating threats, China's action remains restrained and minimized. In other words, there is an interest-effort mismatch (Scobell, 2018). One of the most vocal criticisms came from Barack Obama (2014). In an interview with the New York Times, he accused China of being a free-rider on Iraq for the past 30 years and of not taking on more international obligations.

As "keeping a low profile" (韬光养晦, taoguang yanghui) was replaced by "striving for achievement" (奋发有为, fenfa youwei), accordingly, there are some debates about the sustainability and limitations of China's non-intervention principle (Zheng, 2016; Ren, 2021). Advocators of this principle argue that when China refers to non-interventionism, one important aspect is the emphasis on mutuality. Defenders regard this principle as a political weapon to prevent foreign intervention in China's internal affairs (Zheng, 2016). Moreover, this principle is a flag that serves China's peaceful rise and its anti-imperialist identity. If the principle is abandoned, it will not only make the West more vigilant towards China's development but also tear China apart from the global South, losing the support of developing countries (Moradi, 2019).

On the other hand, some scholars believe that China's bystander status will be increasingly untenable. Researchers hold two main views as following when arguing that China should reorient its overseas policy:

- **To protect interests abroad:** "China may not want to strengthen its political and security presence in the region—but it may feel that it has no choice in the matter" (Lons, Fulton, Sun & Al-Tamimi, 2019, p.3). Chinese state-owned enterprises, represented by oil companies, are encouraged by domestic policy to "go out" and the easy access to credit. As "major economic actors with large

international activities encouraged by the government”, their development is driving China’s direct investment abroad. These state corporations are “on the front line of risk management abroad” and bring risk-averse Chinese government in conflict zones, challenging China’s bystander approach in conflict-ridden areas (Parello-Plesner & Duchâtel, 2015, pp. 49-53). For example, China’s investments have suffered greatly during the turmoil in Sudan and Libya. Considering the expanding overseas interests, it will no longer be practical for Beijing to implement completely hands-off policies (Zou & Jones, 2020; Duchâtel, Bräuner & Hang, 2014). In general, scholars of this view see the need for active action in terms of the risks and economic loss. China’s external economic expansion will require more outward political posturing.

- **To be a responsible great power:** “A policy of non-interference is not a credible policy for a nation that wants to be respected as a responsible global power” (Jakobson, 2007, p.18). In this regard, critics believe that the non-intervention principle is inconsistent with the image of a responsible power that China is trying to portray. Loke (2009) analyzes China’s ongoing efforts to learn about the appropriateness of its behaviors. With the universalization of values such as human rights and democracy, rigid principle may attract criticism against China in international practice and tarnish its reputation (Zheng, 2016). This policy attitude also serves like a shackle that prevents China from deeper regional participation (Moradi, 2019).

In addition, the commitment of a responsible power is also linked to the construction of a strong national image for domestic audiences. Parello-Plesner and Duchâtel (2015) give a detailed introduction about how Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Public Security enhanced their capacity in delivering protection for Chinese nationals overseas (pp. 40-49). In addition to the need to protect its citizens abroad (Chaziza, 2021), China’s increased commitment to world affairs is also in line with domestic expectations for the rejuvenation of the nation and helps the Communist Party to gain domestic legitimacy (Lons, Fulton, Sun & Al-Tamimi, 2019, p. 17).

The non-intervention principle has always served as a fundamental pillar of China’s foreign policy ever since it was proposed. Nevertheless, it is foreseeable that it will become increasingly difficult for China to stay out of national and regional conflicts,

no matter if it is for the above-discussed protection of the expanding national commercial interests and overseas citizens, or the rising expectations from the international community for China to take more responsibilities. Despite the clear consistency in China's official rhetoric for the non-intervention, this principle has shown to be rather flexible and adaptive to China's national interest in different periods (Hess & Aidoo, 2010).

Another noteworthy topic in existing research is the attempts to create new alternative concepts of intervention. For propaganda purposes, the concept of intervention (干涉, ganshe) has been given a purely negative connotation with imperialism and hegemonism in China. I noticed, however, that the description "constructive role" (建设性作用, jianshexing zuoyong) not only can be found during the Darfur and South Sudan mediations, but is also a recurrent expression in Chinese diplomatic discourse nowadays. However, its definition remains vague. The opposite of constructive is destructive. The term "constructive" thus contains a positive connotation. In Cambridge Dictionary, constructive is defined as "useful and intended to help or improve" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Perhaps the emphasis of the "constructive" in China's official discourse can be understood through Sultan and Sun's (2020) distinction of the negative/positive mediator (Sultan & Sun, p. 10).

I argue that the formulation of "constructive role" should be seen as a preliminary attempt for China to create an alternative concept that emphasizes the positive nature of the intervention. The replacement of the term *intervention* with other positive wordings is a new trend emerging in China. Zhao Huasheng (2011), a specialist on Russia and Central Asia of Fudan University, crafted the notion of *Constructive Intervention* (jianshexing jieru, 建设性介入). 介入 (jieru) can also be translated as stepping in or engagement. Another similar word to this is 干预 (ganyu), which has a preventive meaning (Sørensen, 2019). Both 介入 (jieru) and 干预 (ganyu) are different from 干涉 (ganshe, intervention) in Chinese. The former two have more positive connotation. Using the example of the turmoil in Kyrgyzstan, Zhao argues that there is not necessarily a conflict between the principle of non-intervention and so-called constructive intervention. In his opinion, "helping to mediate conflicts, alleviate crises, prevent further deterioration of the situation, and guide the situation towards peace and stability" do not fall within the scope of interference in internal affairs. Zhao highlights

the risks China would face as a bystander and argues that both non-intervention policy and constructive intervention should be considered as important diplomatic options. Zhao's concept was taken by Sun and Zoubir (2014) to examine China's diplomatic interactions with the Arab world. They argue that constructive intervention is a middle way between "responsibility to protect" and "non-interference in others' internal affairs". It differs from traditional Western intervention in four ways: constructive intervention (1) emphasizes political rather than military intervention, (2) advocates gradual reform rather than regime overthrow, (3) engages actively with all parties in the conflict without coercion, and (4) requires the support of regional organizations (Sun & Zoubir, 2014).

Another representative study is Wang Yizhou's concept of *Creative Involvement* (创造性介入, *chuangzaoxing jieru*). He suggests that 介入 (*jieru*) shall be translated as involvement to avoid the negative indication (Wang, 2011). According to Wang, creative involvement represents a more proactive diplomatic stance by China in the international society. China should proactively intervene (or involve, 介入, *jieru*) in both regional and global affairs and provide more Chinese solutions as well as public products (Wang, 2018, p.17; 2011; 2015). Wang (2018) explains that the *creative* (创造性, *chuangzao xing*) in this term refers to "the process of solving a problem in a novel way that produces a new, valuable product or result" (p.13). This approach is in contrast to the "old" model of intervention, which is based on sanctions and pressure. As the international situation is different from that of the Deng Xiaoping era, China should adjust its policy to reflect a higher stage of Chinese diplomacy with "greater vision and ambition" (p.17). What China rejects is not participating in global affairs but the forceful and confrontational approaches. Instead, China seeks to resolve disputes in a "peaceful, cooperative and win-win" manner (p.9). The advocated *Creative Involvement* places particular emphasis on the "leading (引导性, *yindao xing*), proactive (主动性, *zhudong xing*) and constructive (建设性, *jianshe xing*)" nature of Chinese future diplomacy (p.9). While this concept responds to the need to adapt the non-intervention principle in practice, Wang does not clarify as to the scope and extent of involvement and how is it differentiated from intervention. Rather than being a rigorous academic definition, it is more of a discursive suggestion for Chinese policy makers.

Regarding the diplomatic approach adopted by China, Sun and Zoubir (2018) give a new name to China's policy in the (MENA), which is called "Quasi-mediation Diplomacy". They distinguish it with traditional mediation diplomacy in terms of the interests, roles, and primary goals of the mediator. In quasi-mediation diplomacy, the mediator often avoids taking the leadership and instead plays only a limited supportive role. At the same time, the reasons for mediation lie less in security and strategy but more in economic and political interests. Last but not least, it is worth pointing out that Sun and Zoubir believe that China's mediation does not aim at resolving the conflict, but only at de-escalating the situation. This concept is later replaced with "Creative Mediation Diplomacy" (Sultan & Sun, 2020). In 2017, for the first time, Foreign Minister Wang Yi publicly presented a new diplomatic attitude, stating that "China is willing to participate in the peaceful resolution of hotspot issues and to explore the constructive involvement approach with Chinese characteristics" (具有中国特色的建设性介入方式, juyou zhongguo tese de jianshexing jieru fangshi). The key features of this new approach are "peaceful, legitimate and constructive" (as cited in Pang, 2018).

These concepts show a clear intertextuality with each other. Overall, these studies have shown China's domestic effort to offer alternative discursive options for the change of non-intervention. New wordings with positive implication will allow China to circumvent the shackles of the doctrine and offer a more flexible interpretation of its new interventionary behaviors.

3 Analytical Framework

3.1 Poststructuralist discourse analysis

The field of International Relations (IR) studies the relations and interactions between international actors, including not only sovereign states but also non-state actors. Both realist and liberal schools of thought value the influence of materialistic factors on political decision-making. While the former uses power as a central concept to understand how states behave externally based on the distribution of power in anarchy (Waltz, 1979; Morgenthau, 1948), the latter develops a bottom-up view of politics in terms of domestic interests, arguing that the state's foreign policy is adjusted based on different domestic and state preferences (Snyder, 2004; Moravcsik, 1997). By focusing on conflict, democracy, economic dependence and international cooperation, liberal IR theory establishes "a causal link between economic, political and social change and state behavior in world politics" (Moravcsik, 1997, p.535). Constructivism, as the third dominant theory of international relations, denies that anarchy is a static or natural state, nor does it necessarily lead to the logic of self-help and power politics. Constructivists argue that the structure of the international system is intersubjective. There is no pre-given nature for identities and interests, they are constructed in the process of interaction, leading to different cultural logics and ultimately to changes in the behavior of states (Wendt, 1992; Weber, 2001). Constructivist research focuses on ideational socialization, analyzing the external behavior of states through conceptual factors such as norms and identities. With a logic of appropriateness, constructivism challenges the traditional logic of consequence (March & Olsen, 2004).

Poststructuralism engaged IR from the 1980s and has gradually become a unique theoretical perspective. Rather than setting out a new paradigm or theory, it instead offers a critical attitude and promotes a new set of questions and concerns, where "interpretation and representation, power and knowledge, and the politics of identity" are central to understand global affairs (Campbell, 2013, p.225). The poststructural approach questions the traditional positivist theories and rejects the subject/object dichotomies such as fact/value, or objective knowledge/subjective prejudice. There is a reorientation of analysis from pre-given subjects to the problematization of subjectivity. Even theory is no longer just an analytical tool, but instead has become an

part of analysis itself. Poststructuralism questions the traditional theories by asking what impact do analytical approaches have on our understanding of global politics? What established practices or political orders are considered as given or natural? Which understandings are privileged and which are marginalized or excluded (Campbell, 2013, pp. 236-238)? Through the lens of power relations and knowledge production, poststructuralists problematize the established narratives as well as practices, and value the disclosure of other excluded possibilities. Discourse plays a prominent role in poststructural approaches and is considered as the key to understand the world. In the following parts, I will further discuss the connotations of discourse and how poststructuralist discourse analysis (PDA) can be applied to the analysis of identity-foreign policy dynamics.

3.1.1 Discourse

The centrality of discourse is a major concern for poststructuralists. The definition of discourse varies across research approaches. In the more microscopic, linguistic field of interpretation, discourse is the language in use or context. It is “a stretch of language, larger than the sentence” (Bullock & Stallybrass, 1977, p. 175, as cited in Gasper & Apthorpe, 1996, p. 3). In sociological and political analyses, the concept of discourse extends from the concrete context to more practices and actions. Discourse refers to “a specific series of representations and practices through which meanings are produced, identities constituted, social relations established, and political and ethical outcomes made more or less possible” (Campbell, 2013, pp. 234-235; Foucault, 1972). It shall be understood as “structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.105), or “systems of meaningful practices” on both linguistic and behavioral levels, which “form the identities of subjects and objects”, construct understandings and relationships between phenomena. (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, pp. 3-4). Foucault’s work on discursive formation emphasizes the importance of discourse, as relations between statements prescribe the way we talk and think about certain issues (Foucault 1972, pp.31-38). His understanding of knowledge and power challenged traditional notions of causality, and the discursive relationship between language and society received increasing attention.

Poststructuralists argue that language is not an objective or transparent medium. Discourse is a constitutive dimension of social relations that “does not merely describe

or make known a preexisting or underlying reality, but instead helps to bring that reality into being” (Howarth & Griggs, 2012, P.306). In other words, discourse has a constitutive function for the “reality out there” that goes far beyond mere representation. While the formation of discourse depends on social structures, discourse also influences and constructs social reality in turn—it is this process of interaction that makes discourse the object of our analysis.

Poststructuralist theory is based on a key idea that “the perceived world acquires meaning through discourse” (Carta & Morin, 2014, p. 302). It even goes as far as stating “there is nothing outside of the text” (Derrida, 1997, p. 158). Poststructuralists point out that “no materiality can exist or be presented without a discursive representation” (Buzan & Hansen, 2009, p.142). These perceptions are not to deny the existence of objective facts, but to value the power of language and to emphasize its ontological significance. Materiality is only ascribed significance through discourse. As famously cited, an earthquake can be either an ordinary natural phenomenon or “the wrath of God” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 108). Compared to other interpretive analyses, PDA focuses more on the role of *meanings* in shaping actions, on how these meanings are articulated, and how this relates to wider social systems and power relations (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000). Not only identity but also other policy phenomena shall be seen as “articulations rather than facts, as the outcome of complicated processes of inscription, of re-presentation, rather than as ‘given’ structures, tendencies or situations” (Gottweis, 2003b, P.249).

The material environment remains meaningless until it is interpreted and given meaning. It is also important to stress that for poststructuralists meaning itself is unstable and contingent (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Howarth & Griggs, 2012). The discursive construction of reality is a dynamic process, in which the meanings of phenomena and views of world are constantly in flux and can only reach partial fixations. Following this logic, “truth” shall be seen as the contingent result of struggles between competing discourses that give the existing phenomena social and political significance (Gottweis, 2003b, p. 249). Social reality is nothing more than a contingent expression of different elements in a hegemonic discourse (Remling, 2018). The partial fixation of meanings can be achieved through articulatory practices. It is this radical contingency of meaning and continuous struggle that underlines the importance of discourse analysis.

3.1.2 Identity

Identity is a fundamental concept in discourse studies. Constructivism's emphasis on conceptual factors such as norms and values gives new analytical significance to identity as a source of state action (Wendt, 1992; Flockhart, 2012, p.85). Constructivists seek to explain how, beyond material factors, states' behaviors are influenced or constrained by ideational factors and how states shape foreign policy through the logic of appropriateness. Critics argue that the constructivist perspective is too static in its conception of identity, where change tends to be slow and gradual. While constructivism helps to explain policy stability, it is inefficient explain how the same cultural background and history can create contradictory national policies (Wæver, 2002). In contrast, poststructuralism offers a more dynamic view of identity. They reject identity as a causal influence on foreign policy. Instead, identity is understood as a performative practice, which cannot "operate as an explanation, nor can be tested against other 'variables' explaining foreign policy decisions or behavior" (Hansen, 2016, p.101).

For poststructuralists, identity is not a natural fixation but a production, a discourse practice—it is constantly shaped in practice and is always in process. An identity is neither pre-discursive nor stable. It is just temporarily fixed through the regulated process of repetition and always constituted within representation (Hansen, 2016). In respect of difference and inscription of boundaries, a "Self" is demarcated from an "Other", a "domestic" from a "foreign" (Campbell, 1998; Hansen, 2006). The Other can be articulated as superior, inferior, or equal in terms of status, and the specific identity can be constituted as an ally, a threat or a laggard in need of help (Hansen, 2006, p.68). In general, identity should be understood as relational.

3.1.3 Discourse analysis and foreign policy

Discourse analysis is "an engagement with meaning and the linguistic and communicative processes through which social reality is constructed" (Holzscheiter, 2014, p.144). It is essentially critical in that it aims to problematize existing policies and to question the meaning of what is taken for granted.

In the field of IR, discourse has been significant in the development of constructivism and poststructuralism—the former focuses on norms, identities and institutions, and the latter delves into the links between discourse, ideology, and power. The major difference between the two is that constructivism use discourse analysis as an interpretive rather than a critical methodology. Through causal analysis, constructivists try to understand why states behave the way they do. This causal relationship, on the other hand, is not the focus of PDA. This is not to say that PDA is not interpretively efficacious. It is just that this kind of interpretation is not positivist and shall be seen as constitutive rather than causal. PDA can help us to better understand on what basis particular policies are adopted and how discursive meanings are constituted (Aiolfi, 2015; Diez, 2014).

From a poststructuralist perspective, policymaking is performative. It is a process of “writing and inscribing” (Gottweis, 2003a) in which discourses are particularly important. As Ripley (2017) puts it, discourse is a “powerful tool to set agendas, produce meaning, legitimize interests, and enforce power structures”. Policymakers use narrative and interpretation to temporarily fix the meaning of issues so that they can be managed. Even though political actors may say one thing and do another, they still need to legitimize their political choices and justify past or future actions. Through discourse, policymakers can articulate meaning, construct identities and interests, and provide legitimacy or necessity to policies. In undertaking policy analysis, we therefore should focus on the constitutive role of discourse. In deconstructing taken-for-granted logics and practices, PDA seeks to expose exclusionary logics, or to propose alternative counter-logics (Howarth & Griggs, 2012).

Following Campbell’s (1998) logic of performative construction of identity, foreign policy should be understood as a discourse practice that “contingently constructs through stylized and regulated performances the identity of the state in whose name it operates” (Campbell, 1998, P.73). The performative constitution of identity leads to the appropriateness and possibility of certain actions that have an impact on foreign policy. In turn, policy also always depends on the representation of identity. This relational rather than causal dynamic determines that identity is “both constitutive of and a product of foreign policy” (Hansen, 2006, p.20). To conduct a discourse analysis of foreign policy is to locate key representations or nodal points, and to further identify

the main connections between representations and policies. By analyzing the main discursive structures as well as the subtle variations, researchers aim to provide a “road map” (Hansen, 2016, pp.102-104).

In this part I briefly summarized the poststructuralist perspective on discourse and the non-causal but relational linkages between identity and policy. In summary, PDA follows a how-possible logic, focusing on how concepts are contested and argued, and how foreign policy itself is engaged in the practice of discursive and identity struggle (Diez, 2014). I will now explain my research design.

3.2 Methodology

Drawing upon a poststructuralist perspective of analysis, I will have a twofold focus in my analysis. Firstly, there is the fundamental question: how is the crisis represented? Different representations lead to different policy demands. My focus then comes to the relational dynamics of identity and policy, analyzing how meanings and identities that form the context of China’s actions are constructed in discourse and how they change in response to key events. What Others are constructed through representation? What kind of Self is further shaped? What kinds of policies are defined as legitimate and necessary?

My research approach is inspired by the model of identity construction proposed by Lene Hansen. Hansen (2006) suggests that basic discourses construct identity around three dimensions: spatial, temporal and ethical. Understanding identity as spatial involves the delineation of boundaries and spaces. This construction can be either about specific nation states or regions (e.g., China, America/ Europe, the Middle East) and generate spatial identities based on territorial borders, or it can be based on abstract political spaces and identities (e.g., international community, terrorists, developing countries) and articulate different political subjects. Temporal identity constructions are about “development, transformation, continuity, change, repetition or stagnation” (p.43). It often includes the construction of a more developed or backward Other, and whether they have the capacity for change. The past Self may also be a temporal Other. For example, Wæver (1996) argues that in the field of security, Europe’s Other is Europe’s own violent past, “which should not be allowed to become its future” (p.122). The process of linking and differentiation thus plays an important role in this dimension

of identity construction. The construction of an ethical identity can be understood as an allocation of responsibility, implying a concern for whether the Self is responsible or not for the Other. Assigning an ethical or moral significance to a phenomenon in foreign policy discourse facilitates the legitimization of policy choices. For example, a humanitarian concern can make intervention possible. It does not only underline the need for immediate action, but also raises the behavior of the state from the level of self-interest to a more noble sphere.

This theoretical framework analyzes the relationship between policy and discursive identity construction on three equal dimensions. It helps understand how identity is articulated through (foreign policy) discourse, how this construction further creates space for policy. It also helps grasp how the discourse of foreign policy is (re)constructed to stabilize the identity of the Self in the face of challenges and controversies.

Research Design

I will use Hansen's identity construction framework as my research method. A basic discourse provides clear articulation of identity, which is constructed along three dimensions, namely spatial, temporal and ethical. By identifying basic discourses, this thesis aims to show how different identities and representations are systematically linked together. The basic discourses are concluded from the case of Darfur, in which China made different adjustments to its policy and identity in different phases. This is because I see the future adjustments during the South Sudan civil war as a continuation and evolution of China's Darfur policy. China's intervention in South Sudan is built on its experience in Darfur and shows a gradual deepening of intervention overall. Therefore, the inclusion of South Sudan in the analysis makes my findings more complete and more convincing. Moreover, representations of the civil war in South Sudan can also find their roots in the basic discourse of the Darfur crisis. I therefore categorize the South Sudanese discourse as a variant rather than a basic discourse.

The identification of the basic discourse is guided by the following questions: How is the situation represented? How does China articulate the need to (not) intervene? What identity is constructed through discourse? Based on the representations and symbols that often appear in China's official discourse, I categorized three basic discourses in the Darfur crisis, namely the development discourse, the humanitarian discourse and

the international community discourse. China later combined the features of the first two discourses and formulated a development-led peace discourse in the civil war of South Sudan.

These discourses create different political spaces and indicate different policy choices, not only about “whether” to intervene but also about “how” to intervene. Examining these discourses allows me to sort out dynamic changes of China’s policy-identity constellation, and to grasp how policy is legitimized through the discursive construction. Based on the basic discourses and their variations, I further aim to answer how China perceives its own policy adjustments and, in particular, how the policies are discursively distinguished from intervention and thus not threatening the stability of China’s non-interventionary identity.

Text selection

As China is a one-party state and restricts access to political debates, it is difficult to obtain documents from opponents or internal party dissent to examine the process of policy debates. Therefore, my analysis will be conducted based on official statements, interviews, and pronouncements. The focus is on how official discourses constructed the crises and on China’s policy changes. Concrete research materials include statements by Chinese UN representatives, such as explanatory remarks at the UN Security Council and Chinese representatives at high-level consultations and in the Security Council, remarks by special envoys at the media briefing, remarks by the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Sudan and related answers at the regular press conference. Sources are mainly from the official websites of Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the UN¹, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs² and the People database (人民数据库, renmin shujuku³). In the People database, I search for statements by foreign ministry spokespersons using the keywords Darfur and Sudan. Then I focus on the ones related to key events. These official discourses explicitly represent the articulations about identity and policy. They not only have the formal authority to define political positions, but also are widely read and followed (Hansen, 2006, pp.73-78). As such, they meet my research goals.

¹ (CH) <http://un.china-mission.gov.cn/zgylhg/jjalh/alhrd/fz/>;
(EN) <http://un.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/chinaandun/securitycouncil/regionalhotspots/africa/darfur/>

² https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/fz/1206_45_3/fyrygth/

³ <http://data.people.com.cn/>, with search Foreign Ministry spokesman's remarks

3.3 Reflection and limitation

There is no standardized research methodology for PDA. The specific way of analysis depends on the choice of the researcher. This also brings up the issue of subjectivity. Although as a researcher I try to be as unbiased as possible, there is always the fact that my knowledge and prior personal views may be subliminally reflected in the research. The most immediate challenge this poses for me is that while I try my best to deconstruct existing narratives with a critical mind and be mindful of the contingency of meaning and linkage, as a native mandarin speaker, some concepts or connections appear self-evident to me or to someone with a relevant Chinese cultural background. This self-explanatory problem is both a focus of concern in the research methodology and the discursive influences that I have always had to overcome as a researcher. To redress this, I have been taken care to provide clear and detailed explanations to each concept in my research.

4 Sudan as Case Study

Before beginning my analysis, I will provide a brief overview of the conflicts in Sudan after the 21st Century. This will provide the contextual basis for the further discussion about China's discourse and policy changes.

4.1 Background

In Darfur, there is a long-standing conflict between nomads, represented by Arabs, and sedentary farmers, represented by Africans. The competition between the two sides over land and water resources becomes more and more intense with global warming. The ruling government has gradually become part of the conflict in that the Arabs have been in absolute power from the center to the local level since independence (Ahmed, 2010). The conflict escalated in 2003 when the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army and the Justice and Equality Movement in Darfur launched attacks on the Sudanese government for failing to protect the interests of black people. In response, the government quickly armed and mobilized the Janjaweed militias to fight against the rebels.

The situation deteriorated rapidly, resulting in mass casualties and displacement. Not only do actions from rebel groups and opportunistic warlords (or bandits) exposed civilians in Darfur to abuse and insecurity, but violence from the government also posed a threat that may consolidate the "ethnic cleansing" (Human Rights Watch, 2006). The International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur (2005) reported human rights violations by government armed forces and Janjaweed in Darfur, including but not limited to killings of civilians, executions of prisoners of war, looting, rape, and forcing or threatening refugees not to return home by burning villages and destroying water wells. The Commission of Inquiry warned that most of the destruction was caused by the Janjaweed militias with the support of the government of Sudan. In other words, the Janjaweed committed serious human rights violations and atrocities against civilians of African descent in Darfur with impunity and the acquiescence of the Khartoum government. Darfur is thus a case of state-sponsored violence against civilians, a crisis that represents an important challenge to China's non-intervention policy (Loke, 2009).

In 2007, Sudan accepted the hybrid deployment co-led by the United Nations and the African Union (AU). In 2011, South Sudan gained independence through a referendum under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Afterwards, while Khartoum and Juba kept feuding over oil, South Sudan was soon embroiled in its own civil war in 2013. The civil war was sparked by political struggle, but then quickly escalated into a war between ethnic groups.

China: A Challenged bystander

China and Sudan established diplomatic relations in 1959 and have a long history of political and economic ties. In the 1990s, Sudan's relations with the international community deteriorated dramatically in the face of increasing international isolation and the US-led sanctions (Elliott, 2011). The withdrawal of international investment and the remained rich local natural resources in Sudan opened up opportunities for China to further strengthen its cooperation with Sudan (Shinn, 2009; Large, 2008a).

In 1997, the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company (GNPOC) was established with China National Petroleum Corporation taking a forty percent stake. In 1998, China participated in the construction of the 1,500-kilometer-long GNPOC pipeline, which connects the oil fields in the south to the Red Sea for easier exportation. A refinery was also built near Khartoum as the first overseas large oilfield operated by China (Human Rights Watch, 2003). These oil investments of the 1990s brought about a qualitative change in relations between China and Sudan, with Beijing's offering of the "politically dependable option backed up by willingness to invest" (Large, 2008a).

It was because of the above-mentioned long-standing oil cooperation and investment between China and Sudan that the international community expected Beijing to be more influential in the Darfur conflict. Faced with the pressure of international intervention, China was plunged into a maelstrom of political and moral controversy (Gill, Huang & Morrison, 2007; Taylor, 2006). While Western governments were criticizing China's inaction, the Sudanese government, on the other hand, was also disappointed by China's position of not opposing intervention. For example, in 2005 the ruling National Congress Party openly expressed its discontent with China's attitude: "Why is China waiting to use the right of veto in the face of unfair resolutions that target its friends?" (Nafi Ali Naïf, as cited in Ahemd, 2010, p. 8).

Following South Sudan's independence, China has maintained close ties with both Juba and Khartoum. Regarding the frequent oil disputes between North and South Sudan, China, as the biggest oil investor in the region, strived to keep good relationships with both sides and mediate to protect oil production (Natsios, 2012).

4.2 Basic Discourse

Due to these challenging diplomatic circumstances, China kept revising the representations of the crises in its discourse to justify the existing policies or to create new political space.

4.2.1 Development Discourse

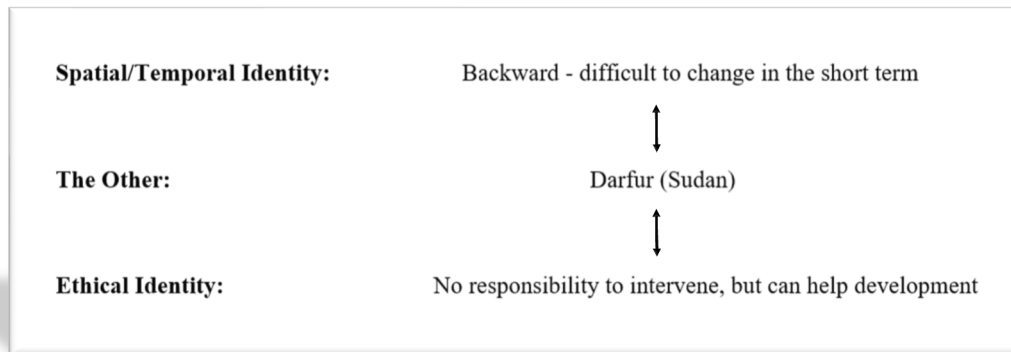
First basic discourse is the discourse of development. It is the most dominant discourse used by China. When Foreign Minister Zhai Jun visited Sudan as a special envoy of the Chinese government, he summed it up by saying:

“The Darfur issue in essence is *an issue of development*. . . . The backward Darfur region has little *natural resources* and suffers *poverty*. The basic way of resolving the Darfur issue is *economic reconstruction and development*. Without economic growth, it will be impossible to improve the living conditions, people will continue fight for basic living materials and *the root cause* for local conflict will not be eradicated” (my own translation. “Assistant Foreign Minister”, 2007).

In the development discourse, Darfur is represented as a “poor” and “backward” region. The “root cause” of the conflict is competition for subsistence resources. In other words, the cause of crisis is emphasized as not man-made, but instead as an objective effect of the unequal distribution of natural resources. This creates a temporal distance which indicates that the backward situation is difficult to change, at least in the short term. In this discourse, the Darfur region and the Government of Sudan do not have an antagonistic relationship. Instead, the suffering of the people in Darfur is seen as equivalent to the suffering of the Sudanese people. With a strategy of silencing, the controversial Khartoum's support for the militias and the tensions between the government and the people are however neglected. In the ethical dimension, this basic discourse does not create a responsibility to intervene. Instead, it suggests that there should be economic support for Darfur. The discourse therefore focuses on the appeal

for material and financial help for Sudan and rejects sanctions that could lead to more economic losses. As Ambassador Wang Guangya said:

“Sudan is one of *the least developed* countries in the world...sanctions can only inflict more *miseries* on the *Sudanese people* and may make the situation even more *complicated*” (“Permanent Representative of China”, 2004).



↔ Process of linking

Figure 1: The Development Discourse

The stability of the development discourse is rooted in its unique self-reflexivity in China. The proverb “Development is the highest truth” (发展才是硬道理, fazhan caishi ying daoli) is familiar to almost every Chinese. This idea was put forward by Deng Xiaoping in his 1992 Southern Speech. After the reform and opening up, China’s economy developed rapidly, and its international status grew together with the economic take-off. It then became a dogma in Chinese society that the improvement of the material base is the key to social stability. Former Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao stated in his government work report that “development is still the key to solving all our problems” (Wen, 2013). President Xi Jinping also stressed that “[China has] gone through in a few decades what developed countries have taken for centuries. This catch-up relies on development” (“Xi”, 2014). These discourses stabilize China’s policy that centers on economic development. “Development” itself has also evolved into a norm that China tried to promote in recent years.

By constructing Darfur as a backward Other in need of development, an experienced China Self is demarcated in the temporal dimension:

“Peace and development within Sudan are closely intertwined... China is willing to help Sudan develop its economy and improve the living standards of its people, thus eliminating the root causes of Sudan’s unrest” (“Ambassador Liu Guijin”, 2007).

The logic behind this basic discourse is that since China has gone through and overcome a similar backward phase, it understands the conflict and chaos caused by poverty and knows the right policy choices. In other words, through the development discourse, China discursively consolidates its Self-identity as a successful developing country while rejecting a responsibility to intervene.

4.2.2 Humanitarian Discourse

While the development discourse denies the need of intervention in Darfur, the discourse of humanitarianism constructs a moral imperative for China to act. Unlike the controversial characterization of genocide, the humanitarian crisis in Darfur was an objective fact supported by UN reports and generally accepted by the international community (International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur, 2005). By recognizing that the humanitarian situation in Darfur is a “serious violation of international humanitarian and human rights law” (“Explanatory remarks”, 2005b), humanitarian discourse placed a moral responsibility on the promotion of a solution to the Darfur crisis. If China remains passive, its identity as a responsible and benign state will be challenged.

In the spatial dimension, Darfur is no longer represented as one single identity in the basic humanitarian discourse. “Civilians” and “people” are introduced into the construction of identity:

“The humanitarian situation in Darfur is tugging at the heartstrings of all parties... Many innocent people have lost their lives and millions of civilians have been displaced and starved. Harassment and looting have worsened the situation for women and children” (my own translation. “Foreign Minister”, 2006).

Through this figurative representation of the war, China highlights to the public the worrying situation in Darfur. As objects of protection, the presence of victims is a prerequisite for the support of humanitarian actors. Unlike the objective environmental

situation that is difficult to change, such as “natural resource deprivation”, a humanitarian disaster caused by “harassment” or “looting” can be ameliorated. This provides a moral basis for the international intervention, emphasizing the responsibility to provide external solutions to humanitarian crises.



↔ Process of linking
 --- Oppositional split subject

Figure 2: The Humanitarian Discourse

It is worth noting that in this basic discourse, the party responsible for causing the humanitarian crisis in Darfur is absent. In other words, the victims are apolitical. Although the humanitarian crisis demonstrated that the Sudanese government failed its responsibility to protect its people, China did not stress, as the US did, that the Khartoum government was responsible for the violence. This apolitical articulation helps stabilize the humanitarian discourse. Spatially, humanitarian discourse breaks away from the traditional space of sovereignty and creates a conceptual space, in which moral responsibility is entailed and the political neutrality of humanitarian actions are emphasized. Thus, if politics is allowed to flow into humanitarian space, it will lead to the collapse of the humanitarian identity (Friis, 2012). Humanitarian principles assume that intervention does not change the Other, but only saves it (Friis, 2012). Therefore, humanitarianism is a non-political duty. It is not intended to resolve political conflicts, nor is it directed at governments or parties to conflicts. This kind of ideal political neutrality distinguishes humanitarian action (even if there is a military deployment) from traditional regime-targeted intervention. This demarcation creates a discursive legitimacy for China’s further engagement.

4.2.3 International Community Discourse

According to Chinese scholar Qin Yaqing (2003), China's relationship with the international community (国际社会, *guoji shehui*) has undergone several significant transformations through the redefinition of its national identity. Prior to the 1970s, China identified itself as a revolutionary state incompatible with the Western-dominated international system. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, by prioritizing economic development, China abandoned its earlier revolutionary attitude towards the international community. Instead, China adopted a policy of greater maintenance of the status quo and actively integrated into the international community. This effort was characterized by participation in international organizations and acceptance of most of the existing rules of the global economic and political order. Since the 1990s, China has further strengthened its cooperation with the international community and increased its recognition of it. By joining more international organizations, China hopes to "become a stabilizing factor in the world system and play a more responsible, more active role" (Qin, 2003, p.15). Drawing upon Qin's research, the Chinese Self has undergone a dynamic evolution from that of a rebel outside the system to that of a collaborator within it. The international community has also changed from a radical Other to a progressive, integratable collective identity.

4.2.3.1 The international community as "We": a complementary identity

Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing accepted China's political and moral responsibility for Darfur by underlining China as a member of the international community:

"The people of Darfur, the people of Sudan and the people of Africa are *awaiting* action from the international community to meet their immediate needs. The international community has a *political and moral responsibility* to ensure that the expectations of the civilians in Darfur do not turn into disappointment. *As a member of the international community*, China is *ready* to work with all parties to help Sudan achieve peace, stability, and prosperity as soon as possible, and to build a harmonious society in which all factions and the people can live and work in peace" (my own translation, "Foreign Minister", 2006).

The discourse of the international community plays a large part in China's diplomatic discourse on Darfur. In the first variant of this discourse, the Chinese Self is constructed

through the complementary identity of the international community. This collective identity includes international organizations such as the UN, regional organizations represented by the AU, and other countries not including Sudan. By emphasizing the attitude of the international community, China suggests that its support for the UN-led hybrid deployment is out of systematic requirement:

“The Annan Plan on peacekeeping operations is an effective way to resolve the Darfur issue at present, taking into account the concerns of all parties, and is widely accepted by the international community” (my own translation, “Assistant Foreign Minister”, 2007).

It is the “common wish of the international community” to alleviate and resolve the crisis in Darfur (“Explanatory remarks”, 2005a). It is also the “consensus” of “all members” of the Security Council and the international community to “lend a hand” to the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS). Thus, as a responsible member of the collective, China is willing to “work together with the international community” and continue to play a role in the Darfur crisis. Through this articulation, China hides its own intention and tendency to consent to intervention.

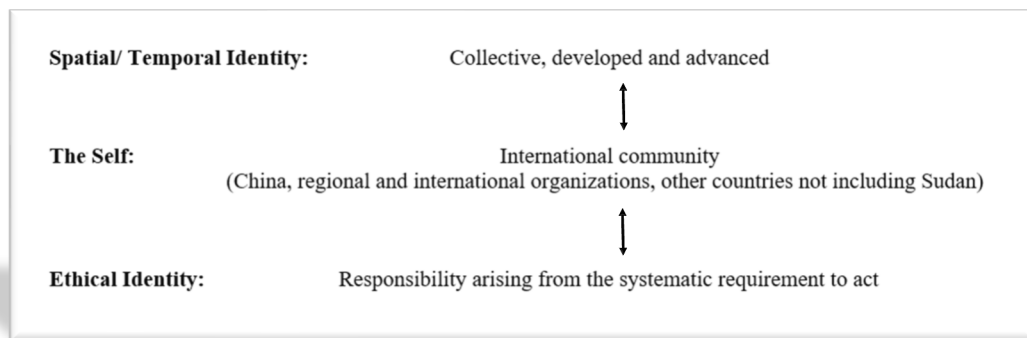
In order to be acceptable and to gain legitimacy, contemporary humanitarian interventions must be multilateral (Finnemore, 2003). Although exerting influence to require Sudan to accept international action which it would otherwise reject falls within the scope of intervention, the policy is given legitimacy because the resolutions are “agreed by the majority of countries”. As member of the international community, both China and Sudan should take into account the opinions of the majority.

In other words, with collective consent, the UN-led operation carries its own right and is what the Sudanese government should accept. While China’s status as a non-interventionary state becomes precarious when it supports international intervention, the collective identity of the “international community” complements Chinese foreign policy. In this way, China constructed a broad international legitimacy for interventions.

No matter whether it was the dispatch of a multi-functional engineering unit to Darfur or the later deployment of a peacekeeping infantry battalion to South Sudan, they were all only “in response to the invitation of the United Nations” (“Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin”, 2007). These policy choices are discursively articulated as active responses to international demands. In this variant of international community

discourse, the justice that comes with collective identity and unanimous consent constitutes a legitimizing factor for China to participation in peace operations.

By hiding the “Self” behind the “We” of the international community, China gives its policy changes obligatory and passive characteristics, and shies away from talking about how China itself will benefit from these policy choices (such as earning international reputation or gaining protection of overseas properties).



↔ Process of linking

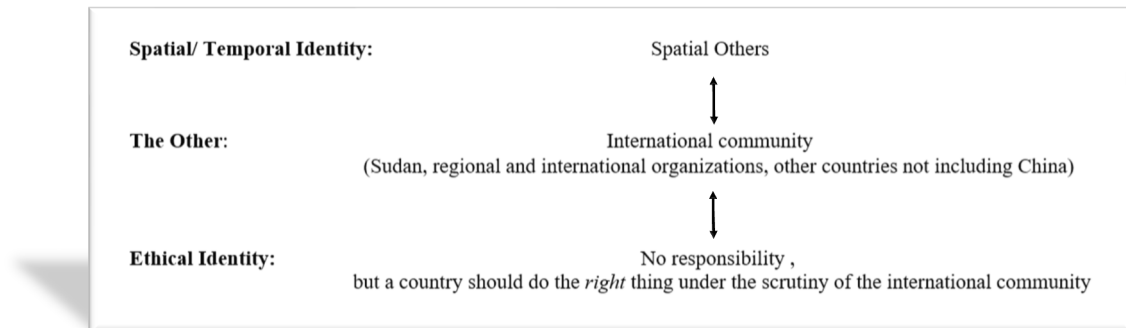
Figure 3: The International Community as “We”

4.2.3.2 International Community as the Other: Endorsers of China’s Policy

The identity of the international community in China’s discourse is twofold. On the one hand, it is the collective complementary identity as I have already analyzed above. The collective consent constructs the “why” of China’s change of position. On the other hand, the international community is constructed as a spatial Other, evaluating (mainly cited as approval) “how” effective or acceptable China’s policies are.

In traditional propaganda, intervention is usually associated with negative descriptions such as coercion, self-interest motivation, disrespect for the state concerned, etc. Thus, by presenting positive assessments from the international community (including Sudan as the state concerned), China attempts to dissipate the association between its policy and intervention. It downplays the fact that these policies have interventionary features in nature. This discourse has shown great stability in the face of international criticism: as China is praised by the majority, criticism is therefore only an unrepresentative voice.

Consequently, criticisms about China not doing enough (e.g., from the Dream for Darfur organization) lose their credibility under this articulation.



↔ Process of linking

Figure 4: The International Community as the Other

4.3 Analysis

Due to traditional views of sovereignty, China is often a staunch defender of the principles of national sovereignty and non-intervention in internal affairs. However, this firm stance changed during the Darfur crisis and the civil war in South Sudan. China went from being an indifferent bystander to an active mediator in facilitating UN deployments and ceasefires. Mediation, as a form of third-party intervention, is a manifestation of diplomatic intervention. China's active involvement fits Hodzi's (2019) definition of intervention, that is, to "affect the direction, duration, or outcome of an intrastate armed conflict" (p. 60). Thus, no matter how much China denied it in its discourse, I argue that its actions possessed a de facto character of intervention.

The stability of an identity-policy constellation means that the policy is presented in a seemingly legitimate way (Hansen, 2006). To examine the stability of identity in a policy discourse, one has to consider the broader social and political context. During a crisis, new facts may be posted by the media, the government agencies or non-governmental institutions. These facts can challenge existing official discourses by threatening the meanings, undermining the identity constructions or destabilizing proposed policies (Hansen, 2006, pp. 27-29). Facing these challenges, meanings will reenter a state of flux, awaiting discursive competitions and alternative articulations to overcome the crisis (Isleyen, 2016, p.63).

Taking Darfur and the South Sudanese civil war as case studies, the analysis will focus on how China's policy discourse on Sudan has evolved between 2003 and 2015, in particular how the basic discourses mentioned above have been applied and challenged. The research will be structured around key events, which refer to those milestones where policy options are reframed or newly presented. Key events will help me to trace the (in)stability of China's official discourse in a dynamic timeline.

4.3.1 Phase 1: Refusal to intervene 2003-2005

On 8 April 2004, the Government of Sudan signed the cease fire agreement with two rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Army and the Justice and Equality Movement. This was mediated by the AU and was regarded as the success of the “all-African” operation (Human Rights Watch, 2006). However, all parties repeatedly violated the ceasefire agreement and civilians were still under attack.

“A month after the international community solemnly marked the tenth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide in April 2004 with promises of ‘never again’, it faces a man-made humanitarian catastrophe in western Sudan (Darfur) that can easily become nearly as deadly... without a rapid international response, what UN officials have already called the worst humanitarian situation in the world today could claim an additional 350,000 in the next nine months” (International Crisis Group, 2004).

The above text is taken from a 2004 report by the International Crisis Group, which reflects the international community’s grave concern about the humanitarian problems in Darfur. In July 2004, the US Congress passed a resolution defining the conflict situation in Sudan as a genocide (House of Representatives Concurrent Resolution 467, 2004). Powell warned that genocide “has occurred and may still be occurring in Darfur” and defined the “tragedy in Darfur” as “the most difficult situations the international community [was] facing” (Powell, 2004). UN Secretary-General Annan also drew an analogy between Darfur and Rwanda in a BBC documentary, stating with distress that the international society “[has] learned nothing from Rwanda” (as cited in Reeves, 2005). As 2004 marks the tenth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, these statements brought increasing international attention to the domestic situation in Sudan. According to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the crime of Genocide (UN General Assembly, 1948), persons who committed genocide shall be punished, “whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individual”. Genocide is therefore a serious accusation. In a genocide discourse, Darfur was articulated to be a radical Other and the internal conflict was constructed as a threat against humanity. This would allow the international community to take unconventional act against it.

However, China did not share this characterization. Not only did the expression “genocide” never appear in official Chinese statements, it was not even hinted at. On 2

February 2005, the People's Daily published an article directly entitled as "There is no genocide massacre in Darfur" (达尔富尔没有种族灭绝大屠杀, daerfuer meiyou zhongzu miejue datusha) (Yang & Liu, 2005), in which China expressed its explicit rejection of this definition by citing the conclusions of the UN investigation report. China's caution stemmed from the moral and legal responsibility implied behind the genocide statement. As a signatory to the Genocide Convention, China has agreed to the obligation of the parties to "prevent and punish" genocide. In other words, if the conflict in Darfur is defined as genocide, then China must act against it. To reject this characterization is therefore to reject the need for international intervention. Discourse and practice are interdependent and mutually constituted. Just as it would be impossible for governments to wage the war on terror at the military and political levels without an accompanying discourse on counterterrorism, China downplayed the situation and downgraded the urgency to act by cautiously avoiding terms such as genocide or ethnic cleansing when describing Darfur.

In contrast to the Western narrative of genocide, the development discourse dominated the Chinese diplomatic discourse at this stage. The development discourse insisted that it was the inequality of resources and economic backwardness that led to the outbreak of the conflict between regions. This articulation had two implications: Firstly, this discourse indicated that the solution to the Darfur crisis still belongs to Sudan's internal affairs, as the promotion of economic development lied within the government's responsibility. Chinese diplomats frequently repeated this view. In 2004, Ambassador Zhang Yishan, Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the UN, stressed that "the Sudanese government has the primary responsibility for resolving the Darfur issue" ("Statement", 2004). Ambassador Wang Guangya also spoke of the secondary role of the international community, stating that the solution to the Darfur issue "depends ultimately on the Sudanese government and people". Therefore, what the international community should do was not to continue to suppress or threaten Khartoum, but to "encourag[e] and urg[e] the Sudanese Government to intensify its efforts and create favorable conditions for it" ("Permanent Representative of China", 2004).

According to a scholar from Fudan University, at the beginning of the conflict, China accepted the official Sudanese government narrative that the situation in Darfur was only local violence and thus internal affairs. China believed that the government of Sudan would be able to bring the conflict under control (Jian, 2012). During this period,

China did not play any kind of role for the conflict resolution (Sultan & Sun, 2020; Ahmed, 2010). Between 2002 and 2004, China was the largest supplier of small arms to the government of Sudan⁴ (Small arms survey, 2007, p. 25). This reaffirms China's position of characterizing the Darfur crisis as domestic politics—by exporting arms to the Sudanese government, China hoped to help the government get the situation under control as soon as possible.

In July 2004, the UN adopted the Resolution 1556, which demanded the Government of Sudan to disarm Janjaweed militias, apprehend and bring to justice those Janjaweed members who have committed humanitarian atrocities. Otherwise, the Security Council would consider imposing sanctions (United Nations Security Council, 2004). In China's view, this resolution used sanctions as a bargaining chip to demand the Sudanese government to take coercive measures. This kind of threat “[would] not help to solve the problem” (“Statement”, 2004). After abstaining from the Resolution 1556, Chinese ambassadors acknowledged and praised the efforts of the Sudanese government, who “has already taken a number of measures in an effort to fulfill the commitments”. These measures were considered as effective from China's perspective, as the humanitarian situation in Darfur “has recently improved”. At this time, China remained optimistic about the Sudanese government's ability to control the situation, “hop[ing] and believ[ing] that the Sudanese government will continue to actively implement the relevant commitments” (“Statement”, 2004).

In such a narrative, a non-failing Sudanese government was constructed, which was willing to cooperate and to taking responsibility for its internal affairs. Such a positive image was a far cry from the Western discourse of a failed government who should be responsible for genocidal atrocities. As the government was not a hopeless perpetrator of atrocities in China's discourse, the scope, and purpose of international pressure should be limited. Any measures or proposals aimed at regime change are thus delegitimized in this articulation.

⁴ In mid-2004, the UN adopted an arms embargo on Sudan's non-governmental actors. The embargo was expanded later in 2005 to include all parties as well as the Sudan government. *Human rights first* issued a similar report in 2008, which claims that China remained as the largest supplier of small arms to Sudan from 2004-2006. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang denied the allegation on 14 March, insisting that China was following the UN embargo and charging that the “the report of the organization concerned is baseless and with ulterior motives”.

In the subsequent Resolution 1564, China took a “clear position against sanctions”, as the pre-amendment draft implied the automatic imposition of sanctions on Sudan. Also, China requested the inclusion of wordings on “respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of Sudan” and weakened “the accusations against the Sudanese government”. Despite numerous amendments, however, China still had “serious concerns” about the content (“Permanent Representative of China”, 2004). In the end, “on grounds of support for the role of the AU”, China chose to abstain from voting but not to block the adoption of the resolution (“Explanatory remarks”, 2004).

The different discourses and identity constructions create different policy choices for China and the West. When China articulated the Darfur conflict as a development issue, the interests of the Darfur region and the Sudanese government were aligned together, and the construction of their identities are not conflicting. Based on the development discourse, China emphasized the primary responsibility of the Sudanese government and, by contrast, the supportive but not obligatory role of the international community to help. Thus, in the corresponding political space created by this discourse, the Darfur issue was an internal affair and a forceful intervention from outside was therefore not necessary. During this period, China was rather indifferent to what happened in Sudan, opposing external sanctions and adhered to the strict principle of non-intervention. By stressing the AU’s leadership, China tried to limit its support to the idea of “African solutions for African problems”. Guided by its identity as a strong supporter of the non-intervention principle and as a friend of the Global South, China’s foreign policy aimed to reduce international pressure on Sudan and buy time for Khartoum. In this way, Beijing has in turn managed to stabilize its traditional non-interventionist identity and avoided taking a leadership role in helping manage or resolve conflicts (Kuo, 2012b).

In addition to attributing the Darfur crisis to the internal affairs of Sudan, the second policy legitimacy that came with the development discourse was that it reaffirmed China’s caution to the effectiveness of sanctions. China sought to maintain its previously held principle of separating economics from politics, which was a fundamental stance in China cooperation with developing countries. As Zhou Wenzhong, China’s deputy foreign minister, stated:

“Business is business. We try to separate politics from business. Secondly, I think the internal situation in the Sudan is an internal affair, and we are not in a position to impose upon them” (as cited in French, 2004).

From Beijing’s point of view, economic interaction and international responsibility should be considered independently. The doctrine of non-intervention, on the other hand, discursively allowed for this separation of business and politics.

While Western countries believed that sanction is the best way to put pressure on the local government, China was “firmly opposed to the imposition of economic sanctions”. China insisted that sanctions would not be conducive to solving the problem in Sudan. They would instead even “further complicate the problem” as the economic situation would worsen. On the contrary, economic support shall be the better way to go, since local economic recovery and poverty reduction were regarded as fundamental to the solution. By constructing development as “closely linked to domestic peace in Sudan” (“Ambassador Liu”, 2007), China sent a message to international and domestic audiences that China’s economic engagement with Sudan should not be stigmatized. On the one hand, this discourse countered international criticism of the Sino-Sudanese economic activities, as “oil cooperation with Sudan is conducive to helping the country develop its economy and to addressing the root causes of war and instability” (“Ambassador Liu”, 2007). On the other hand, it also constructed a political space in which China’s national interests were prioritized. The rejection of economic sanctions was an effort by China to protect its interests in Sudan as best as it could. Chinese diplomats acknowledged that “not to jeopardize our national interests [was] the bottom line”. Ambassador Wang Guangya reassured Chinese stakeholders that when China was trying to negotiate the UN drafts, national interests was always “borne in mind”, and the text of resolutions would certainly “ensure that the interests of Chinese enterprises are not harmed” (“Permanent Representative of China”, 2004).

4.3.2 Phase 2: A Pushed Peacekeeper 2006-2008

Unfortunately, three years later, the situation in Sudan had not improved. Although the Darfur Peace Agreement was signed in 2006, it was only signed by the Government of Sudan and one rebel leader, Minni Minawi. The problem was, not only had the number of rebel groups surged to over 50 by that time, but the main rebel groups were also not all included in the negotiations. The representativeness and effectiveness of the agreement were thus challenged at the very beginning (Ferris, 2008). It was difficult to bring a real improvement to the situation by this agreement. Due to the escalated violent activities of various groups, the safety of international aid personnel was threatened. In several areas, the aid work was even forced to stop (Egeland, as cited in “Mixed UN-African Union force”, 2006).

Faced with the double pressure of the Sudanese government’s refusal to cooperate and AU’s own capacity constraints, in 2006 the AU agreed “in principle” to a UN peacekeeping presence in Darfur (Heinlein, 2006). The AU would accept the transition to an UN-led force as long as Sudan agreed. However, Khartoum reacted strongly to this mission transition proposal. It refused UN access and insisted on allowing only AU presence. The Khartoum government believed that Sudan would become a second Iraq if the international community intervened. Sudan’s President Omar al-Bashir warned directly that “Darfur would become a graveyard for any military contingent entering the region against Khartoum’s will” (as cited in Heinlein, 2006). Despite Sudan’s clear rejection to international intervention in its internal affairs, China’s attitude has shifted. The change was led by two key events: the consent from the AU and the international criticism linking the upcoming Beijing Olympics to Darfur crisis.

4.3.2.1 Consent from the AU: towards a UN-led mission

In 2002, the African Union officially replaced the Organization of African Unity. The South-South cooperation between China and the AU has gradually expanded from “anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism and anti-hegemonism” to “the common pursuit of peace and development” (Luo, 2013, p. 121). To cultivate a good relationship with the AU was one of China’s diplomatic priorities (Luo, 2013). On the Darfur issue, China has repeatedly stressed the “AU-led” approach and often cited the attitudes of African countries as one of its key considerations. For example, in explaining why China

abstained from voting on the UN resolution, China implied that the West should respect the AU's leadership in the Darfur crisis. In terms of sanctions, "many African and other members of the Council expressed their concerns with the issue of timing" ("Explanatory remarks", 2006). These statements constructed an image that China's policy preference on Darfur was not motivated by self-interest—China was not standing with Sudan, but with the greater majority of African countries instead. It stood with the AU who represents Africa's interests. This support for non-intervention was in keeping with the Chinese Self as Africa's friend. In 2006, China further expressed its willingness to strengthen cooperation with Africa in all aspects by declaring a commitment towards the "new type of strategic partnership" (新型战略合作伙伴关系, *xinxing zhanlue hezuo huoban guanxi*) with African countries.

Thus, as more and more African countries agreed to a UN-led peacekeeping operation, China's identity as the Global South's supporter will be unstable if it continued to be perceived as Sudan's best advocate (Fung, 2019). The AU's agreement to UN's participation in peacekeeping made the UN's deployment no longer a symbol of self-serving Western intervention. The international community at this time became a more unified whole, rather than an antagonistic collection of Western imperialist countries and anti-hegemonic Third World countries. Efforts to support UN peacekeeping operations now became a sign of good behavior among groups in the Global South (Fung, 2019, p.72). Moreover, the international community was losing patience with Sudan's ongoing strong confrontational attitude. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice warned Khartoum that Sudan should accept a UN peacekeeping force in Darfur. According to Rice, refusal to cooperate would only further strengthen its international isolation and domestic instability. If Sudan chose to continue this confrontation instead of cooperation, then "the regime in Khartoum [would] be held responsible and it alone [would] bear the consequences" ("US Rice", 2006).

The AU's agreement represented a consensus in the international community on a humanitarian intervention plan for Darfur. All indications showed that if China continued to support Sudan's intransigence, then China would be going against the preferences of the AU and even the whole international community. China's identity as a representative of South-South cooperation and as a responsible power would then be in jeopardy. This meant that China's discourse on Darfur needed to find a new balance in order to stabilize the link between its identity and policy.

The first discursive adjustment was the adoption of a humanitarian discourse. This discourse was not intended to overturn the previous development discourse, but rather to modify and complement it. China recognized the importance of peacekeeping operations because “without peace there can be no development, nor reconstruction” (“China’s SR”, 2007b). The representation of humanitarian crisis impacted on the construction of spatial and temporal identities as it added the subject of the victim, the innocent civilian. It modified the initial development discourse, which simplified Darfur and Sudan as the same Other in representation. Since victims in humanitarian contexts have no political, military or ethnic identity, their identity thus differs from that of the leaders and parties to the conflict (Hansen, 2006, pp. 111-114). According to the humanitarian discourse, China and the international community had a “political and moral responsibility” towards the apolitical civilian victims of Darfur, to ensure that “the expectations of civilians in Darfur [would] not turn into disappointment” (“Foreign Minister”, 2006). Having stressed that there was no goal of regime change, China distinguished the UN-led hybrid operation from traditional regime-targeted interventions. In addition, it needs to be underlined that in China’s construction of the Darfur issue, the humanitarian situation was carefully worded. China used discreet wording more often in description, such as “situation” (局勢, jushi) and “conflict” (冲突, chongtu). In official statements, the situation in Darfur was only defined as a humanitarian “crisis” (危机, weiji) for very limited times. By using words that are less severe than “crisis” to qualify what happened in Darfur, it drew boundaries about China’s limited engagement for UN intervention. For example, China still insisted that all deployments must be based on the consent of the Government of Sudan.

The reason why I argue that this discourse was just a modification rather than a reversal of the previous development discourse was because the representation of the root causes of Darfur’s humanitarian crisis still remained economic. Thus, China appealed to the international society to provide development assistance alongside humanitarian aid to Darfur (“Assistant Foreign Minister”, 2007). Secondly, Sudan was not portrayed as a failed state. Foreign Minister Zhai Jun said that during his own one-day visit to Darfur, “most areas were indeed in a relatively stable situation”. In addition, China also had a different view of the Janjaweed.

“With regard to the Janjaweed, I think *most people don’t know what the Janjaweed is really about*. I would like to tell you that ‘Janjaweed’ in Arabic means ‘those who ride

horses and carry guns'. It is a local term for bandits, *not for militias or a group with plans, goals, or guidelines...* I *don't know* if the Sudanese government supports the Janjaweed, I'm just telling you what I know about the Janjaweed" (my own translation. "Assistant Foreign Minister", 2007)

Through the denial of an organized nature of the Janjaweed, China indirectly denied the relationship between the Janjaweed and the Government of Sudan. Thus, the allegations against the Khartoum's support for militias who posed threats and violence to civilians (and possible proposals for regime change) became not valid under this construction. Although different from the positive affirmation of a cooperative Sudanese government in development discourse, the Sudanese government was still not constructed as antagonistic to the people of Darfur in the humanitarian discourse.

Refraining from open criticism of the Khartoum government was arguably China's most intuitive discursive strategy. By avoiding direct criticism against the government in public, China did not place itself in opposition to the ruling party. Chinese officials have been very cautious in their diplomatic rhetoric. The most (and rare) direct expression of its dissatisfaction was only to this extent:

"We feel really *poignant* (深感痛惜, shengan tongxi) for the *serious violations* of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the Darfur region" ("Explanatory remarks", 2005b).

Even though China later acted and aimed to reverse the position of the Sudanese government, the line between intervention and influence was blurred by avoiding a position of direct opposition. During President Hu Jintao's closed-door meeting with President al-Bashir, he opined that the Sudanese government should "work more earnestly" (as cited in "China proposes", 2007). However, in the four points plan that were publicly stated, the maximum respect was still given to Sudan. Despite the active diplomatic efforts by Chinese president and special envoys, China tried to keep a low profile in discourse, focusing on behind-the-scenes diplomacy rather than exerting discursive pressure in front of the media. This strategy enabled China to intervene in the conflict in Darfur in a non-threatening manner.

China's second discursive change to promote the UN-led operation was to emphasize that the Annan Plan was a common decision of the international community. The deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Darfur was a fact, and in face of the

international consensus for a UN takeover of the mission, China changed its support for Sudan. This is not to say that China turned into a proponent of coercive intervention, but rather that its diplomatic focus has shifted from refusing to intervene to persuading Sudan to agree to it. China was in favor of the UN taking over the AU mission, because it was not only the decision of AU, but also “a good pragmatic approach”(“ Explanatory statement”, 2006):

“Due to constraints in the areas of personnel, equipment and funding, the capacity of AMIS has been *extremely strained*. In the coming months, it may even face the dilemma of trying to *make bricks without straw* (or “no rice to cook”. 无米下炊, wumi xiachui). The AU has made *a number of appeals* in this regard (曾数度发出呼吁, ceng shudu fachu huyu), hoping for timely help from all sides (or “*charcoal in snowy weather*”. 雪中送炭, xuezhong songtan). It is the *consensus* of all members of the Security Council and the international community to lend *a helping hand* (施予援手, shiyu yuanshou) to AMIS. It is imperative that we should act as soon as possible to turn this consensus into reality” (my own translation. “Foreign Minister”, 2006).

In this discursive formation, the them/us, backward/developed, sufferer/helper identities were constructed to create the necessity for China’s policy change. By using the metaphor of “make bricks without straw” and highlighting the AU’s urgent need for help from the international community, China acknowledged (or created) an emergency situation in its discourse. Recognition of the AU’s plight became a prerequisite for the mobilization of its further involvement and the need to act “as soon as possible”. The transition of the Mission to UN leadership was not described as an erosion of sovereignty, but rather as a response to the AU’s appeal. It was articulated as a grateful and awaited help in need as offering “charcoal in snowy weather”. Through emphasizing the high level of consensus, Sudan’s opposition and refusal to cooperate were not mentioned and totally disappeared in China’s discourse.

By aligning itself with the international community, China articulated the legitimacy for its unconventional behaviors of diplomatic intervention (Wang, 2011; Sun & Zoubir, 2018, pp. 235-236). In the international community discourse, China constructed a cooperator Self with an active/cooperative attitude and a passive subjective will. By passive I mean that China described its actions as a mere response to the calls or demands of the international community, rather than as a proactive advocacy.

For example, in response to a question about whether China would participate in the peacekeeping operation in Darfur, Zhai Jun said that

“Sudan, the UN and the AU are currently holding consultations on the issue....If the parties concerned want China to participate, I think we will consider it actively” (“Assistant Foreign Minister”, 2007).

Notably, as shown in the first sentence, China was deliberately excluded, or at least neglected in its official discourse as a decision maker. In this way, China downplayed its interests and preferences behind the collective identity of international organizations. As Sultan & Sun (2020) concludes, China’s mediation was “encompassed by multilateralist efforts” (p. 13). Thereafter, at the “invitation of the United Nations” and at the “request of the UN side and of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon”, the Chinese government decided to further participate in the peacekeeping operation (“Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin”, 2007; “China”, 2008). China sent 315 multi-functional engineering units to Sudan’s Darfur region, who are “deployed in accordance with UN requirements” (“Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin”, 2007). The second batch of the engineering unit was “well prepared”. They were just waiting for the UN peacekeeping force to “give the order”, then they would be “on the way” (“China’s SR”, 2008).

Overall, China’s policy adjustment in Darfur was articulated as a reactive response. This articulation was twofold: Firstly, by not discursively constructing itself as an active advocate of the hybrid deployment (even though, in deed, China worked hard to convince Sudan to accept it), China sought to downplay its role in it and to stabilize its identity as a non-interventionist state. Secondly, by stressing its cooperative attitude, China showed that it has taken on the responsibility as a member of international community and stabilized an identity as a responsible global power.

4.3.2.2 The Genocide Olympics

Another key event that led to a shift of China’s discourse was the international boycott of the 2008 Olympic Games, which had great political significance for China. Winning the Olympic bid represented the recognition of China’s development and achievements since the reform and opening up. Hosting the Olympic Games was an important means for China to brand itself, to enhance its international influence, and to inspire patriotic enthusiasm among the Chinese people. Given the importance that China attached to the

Olympics, some critics saw it as a good opportunity to put pressure on Beijing for its limited engagement for promoting a solution in Darfur. Since 2007, as the Olympic Games have gotten closer and closer, calls for a change in China's policy towards Sudan also reached a peak.

On 28 March 2007, American actress Mia Farrow and her son co-authored an article in the Wall Street Journal calling the upcoming Beijing Olympics the "Genocide Olympics" (Farrow & Farrow, 2007). The article pointed out that Sudan spent eighty percent of its revenue on supporting the Janjaweed militia and buying weapons, most of which are made in China. As Sudan's main economic source was its oil cooperation with China, Farrow accused that China was ignoring the nightmare happening in Darfur's. In addition, Farrow specifically mentioned American director Spielberg, who would be the artistic advisor for the opening and closing ceremonies. She questioned whether Spielberg would really be willing to help Beijing organize the Games, to "sanitize" China's image, and then "go down in history as the Leni Riefenstahl of the Beijing Games". After World War II, as "Hitler's favorite film-maker", Riefenstahl was criticized to use film as medium to produce influential propaganda films for Nazi Germany such as *Triumph of the Will* and *Olympia*. Although she was never a Nazi party member, she was later sentenced as a fellow traveller (Falcon, 2003). Four days after the article publication, Spielberg wrote to the Chinese President Hu Jintao on 2 April, saying that he had only recently learned about China's "strategic and supportive relationship with the Sudanese government". Spielberg called on China to change its policy towards Sudan and to clearly advocate for the UN operation, because China had "considerable influence ... that could lead efforts by the international community to bring an end to the human suffering there" ("Steven Spielberg", 2007). Eventually, Spielberg decided to resign as a consultant for the Olympics, saying that his "conscience [would] not allow [him] to continue business as usual" (as cited in Tourtellotte & Eckert, 2008).

It was clear that since 2007 the international outcry for China to change its position on Darfur has been more vocal. In early May 2007, 108 members of the U.S. House of Representatives sent a joint letter to President Hu Jintao. This letter expressed clear ethical pressure on China, warning that the Beijing Olympics could be "disastrously marred by protest" if China would not change its position in the Darfur crisis (Watts, 2007). A group of Nobel laureates also teamed up with athletes and politicians and

demanded a more active policy from Beijing (Eckert, 2008). In addition, a torch relay was organized by the Dream for Darfur. The torch was lit near Darfur, passed through several countries associated with the history of genocide and ended up in Hong Kong (“Symbolic”, 2007). These international pressures and criticisms have created great instability in China’s identity as a benign and responsible power and threatened the positive image that China wanted to portray through the Olympics. These criticisms urged China to rearticulate and justify its policy towards Darfur.

In the face of these pressures, China made active diplomatic efforts by abandoning its previous firm attitude of indifference and became a mediator, actively persuading al-Bashir to accept the UN resolution. Shortly after Farrow’s article, Assistant Foreign Minister Zhai Jun paid a four-day visit to Sudan from 6 to 9 April, “hoping” that the Sudanese government should “show flexibility” in relation to the Annan Plan. Afterwards, Sudan accepted the Annan Plan in principle. China admitted that it played “a *crucial* role in persuading Sudan to accept the peace plan” (“China”, 2007). On 10 May 2007, Ambassador Liu Guijin was appointed as the special envoy for African affairs. This was the first special envoy of the Chinese government to Africa, representing the great importance that China attached to the Darfur issue. After taking office, Liu immediately visited Darfur from 19 to 23 May and again in June to persuade Sudan that it should accept and implement the Annan Plan. According to Liu, “China has conveyed this message to Sudan *by all means*” (as cited in Liu & Lin, 2007). As special envoy, Liu coordinated among the AU, the western powers and Sudan to reach shared positions and facilitate the political solution (Jian, 2012). In addition to these efforts, China also met directly with the Save Darfur Coalition and Spielberg for over an hour each to explain its policy.

These were clearly parts of China’s noteworthy efforts to respond to international criticism. China sought to become a “point of contact that ‘actively seeks to build consensus between all the parties involved, instead of simply facilitating negotiations’” (Liu, as cited in Hoslag, 2007, p.80). At a later stage, the Chinese government went to great lengths to emphasize its responsible role in the Darfur crisis. China has tried to play a “good cop” during this phase, persuading Sudan to make concessions while also asking the West to be patient. Sudan’s acceptance of the hybrid operation was “inextricably linked” to the Chinese government’s effort of persuasion (“China’s SR”, 2007b). On 31 July 2007, China took the chance of its presidency of the UN Security

Council to push for the unanimous adoption of the Resolution 1769. The resolution led to an agreement among the UN, the AU, and the Sudanese government on the deployment of the hybrid force.

In contrast to China's policy adjustments in diplomacy, China never discursively acknowledged the validity of these criticisms. Specifically speaking, these negative and critical voices were categorized by Chinese government as groundless "Cold War mentality" (冷战思维, lengzhan siwei). The reason why those "very individuals" with "tinted glasses" (有色眼镜, youse yanjing) were trying to link "unrelated" politics to the Olympics was perhaps "out of ignorance... or with an ulterior motive" for their own gain ("Assistant Foreign Minister", 2007; "China's SR", 2008). On the one hand, China denied the logic that China should absolutely take responsibility for Darfur by stating

"It would be *too far-fetched* to hold China responsible for Darfur because of its friendly relations with Sudan" ("Assistant Foreign Minister", 2007).

On the other hand, China was strongly opposed to linking the Olympic Games to politics, arguing that this was "contrary to the Olympic spirit and to the wishes of the people of the world" ("Assistant Foreign Minister", 2007). Liu Guijin cited the Los Angeles Review as reporting that:

"At the 19th Mexico Olympic Games, two American black athletes raised fists with black gloves at the medals podium to protest against the US discrimination policy to black people and were immediately ejected. The then IOC president said that once stepping into the holy gate of the Olympic Games, you have to put politics outside. Therefore, to politicize Olympic Games is a behavior in the Cold War era. Since the Cold War has ended, *a tiny number of people with Cold War mentality and colored glasses* should give up such behavior. Although doing this *may raise the fame of and win votes* for some people, it will *hurt the Olympic spirit* in the long run" ("China's SR", 2008).

This quoted story contained the very sensitive topic of racism in Western society. If the international community saw no problem with the expulsion of black athletes, then if they would agree with the idea that the Olympics should not be linked to politics. If people who agreed to the expulsion but still insisted on threatening the Olympics in

Beijing, then they were applying a double standard, which indicated that the expulsion may have been motivated by deeper racism or to protect the reputation of the United States.

Special Representative Liu Guijin described these criticisms as mere “noise”, some “discordant voices”, which emanated mainly from “some western media, NGOs and certain individuals” (“China’s SR”, 2007b). By using metaphors with negative associations such as noise and Cold War thinking, China completely rejected the validity of these criticisms. While attaching a “western” nature to these criticisms, the legitimacy of them was also eroded domestically, because the “West” Other has natural linkage of hegemonic and imperialist nature for Chinese audiences due to the domestic history education. China’s emphasis on the “western” identity of these critics in its official discourse implied not only that these were unjustified and “unfounded accusations” (“Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, 2007”), but also that non-western and developing countries were in approval of China’s policies.

Speaking of approval, it was also during this period that China began to highlight its “active and constructive role” in the Darfur issue. In terms of discourse, China stressed its responsible identity and constructed the international community as an endorser Other of its policies. China has been “working tirelessly to promote a political solution to the Darfur issue... its important contribution [was] evident to all” (“Foreign Ministry Spokesperson”, 2007). Politically, China “bridged the gap” through “various means” (“Assistant Foreign Minister”, 2007). Deployment-wise, Chinese peacekeepers were the “front line” of international peacekeeping operations in Darfur (“Explanatory statement”, 2008). In terms of implementation, special envoy Liu Guijin gave specific information on China’s assistance in Darfur during a media briefing:

“I visited the large water supply project built with Chinese assistance in Sudan. Under the project, 20 deep wells will be dug at a distance of 85 km away... In addition, we have dug 46 wells and built 20 small power plants in Darfur... China offered RMB80 million of assistance ... over 100 mobile clapboard houses... Chinese business donated 30 computers and a set of remote equipment to a local technology institute. I saw all these assistances of China to South Darfur in a single day” (“China’s SR”, 2008).

In his answers, Liu used very specific numbers at great length to create a visual and auditory impression. This was only what he knew “in a single day”, suggesting that there was more unmentioned assistance going on behind the scenes. These facts

represented the “tremendous efforts” that the Chinese government has made to promote a solution to the Darfur issue (“Explanatory statement”, 2008). Moreover, China repeatedly stressed that its position on Darfur was not “lonely” or isolated (孤立的, *guli de*). These policies were not only “appreciated” by the Sudanese government and the people of North Darfur (“China’s SR”, 2007a), but have also been “approved by most countries in the world, especially by the AU, the Arab League and African countries” (“Reuters”, 2007).

After promoting the unanimous adoption of the Resolution 1769, China concluded that not only the UN but also “all sectors of American society” (美国各界, *meiguo gejie*) have given a “positive assessment” on China’s “constructive role”, agreeing the Chinese government’s dispatch of the multi-functional engineering unit as “strong support for the hybrid operation” (“China’s SR”, 2007c). It is pretty interesting that the American community was singled out here. This was not only because the most vocal pressure around 2007 came from the US—by making this claim, the criticisms were thus constructed as unrepresentative. It was also because that the US was often constructed as an opponent of China and a representative of the evil West. If even the US has expressed praise for China’s policy, then the correctness and rationality of China’s policies were therefore proved.

4.3.3 Phase 3: An active Peacemaker 2013-2015

Following active persuasion by China, Sudan accepted the hybrid deployment. The troops of United Nations-African Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) were allowed to enter Darfur. Until the end of its operations in 2020, UNAMID was responsible for protecting the population, securing the humanitarian assistance, monitoring and verifying implementation of agreements, assisting an inclusive political process, promoting human rights and the rule of law, and monitoring and reporting on the situation along the borders with Chad and the Sudan (UNAMID FACT SHEET, n.d.). After the referendum in 2011, South Sudan gained its independence. However, since then, not only has there been continual conflict between North and South Sudan over the oil interests, but South Sudan was also embroiled in its own civil war since 2013. A series of violent attacks against Chinese projects and workers emerged during this period, challenging how China protects its interests and the safety of its citizens

overseas. Facing these challenges, China adopted a more proactive and decisive stance than before. Not only did China send its first infantry troops to the UN, but it also made clear negotiating goals during mediation and put forward the Chinese initiative while facilitating the peace talks. In the representation of South Sudan civil war, the development discourse and the humanitarian discourse were combined and a variant of the development-led peace discourse emerged. In the following, I will analyze this in detail.

In January 2012, a Chinese project site was attacked in South Kordofan State, which borders Darfur. There were 47 people in the camp. They all belonged to Chinese state-owned Sinohydro Corporation. Eighteen workers escaped from the attack, one of whom was shot and found dead by the Sudanese army. The other 29 workers were abducted by the opposition Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM)-North. The opposition asked China to put pressure on the Khartoum government. This included demands that Khartoum should open the previously rejected proposal for a humanitarian security corridor, investigate war crimes, address the issue of impunity for acts of genocide, and that the Khartoum government should "stop any military operations in the area where the Chinese are present until their safe evacuation" ("Chinese official", 2012). These Chinese workers therefore became a bargaining chip in the domestic disputes. In January 2013, four Chinese employees of China's Poly Group Corporation were kidnapped along with other eleven Sudanese coworkers. In these emergencies, China could only turn to the local government for rescues and hoped the authorities would "enhance the protection of Chinese personnel in Sudan" ("Foreign Ministry Spokesperson", 2013).

This series of targeted violence was a wake-up call for China on how to protect its interests abroad. In late 2013, the civil war in South Sudan broke out. The war has increased insecurity in the region, and the complex political situation further limited the ability of the local government to impose protection on Chinese citizens and property. The civil war was sparked by the power struggle between the leaders of South Sudan. In March 2013, South Sudanese Vice President Riek Machar criticized President Salva Kiir's authoritarian leadership and announced his own candidacy for SPLM President and President. In July, Kiir dismissed Machar from his position. The political struggle between Kiir and Machar, who come from the two largest tribes in South Sudan, Dinka and Nuer, soon evolved into tribal conflict. In December 2013,

armed clashes between Dinka and Nuer soldiers in the presidential guard ignited the civil war in South Sudan (Natsios, 2013; Brosig, 2020). In December 2013, the safety of 12 Chinese laborers was again challenged when they were besieged in the crossfire at a sand mining site near the Nile.

Compared to its stance in Darfur, China has played a more decisive and proactive role in the mediation during the South Sudan civil war. In the same month as the war broke out, China quickly appointed Ambassador Zhong Jianhua to visit South Sudan as a special representative. During the extraordinary summit of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in 2013, Zhong was active in understanding the needs of the parties and pushing for a ceasefire. On 6 January 2014, Foreign Minister Wang Yi met separately with negotiators from both sides of the conflict in South Sudan. Wang demanded an “immediate ceasefire” and urged them to “hold formal peace talks as soon as possible” (“Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua”, 2014a). Wang asked both sides to ensure that they would “take practical measures to protect the lives and properties of Chinese institutions and personnel in South Sudan” (“Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua”, 2014a). In April 2014, the internal conflict in South Sudan intensified and there were killings against civilians. Because oil was the government’s primary source of revenue, the opposition believed that oil cooperation was benefiting the government’s fund to the civil war (Heuler, 2015). As a result, oil facilities in the Unity state and Upper Nile became the target of anti-government forces. Opposition forces warned foreign oil companies to leave the region within a week, otherwise they would “risk forced oil shutdown and the safety of their staff” (cited in Maasho, 2014). China expressed its “strong condemnation” about it and demanded that the South Sudanese government should protect “China’s legitimate interests there and the safety of Chinese personnel” (“Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua”, 2014b; “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Qin”, 2014). At the end of May 2014, the Security Council adopted the Resolution 2155, extending United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) for six months. The resolution agreed that peacekeepers should also protect civilians, including foreigners. Providing protection for oil facilities was also included in the mandate:

“To deter violence against civilians, *including foreign nationals*, especially through *proactive deployment, active patrolling* with particular attention to displaced civilians, including those in protection sites and refugee camps, humanitarian personnel and

human rights defenders, and identification of threats and attacks against the civilian population, including through regular interaction with the civilian population and closely with humanitarian, human rights and development organizations, in areas at high risk of conflict including, as appropriate, schools, places of worship, hospitals, and *the oil installations*, in particular when the Government of the Republic of South Sudan is unable or failing to provide such security” (United Nations Security Council, 2014).

In January 2015, Foreign Minister Wang Yi attended the China-brokered Special Consultation in Support of the IGAD-led South Sudan Peace Process in Khartoum and put forward China’s initiative to resolve the conflict. This was different from the four-point plan suggested by President Hu Jintao during his visit to Sudan in 2007. At that time, Hu’s emphasis was still on basic attitudes such as respect for sovereign integrity, with a focus on the need for the Khartoum government to change its confrontational attitude. However, in Wang Yi’s initiative, specific goals were clearly proposed, including: (1) an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, (2) the formation of a transitional government, (3) firm support for IGAD’s role as the main channel for mediation, and (4) the easing of the humanitarian situation in South Sudan as soon as possible (“Wang Yi”, 2015). This differed from China’s previous approach to simply encourage political dialogue among the parties. China’s role changed in this case from a peacekeeper to that of a peace promoter. While China did not show any political preference for the parties to the conflict, it attempted to affect the duration of the civil war through diplomatic means. In addition, in March 2015, the UN Security Council unanimously agreed to impose sanctions on those blocking peace in South Sudan (United Nations Security Council, 2015). Even though China has always avoided punitive measures, it voted yes this time.

In the representation of the civil war in South Sudan, there was a combination of the development discourse and the humanitarian discourse. Together, these two basic discourses form a variant of development-led peace discourse. The development-led peace discourse shared the argument of that peace is built on development from a long-term perspective. Kuo (2012a) refers to this state-centric model, with a focus on economic construction, as “Chinese Peace”. It contrasts with western-led liberal peace attempts that focus on improving ruling structures. On the other hand, the modification of this discourse lied in that Beijing interpreted Sudan’s insecurity as the result of a

weak state rather than a mere economic root. This modification creates a non-threatening political space while allowing for the coexistence of humanitarianism. In this political space, China can help South Sudan, the weak Other, to “stabilize” the society and create the environment for development.

I will elaborate further on the specific articulation. South Sudan, as the Other, was a “newborn state” (“Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua”, 2014a). Unlike the trust China had shown in the Sudanese government’s capabilities at the beginning of the Darfur crisis, the epithet “newborn state” highlighted the vulnerability of South Sudan. This vulnerability did not only refer to the security situation, but also to the instability at the economic and political level. As a newborn state, the “priority” should be to maintain social stability and to develop the economy (Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua”, 2014a). The construction of a vulnerable South Sudan indicated that it might not have the capacity to solve its domestic problems and thus needs external protection or help. This gave a certain legitimacy to international intervention, as the engagement was based on the purpose of offering help rather than imposing repression. It was about building rather than destroying. As a “true friend” of South Sudan (Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua”, 2014a), China should lend a helping hand.

The parties to the conflict were constructed as relatives with conflicts. During Wang Yi’s visit to South Sudan, he compared the relationship between the two sides in the conflict to that of relatives, saying that the two sides were “originally a family, brothers, and sisters”. Wang Yi quoted a poem by the famous Chinese author Lu Xun: “度尽劫波兄弟在，相逢一笑泯恩仇” (dujin jiebo xiongdi zai, xiangfeng yixiao minenchou). It means the bond between brothers will still remain after all the vicissitudes; “let’s forgo our old grudges when we meet again with smile” (“Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua”, 2014a). By stressing the geographical proximity of the parties to the conflict, China downplayed the long history of struggle between the two tribes. More importantly, the metaphor of family indicated that the conflict between the two parties was not irreconcilable. This discourse thus created a political space in which China could play a role in promoting peace talks.

The meaning of stability in South Sudan was also extended in this discourse. On the one hand, stability was constructed as a prerequisite for development. On the other hand, the impact of instability in South Sudan extended beyond national borders. While the

civil war was an internal conflict, in the representation of South Sudan, China argued that the conflict will have “implications for neighboring countries such as some IGAD member states” and even “affect on the overall peace and stability of the African region” (“China”, 2013). In other words, the conflict in South Sudan was articulated as insecurity for the whole region. Promoting an end to the civil war in South Sudan has therefore gone beyond domestic politics and became a matter of concern for the entire African region. It became an issue to which the international community should pay attention. This extended the boundaries of the civil war in the spatial dimension. At the same time, as the end of civil war was constructed as a more general concern, this discourse therefore gave a political and moral responsibility to China for a more proactive approach.

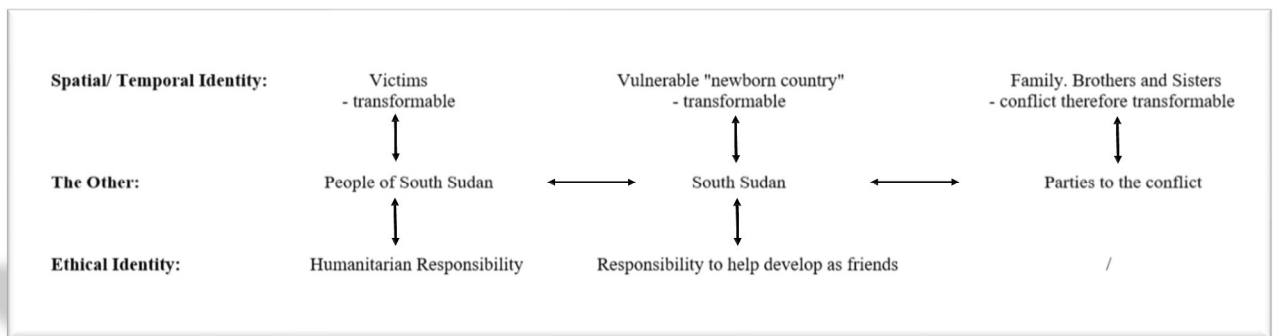


Figure 5: The Development-led Peace Discourse

Despite the decision to send peacekeeping infantry to participate in UN peacekeeping operations, China tried to keep a low profile. This unconventional deployment was only briefly described by the Defense Ministry spokesman, without any further elaboration on the boundaries between it and intervention. However, the international community has also realized this adjustment in China’s position. Reporters questioned for multiple times during routine interviews at the Foreign Ministry about whether this deployment violated China’s non-intervention policy. In response, Hong Lei denied that this meant a change in China’s diplomatic principle. China’s approach was “to maintain regional peace and create conditions for local development” (“Foreign Ministry spokesman on issues”, 2014). China also denied that sending troops was to protect oil fields or related

personnel in South Sudan, stating that China's participation in "peacekeeping operation" was aimed at "strictly fulfilling the mandate of the Security Council". The infantry was only as a continuation of the "consistent" support for UN operations ("Foreign Ministry spokesman on issues", 2014). This force would "perform its duties under the command of the UNMISS in strict compliance with its mandate" ("Foreign Ministry", 2015).

Through these discourses, China underlined that the peacekeeping infantry would be under the leadership of the UN. This implied that these soldiers were neither serving in the interests of China nor would they be accountable to China. China often emphasizes in its diplomatic rhetoric that its actions are in line with its "consistent policy and position" (一贯政策和立场, *yiguan zhengce he lichang*). But I argue this phrasing is essentially problematic. It is undeniable that promoting peace and supporting the UN's actions are indeed the policy shared by most international actors. However, the problem behind this universal phrase in diplomatic discourse is that by emphasizing its consistent position in general, China hides the unconventional level of engagement.

In addition, by stating that development as the "priority" for South Sudan, China subsumed the goal of protecting oil infrastructure, which affects China's own interests, into the goal of "all sides" during the peacekeeping. The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson stressed that "all parties have the responsibility to protect South Sudan's oil infrastructure", because these facilities would be "critical resources for South Sudan in its reconstruction and economic development during the country's peaceful transition period" (Xinhua, 2015).

These articulation represented a typical discursive strategy in China's mediation during the crises of Sudan: In denying its own interests and needs, China seeks to construct a totally altruistic Chinese Self. The "truth" of the discourse is not the focus of this thesis. In my analysis, I revealed how China discursive explained its deepening involvement through pre-existing frameworks and shied away from controversial aspects.

5 Conclusion

“A conceptualization of policy [is] always dependent upon the articulation of identity, while identity is simultaneously produced and reproduced through the formulation and legitimation of policy” (Hansen, 2006, p.187). This poststructuralist perspective offers a dynamic understanding of relationship between identity and policy. Based on Hansen’s identity construction framework, this thesis aims to analyze the discursive struggle in China’s diplomatic practice of (non-)intervention. Taking Sudan as a case study, I focus on China’s dominant foreign policy discourses of the Darfur crisis and the civil war in South Sudan. The aim is to examine what discursive strategies and articulations China has adopted to make its unconventional interventions appear legitimate and unproblematic. The analysis focuses on how discourses constructed the identity of the Other, what political spaces they created, and what discursive strategy China used to respond when the policy-identity nexus was challenged.

The case of Sudan is of typical analytical interest. Firstly, from the Darfur crisis to the civil war in South Sudan, China’s policy has undergone a remarkable transformation. From being indifferent to a pushed persuader, then to a proactive peace promoter, there was a clear turn of its non-intervention policy. Secondly, the factors influencing Chinese policy include not only international pressure (e.g., the “genocide Olympics”) but also the drive to protect domestic interests (e.g., a series of violent incidents against Chinese companies). Therefore, they provide a comprehensive background which allow me to examine China’s discursive strategies in response to different situation.

I identified three basic discourses in Chinese foreign policy through some explicit representations. These basic discourses constructed different others in spatial/temporal/ethical dimensions and advocated different policy options. Following the timeline and key events as nodes, I then reviewed the changes in China’s dominant discourses. In the beginning, China constructed the conflict in Darfur as a development problem resulting from the inequality of natural resources. The Darfur region and Sudan shared a unified, rather than opposing identity. They are both the backward, poor Other. As the issue of development was considered as an internal affair, China opposed to foreign intervention or sanctions during this time and tried to ease international pressure on the Sudanese government.

Thereafter, when the situation deteriorated further, the AU agreed to the UN's involvement in the peacekeeping operation. In the face of international consensus, China flexibly incorporated the humanitarianism and international community discourse. By constructing a non-politicized civilian victim, the humanitarian discourse articulated China an ethical responsibility towards the people of Darfur. In China's humanitarian discourse, the government of Sudan was constructed as one that actively pursued cooperation. Regime change was therefore not part of the purpose of the humanitarian intervention, allowing China's limited support for UN operations. Furthermore, joint deployment was constructed by China as a form of responsive help to AU requests, rather than out of coercive intention. This collective identity of the international community provided an external legitimate justification for the change in Chinese policy.

International criticism of the Beijing Olympics as a "genocidal Olympics" due to the slow progress of the solution in Darfur challenged China's identity as a benign and responsible power. In the face of these criticisms, China actively promoted its constructive role in the Darfur issue. By constructing multiple Others at the regional/national/international level who are grateful for China's policies, China's discourse emphasized the positive assessment by all parties and restabilized the identity-policy nexus.

After the outbreak of the South Sudanese civil war, the previous development and humanitarian discourses were further modified into a development-led peace discourse. As stability was stressed as the prerequisite for development, while allowing for the coexistence of humanitarian discourse, this discursive variant created a non-threatening political space in which China should help the weak South Sudan to stabilize the situation. Following the logic that stability as the prerequisite of development, China in turn articulated the necessity for peacekeeping by stressing the importance of development. When China decried violence against oil projects and workers, it highlighted what the oil facilities meant to South Sudan's development rather than to China. By including the protection of foreign nationals and oil facilities in the UNMISS mandate, China successfully translated its interests into a common concern at the international level. This elevated China's policy (e.g., deployment of the infantry troops) from its own self-interest to the level of fulfilling responsibility to the international community. The deepening peacekeeping engagement was articulated as a follow-on

and support to UN decisions. China once again denied the benefit it would gain from peacekeeping operations. Through these discursive articulations, China attempted to construct a fully altruistic Self.

From being an indifferent bystander, to an active mediator; from providing economic assistance to deploying infantry in peacekeeping forces, China has clearly adjusted its non-intervention principle in practice. However, China remains discursively committed to its identity as a non-interventionist state. The stability of this identity is achieved through three discursive strategies:

First, China insists on the leadership of the UN or regional organizations and rejects unilateral interventions. China portrays itself as a helper, a cooperator, rather than an advocator for intervention. As the old Chinese saying has stated, China should and will only “act with justification” (师出有名, *shichu youming*). This justification in the crises of Sudan came from the framework of multilateral intervention, especially from the UN.

Second, China emphasizes the acceptance or consent of the state concerned. This is an attempt to distinguish the action from the coercive characteristics of traditional interventions. In fact, however, by portraying the non-coercive outcome of an “accepted” intervention, China understates the interventionary process of persuasion “by all means”.

Last but not least, China aims to shape a fully altruistic self. By denying its self-interest, China seeks to distinguish itself from the traditional interventionist powers. Unlike western liberal peace attempts that usually come with a change in ruling structure, China’s indifference to the political system of the country concerned keeps regime change out of its consideration. In the alternative logic of development-led peace, although a stable country would also benefit China, China avoids talking about the benefits it would derive from the intervention (e.g., secured environment and stable economic cooperation). From a poststructuralist perspective, the stability of the Self derives from the demarcation from the Other. In China, traditional western intervention is often constructed as motivated by its own self-interest. The altruistic Self is therefore a discursive struggle by China in order to distinguish itself from the selfish Western Other.

With the introduction of the Belt and Road project, China’s footprint of interests abroad will continue to develop. The cases of Sudan crises exhibit many typical of the

characteristics of volatile and insecure regions. This suggests that similar challenges will likely emerge again for China in the future. The basic discourses I have summarized in this thesis, together with the three discursive strategies proposed above, are still of relevance in today's diplomatic discourse of China. They can provide a referential trajectory for future studies of China's foreign policy discourse.

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