

# A Turning Point for China in Africa?

## -The 2011 Referendum in Sudan-

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### 1. Abstract

This paper is about analyzing and predicting how the 2011 referendum will affect the relationship between Sudan and China.

In recent decades, China has been increasing its presence in Africa economically and politically. Many have found the trend disturbing. For these people, the way China gets its popularity among African nations is via untied aid and corruption. While the international community restricts providing aid without promotion of democratization, China has been investing mainly on natural resources without any condition and colluding with those governments in order to gain its presence. This is often in a violation of international rules.

The most typical example of this new investment is the relationship between Sudan and China. Recently, Sudan has been experiencing rapid increase in oil, and is expected to be the new member of OPEC. The background is the massive investment by China. The range of China's support is not only investment over oil related facilities, but also a dam, ports, and roads. China is developing the entire infrastructure in order to make Sudan its own massive oil development station. However much this has in fact contributed to Sudan's development and can be positively evaluated, the problem is that China also smuggles weapons to Sudan. With those weapons, the Khartoum government has aggravated conflicts such as the Darfur War and the Civil War. The Darfur War is known as one of the most horrible ongoing conflicts in the world. It is reported that 20 million people were murdered and many of them were the victims of ethnic cleansing. There is certain evidence that the weapons used in the Darfur War are made in China. In the Civil War, the rebel army which demanded the independence of

southern part of Sudan was oppressed by the Khartoum government utilizing Chinese weapons. In addition, those Chinese weapons were even used to threaten people to secure lands for dams and oil facilities. The way China deprives natural resources from African nations are commonly criticized as “neo-colonialism,” and many of the critics warn that China, in becoming a super-power, will take over a huge portion of natural resources in Africa.

However, there is a significant event that may change the current situation. The Civil War finally ended in 2005; and both of the sides agreed to have a referendum in Southern Sudan on independence in 2011. Since the end of the Second World War, it has been quite unusual that an African nation is split up. Because of this event, China has been facing difficult choices. Since most of the oil Sudan has is produced in the south, the concessions which China secured are also in the south; however, China has been actively supporting Northern Sudan. Thus, people in Southern Sudan have a sense of hostility against China. However, if China switches the policy and starts supporting Southern Sudan, that may destruct the long and strong relationship with Northern Sudan, also impacting the flow of oil. In addition, the Peace Agreement in 2005 clearly states that the oil concession would be divided equally, but the way of dividing is still quite controversial. Therefore, China is now set to change its policy. Because China has a massive concession over two conflicting groups, it can no longer continue the “neo-colonization policy,” but start reconciling those two nations.

Analyzing the consequence of the 2011 referendum in Sudan would be an important key to predict the future relationships between China and Africa. This is because Sudan is not the only nation which is considered to be rebelled soon or later. The long history of corruption and ethnic conflict in Africa has created many rebel groups and those groups may gain a chance to achieve independence just like Sudan, and the 2011 referendum in Sudan will certainly encourage them.

Therefore, this paper will attempt to answer to the key question, “Can China and Sudan in 2011 to be the model for the future Chinese involvement in Africa as a whole?” and later analyze what will possibly occur in the relationship between China and Africa.