
Conflicting Perspectives on Humanitarian Intervention: In Light of the Darfur Crisis

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the US and China's response to the Darfur crisis in order to examine the underlying conflicting perspectives on the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention. The findings show that the US and China characterized the Darfur crisis differently. For the US the level of violence in Darfur was genocide; thus, robust humanitarian intervention was required to stop it. On the other hand, China described the situation as a crisis, but not genocide. Therefore, addressing it requires a peace process rather than humanitarian intervention. This is a clear indication of the conflicting perspectives that exist around the principle of humanitarian intervention. The reason is that national interest rather than humanitarian consideration seems to dictate their response to the Darfur crisis.

1. Introduction

This paper discusses the US and China's response to the Darfur crisis in order to examine the underlying conflicting perspectives on humanitarian intervention. Ever since its inception, the concept of humanitarian intervention has been a controversial issue in the international community. Especially getting involved in the affairs of another state for reasons of protecting civilians from the atrocities of their own governments has been a moot subject. The reason is that humanitarian intervention relies on the use of force to ensure the respect of human rights (Bellamy, 2016), which contradicts with the sovereignty and non-use of the force of the United Nations (UN) Charter. As such, the discussion about what constitutes humanitarian intervention and how that concept can coexist with sovereignty has been controversial, causing conflicting perspectives.

Situations demanding intervention to protect human rights violations present a number of conflicting perspectives. The Darfur crisis is a case in point. The US characterized the level of violence in Darfur as genocide (Olimat, 2014). Thus, robust humanitarian intervention is required to stop the genocide (Ibid). According to the US, the Sudanese government is the culprit of the genocide; thus, any plan to end the genocide should not include the Sudanese government (Verhoeven et al., 2016). On the other hand, China termed the situation as a crisis, but not genocide (Olimat, 2014). Thus, addressing the crisis requires a peace process rather than humanitarian intervention (Verhoeven et al., 2016). China emphasized the Government of Sudan's efforts to remedy the situation, with a limited role for external parties. Hence, in China's reading, the government of Sudan was neither to be confronted nor ignored, but rather to be assisted in fulfilling its obligation to protect its citizens (Ibid).

By using the Darfur crisis as a case study, this paper seeks to understand the stark controversy that exists on the doctrine of humanitarian intervention, especially along the North-South line. In doing so, it addresses the question, how far the US's and China's response to the Darfur crisis was genuinely motivated by humanitarian concern, or whether their true aim was to secure their national interests.

2. Background of the Darfur crisis

Darfur is a region in western Sudan, which is approximately the size of mainland Spain (Weldon, 2017). It is home to an estimated 7 million people and has more than 30 ethnic groups (Dagne, 2004). Despite being ethnically heterogeneous, the groups in Darfur can be broadly classified as Arab descendants or African (Weldon, 2017). Arabic nomads reside in the northern and southern regions of Darfur, while the center is comprised of African farmers (Lusignan, 2005). Both communities are Muslims, and years of

intermarriages have made racial distinctions impossible (Dagne, 2004). The Darfur crisis is too complex to be labeled to a single cause, but broadly it can be attributed to two main factors: competition for scarce resources and central government neglecting the region (Ibid).

Figure 1: Political Map of Sudan and the Darfur Region.



Source: *oxfamamerica.org*

2.1 Competition for Scarce Resources

At the core of the Darfur conflict lies a competition for scarce resources, which predates the existence of the state. The largely nomadic Arab ethnic groups often venture into the traditional farming communities of Darfur for water and grazing, often triggering armed conflict between the two groups (Ibid). During the dry season especially, drought and desertification in the northern region of Darfur pushed the nomadic Arab descendants' herders south into the central areas, causing clashes with the African farmers (Lusignan, 2005).

2.2 Government Neglecting the Region

Central government neglecting the Darfur region was another claim for the cause of the Darfur crisis (Dagne, 2004). Given the scarcity of resources and uneven development policies and strategies, western Sudan, especially Darfur, became the worst neglected region. Although the whole of Sudan is relatively underdeveloped, Darfur remains one of the most underdeveloped regions in the country (Shepherd et al, 2009). Notably, the African Darfurians accuse the government of Sudan, leaving them with poor economic development, poor health and education facilities (Ibid). In response to this, rebel forces called the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) revolted against the government in 2003 (Ibid). The Sudanese government, however, retaliated by attacking the region of non-Arab tribes, especially by recruiting and arming the Janjaweed militia, which are Arab descendants (Weldon, 2017).

Since the conflict began in early 2003, tens of thousands of Darfurians have been killed and hundreds of thousands displaced. The number of casualties varies according to different sources. For instance, according to the estimates given by the government of Sudan, the number of casualties were 10,000. However, according to the World Health Organization, the numbers of casualties were 70,000 (World Health Organization cited in Hagan, 2011). And according to Bruce Lusignan, 30,000-50,000 are estimated to have been killed, and 1.2 million have been displaced out of the 7 million population of the Darfur region (Lusignan, 2005). According to Dagne, an estimated 240,000 people had fled westward to refugee camps in neighboring Chad (Dagne, 2011), and many others remained internally displaced (Dagne, 2004). The government of Sudan was also accused of carrying out genocide by starving the people and preventing humanitarian access to Darfur (Shepherd et al, 2009).

Khartoum has rejected claims that the Darfur conflict is being fought along ethnic lines (<https://www.hrw.org/legacy/background/africa/sudan/2004/3.htm>). Instead, it argues that the conflict was a tribal clash exacerbated by competition for resources due to desertification and the insurgency that was intensified in the region since 2003 (Ibid). Thus, Sudanese President Omar el-Bashir accused the Western media of "fabricating and exaggerating" the situation in

Darfur for reasons to distract the international community's attention from atrocities in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Palestinian territories, and Somalia (Nakhlawi, 2008). He further said that the crisis only affects 10 percent of the region; thus, the majority are living normal lives (Ibid).

Similarly, Permanent Representative of Sudan to the UN Mr. Elfatih Mohamed Erwa criticized the US for amplifying the outcry for political reasons and described the UNSC Resolution 1556 as a "Trojan Horse" (National Security Archive, US, 2014). He further claimed that the US government had supported the rebellion in Darfur, which his government had a recorded communication (Ibid). Mr. Erwa said that his country 'would never be safe from the council even if there was no crisis in Darfur' (Ibid). In his opinion, his government has been singled out for political reasons rather than for wrongdoings.

Before discussing the response of the US and China to the Darfur crisis in detail, it is essential to look at the concept of humanitarian intervention and its conflicting perspectives. Here the focus is on the more controversial category of humanitarian intervention that is without the UN Security Council approval. Such a type of intervention is often called unilateral humanitarian intervention. It can also cover situations in which more than one state is involved in the use of force. It is interesting to note that humanitarian intervention takes place only if the target state does not give consent. If consent is given by the target state, there is no need to invoke humanitarian intervention; rather it will be simply intervention by invitation.

3. Conflicting Perspectives on Humanitarian Intervention: Supporters vs. Opponents

Since the end of the Cold War, there have been attempts to reform the international system, which rests on the principles of state sovereignty and non-interference founded on the Charter of the UN. Mario Battati noted that following the end of the Cold War human rights would be one of the top priorities of the new world order (Bettati, 1996). Similarly, Mahmood Mamdani concludes that following the end of the Cold War the phrase state sovereignty would be widened to encompass an international standard of human rights standards (Mamdani, 2009). Also, Alex J. Bellamy and Nicholas J. Wheeler suggested that, since the 1990s, there was a significant shift of attitudes on the inviolability of sovereignty, which led to the primacy of humanitarian claims' (Bellamy, 2016). It seems that the end of the politics of the Cold War has tilted the argument in favor of intervention. Thus, the inviolability of state sovereignty, which has been the defining principle in the international system, has now become obsolete with the evolution of the human rights regime (Ignatieff et al., 2011).

The decision to intervene or not to intervene in a humanitarian crisis has been a controversy in the international community. The main hotly contested issues have been addressing the questions of who justifies humanitarian intervention and on what bases, who has the right to intervene, and whether states should forfeit their right to sovereignty if they are accused of human rights violations (Shimko, 2016). These questions have been central to the controversy, especially along the North-South lines that led to the long-standing debate between supporters and opponents of humanitarian intervention.

3.1 Supporters

Humanitarian intervention which emphasizes the protection of human rights by interventionist means has been promoted by the global North (Western countries). Advocates of humanitarian intervention argue that the state-based norms of collective security of the UN Charter, especially the rights of state sovereignty and non-intervention, are unfit to meet the new international norms which seek to protect violations of human rights in the international community (Chandler, 2004). That is to say, if non-interference has emerged as a result of a changing international system, so does the protection of human rights violations, which necessitates a new change in the global system.

According to the supporters, states forfeit their sovereignty rights when they violate or fail to protect the basic rights of their citizens (Shimko, 2016). In other words, sovereignty derives from a state's responsibility to protect its citizens, and when a state fails in its duty, it loses its sovereign rights (Tesón 2003, cited in Bellamy, 2016). In such situations, the broader international community bore the responsibility to protect people's lives, and thus forcible humanitarian intervention would be considered lawful. As Michael Walzer stated in his prominent work 'Just and Unjust Wars', humanitarian intervention is justified when 'it is a response to acts that shock the moral conscience of mankind' (Walzer, 2007).

Defenders of humanitarian intervention stress that there is a moral agreement between the world's major religions and ethical systems that genocide and mass killing are serious wrongs (Bellamy, 2016). Hence, there is a good moral justification for humanitarian intervention to protect civilians from mass violations of human rights, irrespective of what the UN Charter says (Ibid). Furthermore, in today's interconnected world, massive human rights violations in one part of the world affect every other part, they argue (Blair 1999, cited in Bellamy, 2016).

The pro-interventionist believe that their point of view is based on moral grounds, not on realpolitik. Conforming to this view, Samantha Power claims that the "responsibility to protect" innocents from slaughter is sacrosanct, even if it means U.S. military

violating foreign nations' sovereignty (Power, 2013). Also, Cristina Gabriela Badescu states that killing civilians is no longer acceptable as a necessary part of state formation, nor is the international community standing by idly in the face of massive violations of human rights (Badescu, 2011). From the supporters' viewpoint, humanitarian intervention is seen as a progressive doctrine; with political, legal, and moral significance making it fit for its purpose (King's College London; International Peace Support Training Centre-Karen & Aluoch, 2018).

3.2 Opponents

Opponents of humanitarian intervention (most countries of the global South) oppose the very idea of humanitarian intervention. According to them, humanitarian intervention violates the UN principle of state sovereignty and non-use of force. Hence, any attempts to reform the international system that has been founded on the principle of sovereignty and non-intervention is unacceptable (Chandler, 2004). No matter what the justification is, any act of military intervention in other countries' sovereignty indicates a reverse of the international order to the time where might was right - the same situation that caused the two world wars.

Obviously, no principle of the UN Charter is more important than the principle of non-interference. Article 2 (4) of the United Nations Charter defines the principle of non-interference as follows: 'All Members [member states] shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state ...' (*United Nations, Charter of the United Nations*, 24 October 1945, 1 UNTS XVI). The accepted exception to this principle is that Chapter VII, which sets out coercive measures by the Security Council when international peace and security is under threat (Article 42) (Ibid).

The recognition of the principle of non-interference has been considered as a major step towards an international order of peaceful co-existence among nations. Hence, the idea of human rights is valid as long as it is compatible with the basic norm of non-interference, the anti-interventionists argue (Köchler, 2001). If a government refuses to respect the rights of its people, this still should not be a justification for violating its sovereignty. As Naom Chomsky states, the ultimate sovereign of each nation-state is the people of that state, whose right to replace unjust governments cannot be taken over by supposedly benevolent outsiders (Naom Chomsky, 2011. "The Skeleton in the Closet: The Responsibility to Protect in History" in Cunliffe, 2011).

According to the opponents, humanitarian intervention is prone to abuses by the great powers, and unless their national interest is involved, they are simply unwilling to incur substantial costs to defend the rights of others (Shimko, 2016). Thus, any act of humanitarian intervention, whether exercised on a unilateral, regional or multilateral level, will be determined by the interests of the power(s) initiating it' (Köchler, 2001). Similarly, Andreas Kraig states that humanitarian intervention is mainly determined by the intervening states rather than by the domestic conditions of the target state (Krieg, 2013).

Countries of the global South have repeatedly condemned unilateral humanitarian interventions, which undermines their rights of sovereignty and possibly usher in a more coercive international order (Köchler, 2001). However, the UN can do nothing to stop them. This has profoundly demoralized the countries of the global South, which do not enjoy the status of permanent membership. As Stanley Michalak noted, 'The UN was explicitly designed so that it would be unable to act against any of the permanent members or even against their pleasure' (Michalak, 1971).

In theory, accepting the principle of humanitarian intervention erodes every nation's sovereignty. However, in practice, humanitarian intervention always seems to be used in the territory of weak nations of the global South, as if human rights violations only occur there. For instance, according to Amnesty International's 2015 report, Australia and Canada have been practicing systematic human rights violations against the indigenous Aboriginal peoples (*Amnesty International Report*, 2016). The same report raised serious human rights issues in the US, especially among the African-American minority group (Ibid). Therefore, if the same doctrine of humanitarian intervention is applied, would Australia, Canada, and the US agree that other countries have the right to intervene in their domestic affairs? The answer is simply impossible. Thus, it is clear that in practice, there is no danger that foreign troops will land in the global North nations for reasons of protecting human rights violations.

In its current status and application, it is unequivocal that humanitarian intervention is reserved only for the most powerful states. Often used as a justification for the use of force in the countries of the global South not for the protection of human rights but for their own national interests (Brownlie, 1963). The global South nations, having finally achieved the sovereignty they were denied for so long, are now told that the time has come to give it up. Therefore, in the view of the opponents, humanitarian intervention is simply selective, inconsistent, and imperialistic in nature.

The Darfur crisis provides an extraordinary situation to test the conflicting perspectives in humanitarian intervention. And the US and China's responses to the crisis are discussed to understand how this conflicting perspective applies in real-life cases.

4. US Response to the Darfur Crisis: Moral Obligation vs. National Interest

4.1 Moral Obligation

From the beginning, the United States under the then republican president George W. Bush has actively engaged in the Darfur crisis. The then US Secretary of State, Coline Powell, stated that "Darfur killings are genocide" (Shepherd et al, 2009). Thus, it requires a robust humanitarian intervention to stop it. Likewise, the Permanent Representative of the US at UN, Mr. Danforth, accused the government of Sudan of fostering an armed attack on its civilians and creating a humanitarian disaster (National Security Archive, US, 2014). In August 2004, the United States Congress unanimously adopted a resolution labeling the situation in Darfur as genocide (Shepherd et al, 2009). This means that humanitarian intervention can be considered.

Washington argued that its position in Darfur was motivated by a moral obligation, to stop the genocide and help save the people of Darfur (National Security Archive, US, 2004). For the US, the government of Sudan is the culprit of the genocide and has ceased to be a partner for any solution (Verhoeven et al., 2016). Accordingly, an effective solution requires a strong protection effort with international peacekeepers confronting the Sudanese armed forces and their allies (Ibid). In this light, principal veterans of the US National Security Council even proposed a Kosovo-style approach and said that "We Saved Europeans; why Not Africans?" (Ibid). Similarly, Hawkish policy entrepreneurs - USAID administrator Roger Winter and Smith College's Eric Reeves advocated for regime change as the only effective way to stop the genocide (Ibid).

A document retrieved from National Security Archives titled "Darfur: Who Will Apologize?" asserts that, since the US is the only country that labeled the atrocities in Darfur as genocide, it must lead the coalition that will stop it (National Security Archive, US, 2013). The US military force and expertise are vital to ending the genocide because the international force is weak and limited in mandate (Ibid). The document recalled how the US has failed in the Rwandan genocide, in which President Clinton visited Rwanda in 1998 and said that "We must never again be shy in the face of the evidence" (Ibid). In the case of the Darfur genocide, which American president will apologize? the document stated (Ibid).

Broader contestation was reflected in the nature of the Darfur crisis, especially whether it constitutes genocide or not. In 2005 an International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur, authorized by UNSC Resolution 1564, issued a report stating that the government of Sudan has not pursued a policy of genocide (Verhoeven et al., 2016). However, as is often the case in assessing genocide, applying the third required element of 'intent' of Article II of the 1948 Genocide Convention was controversial (National Security Archive, US, 2004). And deciding whether the Arab Janjaweed militia –supported by the government of Sudan - has the specific intent to destroy the black African Muslim farmers, in whole or substantial part, was a moot point (Ibid). As Dubinsky stated, genocide or systematic ethnic cleansing does not seem to have taken place in Darfur (cf. Dubinsky 2005, cited in Shepherd et al, 2009).

The US's past experiences on humanitarian intervention show that it has been selective and inconsistent in its application of moral obligation. As such, many scholars have expressed the view that the US has been using 'moral obligation' as a disguise to pursue its national interests. A case in point is the deplorable genocide of some 800,000 people in Rwanda in 1994. Despite early knowledge of the danger of the crisis, the US chose not to intervene (Lusignan, 2005). The US had enough available forces that could have easily extended to Rwanda if it had chosen to intervene and stop the genocide. As Samantha Power in her book 'A Problem from Hell' pointed out, the US - as the world's indispensable nation - has the moral duty to use its awesome military capabilities to save civilians when states fail to act (Power, 2013). However, the US did nothing to stop the genocide because Rwanda at that moment was never prominent on the US political agenda, and there was no national interest to protect there.

Conversely, five years after the Rwandan genocide, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Forces – spearheaded by the US - intervened in the Kosovo crisis on humanitarian grounds at a time when there were only about 500 deaths (Wheeler, 2003). These two events (Rwandan genocide and Kosovo crisis) expose the US' selective application of its humanitarian intervention policy. Contrary to what the US claims, moral or human rights values are basically used as tools to justify its national interests. These genuine values serve as weapons against countries Washington does not like, which are cherry-picked according to the national interest of the moment, rather than moral values.

4.2 National Interest

Sudan had economic and security interests for the United States. Economically, Sudan has natural gas and oil. The US's dependence on oil has long influenced its foreign policy. This has become clearer during the Bush junior presidency when the US unilaterally invaded Iraq in 2003 for the purpose of oil under the pretext of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). Chevron - an American energy corporation - discovered oil in Sudan in 1979 (Ibid). However, before it started production it had to leave the country in 1990 because of the civil war (Ibid), giving China the opportunity to fill the vacuum.

In 1999 PetroChina managed to produce oil in Sudan. And by 2009 Sudan has become the third-largest sub-Saharan African-oil exporting country, after Nigeria, and Angola, in which 68.3% of its oil production was exported to China (Olimat, 2014). Evidently, the US was not happy with this. Thus the Darfur crisis was a blessing in disguise to change things in favor of its national interest. The US has spearheaded the UN Security Council resolution 1556 on the Darfur crisis, which threatened to sanction Sudan. Moreover, it has supported the independence of South Sudan that obviously weakens Sudan's oil leverage. According to Bruce Lusignan, the US hostile policy towards Sudan was believed to serve to garner a piece of the oil pie and to contain China, and arguably a rising global power that will challenge its hegemony (Lusignan, 2005).

Security is another national interest of the US in Sudan. Sudan was on the American list of rogue states. As such, in 1997 the US imposed comprehensive economic, financial, and trade sanctions against Khartoum. A state department report in 2002 notes that groups such as Al Qaeda, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, HAMAS, and the Egyptian Islamic Jihad have safe havens within Sudan's borders (Ibid). After 9/11, the US removed Sudan from a State Department list of "non-cooperative" states in the war on terrorism. And in 2017, it lifted a two decades economic sanction in the country, saying that Khartoum had begun addressing concerns about terrorism.

That being said, some scholars and political analysts believe that the US's concern on the Darfur crisis was indirectly linked to the independence of South Sudan. The Darfur crisis erupted while the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between North and South Sudan was taking place in Abuja. The purpose of the peace agreement was to guarantee independence for South Sudan in which the US-orchestrated for so long. Hence, the Darfur crisis provided the right moment to put more pressure on Khartoum to accept the agreement.

The reason why the US worked for the independence of South Sudan was not for the sake of South Sudanese independence, but rather to garner its oil share in the country. When South Sudan separated from Sudan, 75% of the oil has gone under the territorial control of the Republic of South Sudan (RSS) (Agubamah, 2014). Obviously, this has weakened the oil leverage of Sudan as well as China, at the same time strengthening the US' and the RSS'. This is a clear indication of how national interest rather than moral obligation characterizes the US' humanitarian intervention policy.

5. China's Response to the Darfur Crisis: Non-interference Principle vs. National Interest

5.1 The Principle of Non-interference

China's response to the Darfur crisis was one of the most closely watched in international relations, especially in its non-interference policy application. In foreign policy principles, one of China's greatest assets is that its commitment to the doctrine of non-intervention (Erian, 2012). In line with the UN Charter, China has a firm commitment to sovereignty and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other nations. China's firm commitment to non-interference was best highlighted at the Bandung Peace Conference in 1955 by the then Premier Zhou Enlai as follows:

Peace can only be safeguarded by mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Encroachment on the sovereignty and territory of any country and the interference in the internal affairs of any country will inevitably endanger peace. If nations give assurances not to commit aggression against each other, conditions will be created in international relations for peaceful coexistence... it will then be possible for the people of these countries to choose their own political system and way of life in accordance with their own will (Main Speech by Premier Zhou Enlai, Head of the Delegation of the People's Republic of China, n.d.).

China historically faced numerous breaches of its sovereignty. During the period between 1839 and 1949, which is commonly known as China's "Century of Humiliation", China lost control over large portions of its territory at the hands of Western powers (Kaufman, 2011). This experience has arguably fueled its firm stance on non-intervention. In addition, China's fear of separatist threats in Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang fueled its strong objection to intervention in the affairs of others (Prantl & Nakano, 2011). This drives China to promote non-interference elsewhere.

While China believes that human rights are relative, and each country should be allowed to tackle it in its own way without external interference, the West views human rights as a global issue that supersedes sovereignty, and external interference is to be carried out when it has to do with protecting human rights violations. China argues that attempts by foreign nations to discuss human rights violate the rights of a sovereign country. As a permanent member of the Security Council, China's position has gained wider acceptance in the global South nations who seem to be more concerned with getting rid of Western interference in their domestic affairs.

According to several political analysts, China's position on the Darfur crisis was determined by its non-interference policy. China argued that the Darfur crisis was an internal affair of Sudan that should be left to the Sudanese government to handle. Thus, it

emphasized the Sudanese government's efforts to remedy the situation (National Security Archive, US, 2014). In China's understanding, the Sudanese government was neither to be confronted nor ignored, but rather to be assisted in fulfilling its obligation to protect its citizens (Verhoeven et al., 2016). The West criticized China's position, saying that it amounts to nothing but direct complicity in fuelling the crisis (Agubamah, 2014).

Unlike the US, which endorsed a punitive response, China pushed for an engagement approach in the Darfur crisis (Ibid). Such a position was reflected during the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 1556 in which China objected citing article 41 of the UN Charter, which threatened to sanction Sudan (complete or partial interruption of economic relations and communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations) (Nebati, 2004). In all the SCR on Darfur, China did not veto either did it vote no. Even when the Security Council adopted resolution 1593 (2005) and referred to the Darfur issue to the International Criminal Court (ICC), China did not veto. To this day China refrains or abstains from voting on UNSCR that mandate intervention instead of vetoing or voting 'no' to such interventions (Iyasu, 2013). That is to say, China indirectly allows several interventions to go ahead without having to reverse its commitment to non-intervention.

China has never vetoed or voted 'no' to any of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Darfur, despite intense pressure from Khartoum. Nafi Ali Nafi, assistant, and adviser to the president and deputy president for political affairs of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP), openly criticized China for not using its veto power to stop the Security Council resolutions (SCR). He went on to say, 'why is China waiting to use the right of veto in the face of unfair resolutions that target its friends?' (Ahmed, 2010). This shows that China has not obstructed relevant international resolutions and therefore its support for Sudan has not been unconditional.

5.2 National Interest

China's position on the Darfur crisis was criticized for it was determined by its oil interests in Sudan rather than by its non-interference policy. According to Olimat (2014), China's dominance in the Sudanese oil sector was clearly the primary reason for its strong support for Khartoum (Olimat, 2014). Similarly, Sutter (2010) argues that China used its position on the UN Security Council to avoid resolutions that threatened sanctions against the Sudanese government over Darfur, which would have affected Chinese investments in the country" (Sutter, 2010 cited in Olimat, 2014).

In line with this view, Richard Just (2004) criticizes China for its unconditional support to the Sudanese government due to its strong economic engagement with the country (Just, 2004). According to these critics, China obstructed relevant international resolutions aimed at stopping the widespread violations of human rights in Darfur (Ibid). That is to say since China indirectly encouraged Khartoum to carry out the atrocities it bears some responsibility for the worsening humanitarian crisis in Darfur.

The Sino-Sudanese oil cooperation predates the Darfur Crisis. With the dramatic inflow of China's foreign direct investment into Sudan's oil sector in the 1990s their relationship has been expanded (Pitso, 2015). In 1990 when the US companies abandoned Sudanese oil fields because of the civil war (between North Sudan and South Sudan), Khartoum invited Chinese oil corporations to explore its territory (Lusignan, 2005). Subsequently, in 1999 the Chinese managed to produce oil in Sudan, transforming the country from oil-importing into oil-exporting. And by 2009 Sudan became the third-largest oil-exporting country in Sub-Saharan Africa, behind Nigeria and Angola (Olimat, 2014).

As the Sino-Sudan oil cooperation becomes successful, Sudan has become a significant trading partner for China, especially in the energy sector. As such, sixty percent of its total oil production was exported to China (Ibid). The success in the oil sector also had spilled over effects in the overall trade of the two countries. For instance, in 2009 an estimated 68.3% of Sudan's exports go to China and 21.7% of imports came from China (Ibid). Between the 1990s and 2006, Sudan's inflation rate had dropped from 135% to 5%, and also its annual economic growth rate was maintained at around 8-12%, which was one of the best growth rates in Africa (Ibid).

In line with this view, Edgar Agubamah argues that China's tremendous contribution to the revival of Sudan's economy through the development of its oil industry was overlooked due to the debate over the Darfur crisis (Agubamah, 2014). According to him, Sudan's economic revival had a direct impact on accelerating the peace process in South Sudan, which leads to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005 (Ibid). Without the economic growth in the country, the peace agreement would not have been successful, Agubamah argues (Ibid).

Because of its economic interests, China used its diplomatic networks and the UN Security Council position to avoid resolutions that threatened sanctions against Khartoum over Darfur, which would have affected its interests in the country. Also, when Khartoum rejected the adoption of UNSC 1706, which proposed the deployment of UN peacekeeping mission to Darfur in replacement of the AU peacekeeping force, China played a key role in ultimately getting Sudan to accept the AU-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) (Ahmed, 2010).

China's economic interest in Sudan was unequivocal. When the West approved sanctions against Sudan, China was caught between the US pressure and safeguarding its own energy interests. As such, China has never been an active player in the Darfur peace process. Some argue that without its energy interests; China would not have been an active player in the Darfur crisis. This implies that China's response to the Darfur crisis, like the US, was derived from its national interests.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Ever since its inception, the concept of humanitarian intervention and its legitimacy has been a contested issue in the international community. There is no problem with the concept, as it claims to stop gross human rights violations. The main problem, however, is when it comes to its implementations. Past experiences have shown that much of the decision-making processes that led to humanitarian intervention have been shaped by national interests rather than humanitarian considerations. Also, the sheer inconsistency with which the international community responds to human rights violations (intervention in some and non-intervention in others) challenges the effectiveness of the humanitarian intervention. In theory, the principle of humanitarian intervention erodes every nation's sovereignty. In practice, however, it seems to be suggested on the territory of the weak global South nations, as if the problem of human rights violations happens only there.

In the case of the Darfur crisis, the US described the extent of the violence as genocide. Hence, robust humanitarian intervention is required to stop the genocide. China, on the other hand, called it a crisis, but not genocide. Therefore, dealing with the crisis requires a peace process rather than humanitarian intervention. The US claims that moral obligations rather than national interests shaped its position on the Darfur crisis. Likewise, China claims that its position is characterized by its non-meddling policy rather than its national interest. It was evident, however, that the US and Chinese response to the Darfur crisis had nothing to do with humanitarian considerations; rather, it was based on their national interests in Sudan.

Although ending gross human rights violations against civilians has been claimed as the main purpose of humanitarian intervention, little is known about its effectiveness. As a matter of fact, so many damages have been done in the name of humanitarian intervention. As David N. Gibbs noted, because of its warfare nature, humanitarian intervention could easily worsen the humanitarian crisis it intends to correct (Gibbs, 2009). Apparently, with the controversies and politics surrounding the current humanitarian intervention principle, powerful nations will always find ways to justify their military actions over the weak nations as humanitarian intervention, not in the protection of human rights violations but simply to secure their national interests.

Nonetheless, this reality should not negate the overall importance of humanitarian intervention. It could still be considered as a significant practice to stop or at least minimize humanitarian crisis, if it can be conducted under the UN auspices, by working towards establishing a standing UN army for the objectives of humanitarian intervention. However, the unjust Security Council should be abolished from the UN system for this to be impartial. Only then, intervention for purely humanitarian purposes could be used. If not, in the current situation humanitarian intervention could simply be used by the powerful nations as a tool to promote their national interests rather than protect human rights violations.

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