

# Great Powers and International Conflict Management

European and Chinese Involvement in the Darfur  
and Iran Crises

Emma van der Meulen and Frans-Paul van der Putten

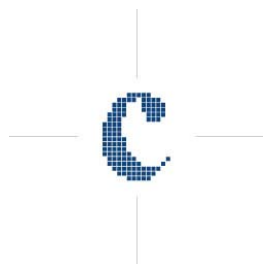
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# 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

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In the coming decades, the relationship between Beijing and Washington is likely to be the primary bilateral relationship in the shaping of international security. Consequently, authors on China's rise in global security usually focus on this bilateral relationship. The security relationship between China and Europe is still a somewhat meagrely explored topic. The reason for this may be that direct security relations between Europe and China are only a minor element in Sino-European relations. And yet, as the US' main security partner, Europe is a major actor in global security. Two European countries are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC),<sup>2</sup> and Europe is a source of significant economic and diplomatic influence in a number of regions in the world. To understand how the international security landscape is changing as a result of China's rise, the interaction between Europe and China is very much a relevant topic.

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1 The authors would like to thank all reviewers who have commented on this paper's draft version. A shortened and revised version of this paper was published as 'Europe and China in International Conflict Management: Rivals and Partners' in Jaap de Zwaan, Edwin Bakker and Sico van der Meer eds, *Challenges in a Changing World: Clingendael Views on Global and Regional Issues*. The Hague: T.M.C. Asser Press, 2008.

2 On current developments in the relationship between the UNSC and the EU see Daniele Marchesi, 'The EU Common Foreign and Security Policy in the UN Security Council: Between representation and coordination. Bruges: College of Europe, Regional Integration & Global Governance Papers 3 (2008).

The emergence of China in international politics leads to a fundamental change in great power involvement in conflict management and security diplomacy. The clearest example of China's new role has been its part in the North Korean nuclear issue. In 2003 Beijing initiated a mediation effort to address tensions between North Korea and the United States relating to Pyongyang's nuclear weapons programme. This effort became institutionalized in the Six-Party Talks (involving also South Korea, Japan, and Russia). Washington has increasingly come to regard Beijing as a partner in managing the North Korean nuclear issue.<sup>3</sup> The intermediary role played by China is a new development and indicates both the greater influence and greater responsibility of Beijing.<sup>4</sup> Two other crisis situations in which China and the US play roles that are to some extent similar to North Korea are the Iranian nuclear issue and the violence in Darfur, Sudan.

However, although Sino-US cooperation in the Six-Party Talks paved the way for more cooperation towards greater stability in other parts of the world, there are important new challenges to be faced. First, North Korea borders on China. Perhaps Beijing feels less compelled to take on a prominent role in conflict management in more distant regions. Second, in the North Korean issue the US and China clearly dominate as the two leading powers. But in the Iran and Darfur issues, European actors constitute a major third leading power (with Russia arguably being a fourth leading power in the Iran case). Geographically, the Middle East and Africa are the regions where Chinese and European security concerns meet most directly.<sup>5</sup> One of the first steps to a greater insight into how great power involvement in conflict management is evolving is to look at the relationship between China's and Europe's roles on Darfur and Iran.

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3 Frans-Paul van der Putten, 'The United States and the Asian 'Rogue': From dogmatism to pragmatism' in: Koen De Keuster and Jan Melissen eds, *Ending the North Korean Nuclear Crisis: Six Parties, Six Perspectives*. The Hague: Clingendael Institute, Diplomacy Paper 18, November 2008.

4 Frans-Paul van der Putten, 'China: Learning to be a Great Power?' in: Koen De Keuster and Jan Melissen eds, *Ending the North Korean Nuclear Crisis: Six Parties, Six Perspectives*. The Hague: Clingendael Institute, Diplomacy Paper 18, November 2008. On the North Korean case as a model for Sino-US cooperation see Bonnie S. Glaser and Wang Liang, 'North Korea : The Beginning of a China-U.S. Partnership?', *The Washington Quarterly* 31/3 (Summer 2008) 165-180.

5 For a recent publication on the overall response of the EU (and the US) to China's influence in Africa see Asteris Huliaras and Konstantinos Magliveras, 'In Search of a Policy: EU and US reactions to the growing Chinese presence in Africa', *European Foreign Affairs Review* 13, 2008, 399-420.

This paper discusses how the relationship between China and Europe in international conflict management is evolving by looking at the cases of Sudan and Iran. Two questions in particular are of interest. First, does the growing influence of China lead to a weakening of Europe's role? This could manifest itself in terms of less influence in countries in the region, in less cooperation with the world's most powerful nation, the United States, or in a decreasing influence on defining which norms apply in international security issues (or global governance), – all of these in a relative sense regarding China's position. Second, what is the potential for cooperation between Europe and China in conflict management and security diplomacy? In other words, which factors are relevant and how are they affecting the potential for cooperation?





## 2. Issues at Stake

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One likely reason why little has been written about Europe as a security counterpart of China is that Europe as a unified security actor does not exist. The UK and France are the two leading European powers and they have distinct roles in international security. At the same time, individual European countries are tied together in the European Union and NATO. They cannot be regarded as entirely individual actors on the international security scene. For the purpose of this paper, Europe is regarded as an international security actor whose interests and behaviour are shaped in four major centres of decision making: Brussels, Paris, London, and Berlin.<sup>6</sup> Geographically, Europe is taken here to refer to the European Union, while it is taken into account that Europe's three major countries dominate decision-making in Brussels and also have – to some degree - the capability of operating individually on the world stage. While this facilitates the analysis, it should be kept in mind that Europe remains divided and because of this Europe's role as a security actor – when compared to China - is fundamentally limited.

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6 This four-part approach to Europe is also used by the Chinese government in its diplomacy towards Europe: Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005, 160-161.

In Africa and the Middle East, it is especially great powers from outside the region which play potentially leading roles in conflict management. The Middle East has no effective regional security mechanism, and in Africa's case the African Union has limited resources and external powers are highly influential. The leading great powers are the permanent members of the UNSC. They can play their role in conflict management through the UNSC, but also bilaterally or via other diplomatic platforms. The two crises most often cited as examples of China's growing role in African and Middle Eastern security relate to Sudan and Iran. European actors are actively involved in both instances. The violence in Sudan's Darfur region is a primarily domestic crisis. Both Europe and China have taken up an active role with the aim of restoring peace and stability. The case of Iran revolves around Tehran's uranium enrichment programme, and threats by the US and Israel to intervene militarily if Iran continues to move towards a nuclear weapons capability. Europe, China, and Russia have taken up a role of mediation between Tehran and Washington in order to prevent a military conflict.

The issues at stake for the Chinese and the Europeans are located at three levels. *First*, there are local interests and local influence. In a given country or region, both Europe and China have certain local economic and diplomatic interests and wish to protect these. *Second*, there is the question of how a given crisis affects the positions of both Europe and China vis-à-vis the United States. At the basic level, it is in China's interest to have good relations with both Europe and the US while in certain instances being able to benefit from differences between the positions of the Europeans and the Americans. The same is true for Europe regarding its relations with Beijing and Washington. Shifts in this triangular relationship affect power relations not only at the local level, but also at the global level.

*Third*, there is the general debate on how to deal with the concept of state sovereignty, in relation to both human rights and non-proliferation. This debate is of crucial importance for the future of global governance, especially where it concerns international conflict management. The differences between China and the West are the greatest with regard to human rights. Europe, along with the United States, is in favour of a system in which international security organizations such as the UNSC intervene in domestic affairs not only if international stability is in immediate danger, but also if a national government cannot or does not protect the human security of its citizens. However, China favours a global security system that leaves a great deal of room for states to manage their internal affairs without external interference. The Chinese leaders believe that human rights norms can be

manipulated by great powers to legitimize interventions in other countries.<sup>7</sup> In China, protecting territorial integrity is crucial to the survival of the Communist Party.<sup>8</sup> Local crises in Tibet or Xinjiang carry the danger of inviting outside interference, which could lead to a decrease in control from the centre over these regions.

So while there is a high degree of confidence in the West that there is no danger of an undesired intervention by foreign powers in Western countries, China does not have this confidence.<sup>9</sup>

In the debate on how to deal with nuclear proliferation issues, Europe's and China's positions are much more compatible. China and Europe oppose the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and they work together in various international organisations to this end. Even so, Beijing is more reluctant than Europe when it comes to sanctions against countries that are suspected of developing nuclear weapons. Like with human rights, from the Chinese point of view there is a risk that major powers (in particular the US) will use the proliferation theme as a pretext for intervening in or sanctioning countries ruled by unfriendly governments. At some point in the future, the US could use this strategy against China. For European countries, this risk is negligible.

Actively participating in the debate on the norms and standards relevant to international interventions is thus a primary line of defence from the perspective of China's leadership. This does not mean that China always favours state sovereignty over human rights or non-proliferation, or that Beijing does not actively support certain interventions.

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7 Allen Carlson, *Unifying China, Integrating with the World: Securing Sovereignty in the Reform Era*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005, 174-175.

8 Russell Ong, *China's Security Interests in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. London: Routledge, 2007, 15.

9 For European perspectives on what China's role in global governance should be see Charles Grant with Katinka Barysch, *Can Europe and China Shape a New World Order?* London: Centre for European Reform, 2008, 89-92; Marcin Zaborowski, 'EU-China Security Relations'. Paris: ISS Analysis Paper, 2008, 2; François Godement, 'The EU and China: A necessary partnership'. In: Giovanni Grevi and Álvaro de Vasconcelos, *Partnerships for Effective Multilateralism: EU relations with Brazil, China, India and Russia*. Paris: ISS Chaillot Paper 109, May 2008. On China's perspective see Samuel S. Kim, 'Chinese Foreign Policy Faces Globalization Challenges'. In: Alastair Ian Johnston and Robert S. Ross eds, *New Directions in the Study of China's Foreign Policy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006.

As pointed out by Allen Carlson, in 1999 China criticized the Western intervention in Kosovo, but it also supported international intervention in East Timor.<sup>10</sup> The Africa specialist Ian Taylor argues that in the longer run, the interests of the West and China in the sphere of human rights in Africa are very similar, implying that Beijing's foreign human rights policy will move closer to Western norms.<sup>11</sup> However, according to Stephanie Kleine-Ahlbrandt and Andrew Small, in the foreseeable future China's policy towards 'pariah states' will show only minor, experimental changes.<sup>12</sup> For the moment, the focus on specific cases remains crucial in order to understand how the relationship between Europe and China in conflict management is developing. It is not abstract theory, but actual crises in international relations, whether these relate to human rights, armed conflict, natural disasters, or economic instability, that shape the debate on sovereignty and intervention.

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- 10 Carlson, *Unifying China*, 176. Also Allen Carlson, 'More Than Just Saying No: China's Evolving Approach to Sovereignty and Intervention since Tiananmen'. In: Alastair Ian Johnston and Robert S. Ross eds, *New Directions in the Study of China's Foreign Policy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006; idem, 'Helping to Keep the Peace (Albeit Reluctantly): China's recent stance on Sovereignty and multilateral intervention, *Pacific Affairs* 77/1, 2004, 9-27; idem, 'Protecting Sovereignty, Accepting Intervention: The Dilemma of Chinese Foreign Relations in the 1990s', National Committee on United States-China Relations, China Policy Series 18, September 2002. On: [http://www.ncuscr.org/files/3.%20Protecting%20Sovereignty,%20Accepting%20Intervention%20\(18\).pdf](http://www.ncuscr.org/files/3.%20Protecting%20Sovereignty,%20Accepting%20Intervention%20(18).pdf) (25 July 2008). The changing Chinese perspective on state sovereignty is also noted by Zhang Yongjin, 'Understanding Chinese Views of the Emerging Global Order'. In: *China and the New International Order*. Edited by Wang Gungwu and Zheng Yongnian. Abingdon: Routledge, 2008, 160-161 and Shan Wenhua, 'Redefining the Chinese Concept of Sovereignty'. In: Wang Gungwu and Zheng Yongnian eds, *China and the New International Order*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2008.
- 11 Ian Taylor, 'Sino-African Relations and the Problem of Human Rights', *African Affairs* 107/426 (2008) 63-87.
- 12 Stephanie Kleine-Ahlbrandt and Andrew Small, 'China's New Dictatorship Diplomacy', *Foreign Affairs*, January-February 2008.

### 3. Darfur

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The crisis in Sudan's Darfur province, an area the size of France, is an internal conflict between government-backed militias known as the Janjaweed and local Darfuri resistance movements. Since its outbreak in 2003, 300,000 people have died and two and a half million have been displaced.<sup>13</sup> During the 1990s tensions between Omar al-Bashir's Congress Party and Darfuri politicians were increasing. Al-Bashir, fearful of losing influence in Darfur, appointed loyalists in the Popular Defense Forces (PDF), the local police forces in Darfur that later became known as the Janjaweed. This led to increased tensions between the PDF and the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), the two main Darfuri resistance movements. In February 2003 they carried out attacks on a series of military installations to which the Government of Sudan responded with a counterinsurgency campaign carried out by the Janjaweed.<sup>14</sup> The extreme brutality of this campaign drew the attention of the international community. US President Bush even used the term 'genocide' to describe the killings in 2005.<sup>15</sup> The situation on the ground has become more complicated since 2003 and there are now 27 rebel groups in Darfur.<sup>16</sup> China, the United States, the European Union and the African Union have been among the most important external actors trying to solve the crisis in Darfur. This section will look at the interests of China and Europe in Sudan

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13 <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unamid/background.html> (7 July 2008).

14 Alex de Waal, 'Briefing: Darfur, Sudan: Prospects for Peace', *African Affairs*, 104/414, 2005, 127-128. See for more information on the origins of the crisis: Hugo Slim, 'Dithering over Darfur? A preliminary review of the international response', *International Affairs*, 80/5, 2004, 811-828, and Alex de Waal, 'Who are the Darfurians? Arab and African Identities, Violence and External Engagement', *African Affairs*, 104/415, 2005, 181-205.

15 'In Break with UN, Bush calls Sudan Killings Genocide', *Washington Post*, 2 June 2005.

16 Andrew Natsios, 'Beyond Darfur', *Foreign Affairs*, 87/3, 2008.

and at what actions both have taken to solve the crisis. Have they cooperated to manage the conflict?

### 3.1 The Darfur Crisis: China's Interests

China's local interests in Sudan are related to energy security, in addition to which trade and good diplomatic relations are also important. Oil from Sudan makes up around six per cent of China's total oil imports and Sudan was China's main African oil supplier until 2004 when Angola surpassed Sudan. The China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) acquired a 40 per cent stake in Sudan's Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company in 1997. China has since invested over \$15 billion in the development of the Sudanese infrastructure, mainly related to the oil industry.<sup>17</sup> Because of these large investments, China has an interest in the continuation of good bilateral relations with the government of Sudan. This is also in the interest of the government of Sudan, as trade with China accounted for 64% of their total trade and China bought 47 per cent of Sudan's total oil output in 2006.<sup>18</sup>

Although Chinese direct involvement in oil fields in Darfur is limited, Beijing still has an interest in a political settlement of the conflict. The crisis in Darfur destabilises the rest of Sudan and China's large investments are best protected in a stable Sudan. China's involvement in the Sudanese oil industry has been disputed because the distribution of oil revenues became one of the sources of tension in the civil war between North and South Sudan. Most of Sudan's oil fields are located in the South, while the industry is largely controlled by the North. Oil fields were under attack by the Southern forces during the civil war. By doing business with the Northern regime, China's involvement in the oil industry therefore benefited only one side in the civil war. Beijing has realised the need to balance its ties with the different parties in Sudan carefully, so as not to tie the fate of its investments solely to the National Congress Party's hold on power. This became especially important after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed between the North and the South in 2005 and it became a real possibility that the South would become independent from the North in 2011.

A deteriorating security situation also increases the possibility of Western intervention in Sudan, which would threaten China's influential position.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the conflict in Darfur threatens the stability of Eastern Chad. Chad

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17 Chris Alden, *China in Africa*, Zed Books, London, 2007, 61.

18 Jonathan Holslag, 'China's Diplomatic Victory in Darfur', Brussels: Brussels Institute of Contemporary China Studies, 2007, 1.

19 Holslag, 'China's Victory', 2.

became strategically more important to China after it broke off its ties with Taiwan in 2006 and diplomatically recognised the People's Republic, whereupon China acquired stakes in the Chadian oil industry.<sup>20</sup> China therefore values its bilateral relations with the regime of Chadian President Idriss Déby. Spillovers of the conflict in Darfur into Eastern Chad may threaten his hold on power, as a rebel attack in February 2008 illustrates.<sup>21</sup> In sum, China is interested in a political settlement of the Darfur crisis because of the potentially destabilising influence the crisis has on the rest of Sudan and on regional stability, which could endanger its large investments.

In addition to its local interests in Sudan, China also has a major stake in the implications of the Darfur crisis for global governance. As mentioned in the introduction, China and the West have different views as to how international organisations – notably the UNSC - should respond to a primarily domestic crisis such as the violence in Darfur. The way in which the United Nations addresses this particular crisis sets a precedent for future instances. Beijing is determined to defend the principle of state sovereignty, but at the same time also wants to avoid undermining the legitimacy of the UNSC in global governance, or to come into direct conflict with the US or Europe. These various and at times conflicting interests are key to understanding Beijing's actions in managing the Darfur crisis.

### 3.2 The Darfur Crisis: China's Actions

When the Darfur crisis erupted, Beijing did not pursue an active role. In 2005, Deputy Foreign Minister Zhou Wenzhong famously stated in the *New York Times* in 2005 that 'Business is business. We try to separate politics from business (...) I think the internal situation in Sudan is an internal affair'.<sup>22</sup> From 2004 onwards, the crisis in Darfur has been brought before the UNSC on multiple occasions. China threatened to use its veto against resolutions that included economic sanctions against Sudan, but has never put this threat into practice.

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20 Daniel Large, 'Sudan's Foreign Relations with Asia: China and the politics of "looking east"', ISS Paper 158, Feb. 2008, 12.

21 'A Regime Saved, for the Moment', *Economist*, 7 Feb. 2008.

22 Quoted in the *New York Times*, 22 August 2005.

Instead, China regularly abstained from voting.<sup>23</sup> Key issues for China were the absence of economic sanctions and the consent of the Government of Sudan before any action was taken.<sup>24</sup> This course allowed China to buy time, while strengthening its position in Sudan which was under pressure from the growing influence of India, Malaysia and Russia by the end of 2005.<sup>25</sup> China changed its position on international intervention in Darfur in 2006.

Before 2006 Beijing still preferred a local or regional solution to the crisis.<sup>26</sup> By 2006 the inability of Al-Bashir and the inefficiency of the African Union mission to bring the fighting to a halt had become obvious. Hence, China accepted the necessity of international action. This became apparent through the firm diplomatic language of high-ranking Chinese officials, such as the following statement by the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao: ‘China is very much concerned about the stability in Darfur (...) and of course we support the international society’s decision to send in peacekeepers’.<sup>27</sup> Wang Guangya, the Chinese representative in the Security Council, also played an important and constructive mediating role behind the scenes during the negotiations of the ‘Annan Plan’, the roadmap for the deployment of the UN-AU peacekeeping force, in Addis Ababa in November 2006.<sup>28</sup>

The appointment of Liu Guijin as China’s special representative for Africa, with a special focus on Sudan, in May 2007, further increased the diplomatic pressure. China’s diplomatic stance had started to change already before a group of prominent Americans started the ‘Genocide Olympics’ campaign in mid-2007, criticising China for its involvement in Sudan. However, China may also have been sensitive to this international pressure and criticism as it was potentially damaging to its reputation as a responsible international player, particularly in Africa.<sup>29</sup>

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23 Key resolutions relating to Darfur are resolution 1556 (arms embargo, China abstained), 1564 (threatening ‘additional measures’, abstained), 1574 (expansion of AMIS, approved), 1590 (expansion of UNMIS in Darfur, abstained), 1591 (establishing a sanctions committee, abstained), 1593 (ICC, abstained), 1672 (sanctions against war criminals, abstained), 1679, (transition of AMIS into UNAMID, approved), 1706 (deployment of UNAMID, no consent by Khartoum, abstained), 1755 (facilitation of humanitarian operations in Darfur, approved), 1769 (deployment of UNAMID with the consent of Khartoum, approved)

24 Daniel Large, ‘Arms, Oil and Darfur: The evolution of relations between China and Sudan’, *Small Arms Survey*, Human Security Baseline Assessment, 7, 2007, 7-8.

25 Holslag, ‘China’s Victory’, 3.

26 Yitzhak Shichor, ‘China’s Darfur Policy’, *China Brief* 2007.

27 Press Statement during a state visit to the UK, <http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/page10056.asp> (9 July 2008).

28 Large, ‘Arms’, 9.

29 Holslag, ‘China’s Victory’, 8.



In 2007, China continued its active diplomacy and adopted a mediating position between the Western call for intervention and the Sudanese resistance thereto. China helped to draft a resolution to which the government of Sudan could give its consent, mainly by ensuring that the peacekeeping troops did not come from Western countries and that the final resolution did not contain any economic sanctions. Liu Guijin, the special representative for Africa, also took part in this active diplomacy by visiting Sudan regularly as well as holding meetings with the Arab League and the African Union on the subject.<sup>30</sup> With Khartoum's consent to the deployment of UNAMID, China approved resolution 1769 in the Security Council. This was a major shift away from its initial position that the conflict was an internal affair and reflected Beijing's need to find a new balance in its approach to the Darfur issue. China also voted in favour of resolution 1776, adopted by the UNSC on 25 September 2007, that authorised the deployment of EUFOR in Chad.

To date, active diplomacy is continuing. Chinese President Hu Jintao received Sudanese Vice-President Ali Osman Mohammed Taha in Beijing, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of China-Sudan relations, on 11 June 2008. Hu stated that a political solution was the key to the problem in Darfur and that the peacekeeping operation and the political process should be pushed forward to attain this. Hu also said that the humanitarian and security situation should be improved in Darfur and that China would continue to play a constructive role in the crisis in Darfur.<sup>31</sup>

China has given humanitarian assistance to Darfur, but the amount is limited in comparison to other donors. Beijing promised five batches of humanitarian aid for Darfur in 2004 and the fifth, worth \$5.2 million, was shipped to the region in August 2007, consisting of 'cross-country vehicles, ambulances, medical instruments and mobile houses'.<sup>32</sup> China also contributed \$3.5 million to AMIS, the African Union Mission in Sudan, in June 2006.<sup>33</sup> China contributes 444 troops to UNMIS in South Sudan and 322 troops to UNAMID.<sup>34</sup>

In sum, the Chinese government has become increasingly entangled in the Darfur issue. Initially China favoured keeping a low profile, as its local interests were sufficiently safeguarded and Beijing wished to avoid a direct conflict in the UNSC with the Western countries. However, China

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30 Ibid, 6.

31 'President Hu: China to continue "constructive role" in Darfur issue', *People's Daily Online*, 12 June 2008.

32 'China Continues Humanitarian Aid to Darfur', *China Daily*, 26 Aug. 2007.

33 Large, Sudan's Foreign Relations.

34 [http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/contributors/2008/oct08\\_3.pdf](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/contributors/2008/oct08_3.pdf) (8 Dec. 2008).

increasingly felt compelled to take a more active, less straightforward approach. The growing and negative exposure that China suffered because of its Darfur policy – certainly in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics – and the close linkages between tensions in Darfur, South Sudan, and Chad have made the issue a highly complex one for policymakers in Beijing.

### 3.3 The Darfur Crisis: Europe's Interests

Stability in Sudan is in the interest of the EU as a whole. It could improve economic relations and – due to the relative proximity of Sudan to Europe – would contribute to Europe's own stability.<sup>35</sup> Economic cooperation between the EU and Sudan was resumed after the CPA was signed in January 2005.<sup>36</sup> However, the disbursement of funds was made dependent on the correct implementation of the agreement and a solution to the conflict in Darfur. European interests in Sudan relate to the individual leading states more than to the EU.

France has the most extensive interests in the region. In Sudan, France has business interests as the publicly-listed companies Alcatel-Lucent and Total operate in the country.<sup>37</sup> However, France is mostly concerned about the implications the conflict in Darfur has on regional stability. Darfur directly borders France's old colonies Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR). Chad and the CAR are strategically important to France because of their geographical location in the centre of the continent and because of large reserves of resources. Moreover, France uses some of its old African colonies as a military training ground.<sup>38</sup> France has traditionally tried to guarantee these interests through bilateral ties, military cooperation and an economic network.<sup>39</sup>

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35 European Commission's Delegation to the Sudan, Bilateral Relations, [http://www.delsdn.ec.europa.eu/en/eu\\_and\\_sudan/bilateral\\_relations.htm](http://www.delsdn.ec.europa.eu/en/eu_and_sudan/bilateral_relations.htm) (7 July 2008).

36 Ibid.

37 'On Investment in Sudan', *EthixPress*, June 2007, on: <http://www.ethix.se/nyheter/include2.asp?id=122> (28 June 2008).

38 Vincent Munié, 'Central African Republic and France's Long Hand', *Pambazuka News*, on: <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/comment/48391/print> (1 July 2008).

39 Ibid.

Both Idriss Déby and CAR's President Francois Bozizé enjoyed French military protection against attempts by various rebel groups to overthrow their regimes in 2006 and 2007.<sup>40</sup> The EUFOR present in Chad since March 2008 has its military headquarters in Mont Valérien in France and comprises 3,048 soldiers, of which the majority, 1,564, are French.<sup>41</sup> Over 400,000 Darfurians have fled into Chad and ethnic ties between Eastern Chadian and Darfurian populations exist.<sup>42</sup> Chadian rebels opposing the government of Idriss Déby are backed by the Sudanese government of al-Bashir, while Déby supports the Darfurian rebel groups SPL/A and the JEM. France has therefore been strongly in favour of international action in Darfur from the outbreak of the crisis in February 2003 onwards. An international intervention in Darfur would decrease the pressure on the French troops in the region while France, because of its experience and presence in the region, will be able to play a leading role in coordinating this mission.

The interests of the United Kingdom in Sudan are based on historical ties and Sudanese nationals living in the UK.<sup>43</sup> There are no vital national interests at stake as the UK plays a less active role in its former African colonies than France and is not militarily present in the region. The UK does not have leverage on the Government of Sudan comparable to the French influence on the Chadian or CAR regimes. The UK – which made the prevention and resolving of conflict one of its foreign policy priorities – made Sudan a top priority.<sup>44</sup> This seems to be motivated more by the worldwide promotion of Western values – which enhance Western influence – and by the high-profile status of the Darfur conflict, rather than by British local interests, which are very limited. The main British company operating in Sudan was Shell, but the company divested its production assets during the civil war

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40 See S. Baldeuf, 'If Chad Coup Succeeds, Darfur Crisis Could Deepen', *Christian Science Monitor*, 4 February 2008, and Munié, 'Central African Republic'. France's military presence in Africa has increasingly been scrutinised and its rationale is being questioned. France is accused of being too preoccupied with glory and grandeur which it can nowadays only find by asserting itself as a great power on the African continent. Francois Roche, editor of the French edition of *Foreign Affairs*, argued that France should address the huge gap between the concentration of its diplomatic and military efforts (Africa and the Arab world) and its future interests (BRIC countries). France had committed itself to protecting former colonies against outside aggression, but increasingly chooses sides in internal conflicts. See 'France's Army Keeps Grip in African Ex-Colonies', *New York Times*, 22 May 1996; 'The Glory Days are Passing', *The Economist*, 16 Dec. 2006, 49-50; Munié, 'Central African Republic'.

41 [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/080619-EUFOR\\_TCHAD-RCA-Force\\_strength\\_by\\_Nations.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/080619-EUFOR_TCHAD-RCA-Force_strength_by_Nations.pdf) (1 Aug. 2008)

42 Baldeuf, 'Chad Coup'.

43 [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)

44 <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/fco-in-action/conflict/darfur/> (3 July 2008).

between North and South Sudan and sold its distribution organisation in August 2008.<sup>45</sup>

Germany does not have a strong foreign policy tradition in Africa. Its interests in Sudan are mainly economic. Political interests centre upon the promotion of democracy to achieve stability which would better facilitate trade.<sup>46</sup> Humanitarian aid is one of Germany's five foreign policy priorities and Darfur has been one of the focal points of its humanitarian aid projects since 2004, and made a priority for 2008.<sup>47</sup> Up until 2007, trade between the two countries was at a low level, but expanding.<sup>48</sup> Siemens, the only German publicly-listed company that operated in Sudan, divested in 2007 in response to the humanitarian crisis.<sup>49</sup> A stable Sudan would open up possibilities for trade, which is Germany's main interest in the country.

At the overall level, due to the French position, Europe's local interests in Sudan centre upon regional stability in the first place. The energy resources of Sudan may also become of great interest to Europe should relations with the country improve but currently play no major role. Apart from stability, Europe's main interest in the Darfur crisis is in its repercussions for global governance. Mirroring China's position, Europe wishes to use the Darfur case as a precedent to promote the principle of the international community's responsibility to intervene if human rights atrocities take place. Given its relatively limited local interests, Europe's involvement in managing this crisis should be explained chiefly from the global governance perspective.

### 3.4 The Darfur Crisis: Europe's Actions

In terms of taking action, the EU has been mostly active in the area of humanitarian assistance. Funds available for Darfur totalled 1 billion in December 2007.<sup>50</sup> This money has been used for food aid, aid for Darfuri refugees and support for the political process and the African Union Mission in Darfur. The EU has furthermore supported UN resolutions relating to

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45 <http://www.petrolworld.com/africa-middle-east-headlines/libya-oil-holdings-acquires-shell-fuel-distribution-networks.html>.

46 <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/Aussenpolitik/RegionaleSchwerpunkte/uebersicht.html>

47 <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/Aussenpolitik/Themen/HumanitaereHilfe/bilanz2007.html> (4 July 2008).

48 <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/Laenderinformationen/01-Laender/Sudan.html> (4 July 2008).

49 'On Investment in Sudan', *EthixPress*, June 2007.

50 'European Union Response to the Darfur Crisis', Delegation of the European Commission in Washington DC, Factsheet, December 2007.

sanctions or bringing the perpetrators of crimes in Darfur before the ICC. The EU has also taken up an active diplomatic role in the creation of the Darfur Peace Agreement as well as in the creation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between North and South Sudan. The EU appointed Special Representative Torben Brylle to oversee all of the EU's diplomatic contributions to AMIS and the implementation of the DPA and the CPA. The African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) also enjoyed EU support in the form of logistical assistance, airlifts, financial contributions and the provision of expertise since 2004.<sup>51</sup> In addition, the EU has agreed to deploy a mission to Chad and the CAR to secure the border areas between Darfur and its eastern neighbours.

EUFOR Chad/CAR reached Initial Operational Capacity in March 2008.<sup>52</sup> The EU has also subjected Sudan to a number of unilateral sanctions, notably an arms embargo, and it has also restricted the movements of certain individuals 'who impede the peace process'.<sup>53</sup> The European Union is willing to consider other necessary measures to press the government of Sudan to fully cooperate with UNAMID, for example, but 'within a UN framework'.<sup>54</sup>

At the level of the leading individual states, France has attempted to solve the conflict in Darfur mainly through diplomatic means, while also providing humanitarian assistance, bilaterally and through the European Union. Various officials have visited the region since the outbreak of the conflict, including all Ministers of Foreign Affairs since 2003, namely de Villepin (February 2004), Barnier (June 2004), Douste-Blazy (summer 2005 and November 2006) and Kouchner (June 2007). The appointment of Kouchner, a physician with experience in humanitarian work in Sudan, as Minister of Foreign Affairs was interpreted as a hopeful sign for Darfur.<sup>55</sup> The Sarkozy presidency made Darfur a foreign policy priority and organised an international conference in Paris in June 2007 attended by 17 countries, including the United States, China and Russia as well as the Secretary-General of the UN, Ban Ki-Moon. The Sudanese government was not invited and the African Union boycotted the event, arguing that it undermined already existing efforts to obtain

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51 Ibid.

52 This mission was authorised by the Council of the European Union in October 2007 and approved by the UN on 25 September 2007. The European Parliament has voiced concerns about the European identity of the EUFOR, as the majority of the troops are French: <http://www.europa-nu.nl/9353000/1/j9vvh6nf08temv0/vhucxcevo3sd?ctx=vhwbe5qu4lz1> (7 Aug. 2008).

53 Council Decision 2006/386/CFSP concerning restrictive measures against Sudan, Official Journal of the European Union, 2 June 2006, on: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:148:0061:0062:EN:PDF>.

54 Council Conclusions, Press Release, Sudan/Chad/Central Africa Republic, 28 Jan. 2008.

55 'The Kouchner Effect', *The Economist*, 24 May 2007.

peace.<sup>56</sup> However, France maintained its active role and organised a consultative meeting between Abdul Wahid el Nur, President of the Sudan Liberation Movement; Jan Eliasson and Salim Ahmed Salim, co-mediators from the UN and the AU and representatives of the five permanent members of the UNSC on 18 March 2008 in Geneva.<sup>57</sup> Although France excluded the Sudanese government from these initiatives, France's influential regional role is recognised. After an attack by the JEM, who the government of Sudan suspects is backed by N'djamena, on Khartoum on May 10, 2008, it has directly appealed to France to help to settle the conflict, especially because of the leverage France has over the Chadian government.<sup>58</sup>

At the UN France has actively supported a referral of Darfur to the International Criminal Court.<sup>59</sup> Sarkozy initially supported the charges against President Al-Bashir published in July 2008, but has recently stated that: 'In the event the Sudan authorities do change (...) their policy, France would not be opposed to using Article 16' (i.e., allowing the Security Council to postpone relevant ICC operations for at least 12 months).<sup>60</sup> France has voted in favour of all resolutions of the UNSC condemning the violence in Darfur and co-sponsored key resolutions 1706 (31 August 2006) and 1769 (31 July 2007) which authorise the deployment of a hybrid UN-AU peacekeeping force. French support for AMIS has also been consistent. Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Barnier stated in April 2005 that 'the African Union's involvement on the front line is a guarantee of efficacy'.<sup>61</sup> Apart from these diplomatic efforts, France has committed military resources already present in the border regions with Chad and the CAR to assist in transporting

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56 'Sudan wary of Paris Conference on Darfur', *Sudan Tribune*, 24 June 2007.

57 Communiqué by Foreign and European Affairs Minister Bernhard Kouchner: 'Sudan-Darfur: Search for a political solution to the Darfur crisis', 18 Mar. 2008, on: [http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/article-imprim.php?id\\_article=10964](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/article-imprim.php?id_article=10964) (3 July 2008).

58 See 'Sudanese Official to Visit France in June for Talks on Darfur', *Sudan Tribune*, 30 May 2008, and 'Sudan Asks France's Help to Resolve Darfur Crisis', *Sudan Tribune*, 20 June 2008. Deng Alor, Sudan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, met his counterpart in Paris on 19 June 2008.

59 United Nations Security Council resolution 1593, 31 March 2005.

60 'ICC Fending off Darfur Challenge', *BBC News*, 20 Nov. 2008. Under Article 16 of the Statute of the ICC the UNSC may suspend an ICC case, on: [http://www.icc-cpi.int/library/about/officialjournal/Rome\\_Statute\\_English.pdf](http://www.icc-cpi.int/library/about/officialjournal/Rome_Statute_English.pdf) (8 Dec. 2008). The African Union and the Arab League have pressed the UNSC for a suspension. All permanent members except the United States are in favour of suspension.

61 Statement by M. Barnier, Minister of Foreign Affairs, during his joint press briefing with Jan Pronk, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Sudan.

humanitarian freight to Darfuri refugee camps and to maintain security around these camps.<sup>62</sup>

The UK, like France, has mainly used diplomatic means to end the crisis in Darfur and is second only to the US as the largest bilateral donor for Darfur.<sup>63</sup> The UK has co-sponsored key resolutions 1706 and 1769 in the UN, as well as resolution 1593 that referred Darfur to the International Criminal Court. The UK has been the first country donating cash to AMIS and has also provided military planning expertise.<sup>64</sup> The UK has appointed a special observer for Sudan, Dr Rod Pullen, who attended negotiations between the government of Sudan and the rebel movements in Sirte (Libya) in October 2007 as an observer. In relation to the UN, the UK launched the Darfur Community Peace and Stability Fund in October 2007. The UK and France launched a joint initiative for Darfur, promising more development aid when progress on security, a ceasefire and humanitarian access was made in July 2007.<sup>65</sup> Many NGOs present in Darfur are British and the American initiative for divestment in Sudan has also been taken up in the UK and was recently supported by prominent MPs.<sup>66</sup> Mark Malloch-Brown, the Minister for Africa, visited Darfur in September 2007 and Peter Ricketts, the permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Office, visited Darfur in May 2008. The UK has been an important player in solving the crisis in Darfur mainly because of lobbying on the matter in international organisations and because of the large amounts of humanitarian aid it provides, but has otherwise not taken a leading role. Recently, British Foreign Minister David Miliband visited Sudan and offered to host representatives of all parties in the Darfur conflict in London, an offer that had also been made on an earlier occasion by Prime Minister Gordon Brown.<sup>67</sup>

Germany has mainly attempted to solve the Darfur crisis by supporting initiatives of the European Union and the United Nations. Germany has drawn attention to the Darfur crisis in its capacity as president of the UNSC

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62 G8 Research Group, 'Interim Compliance Report, Regional Security: Darfur', 171, 28 Feb. 2005.

63 Ibid.

64 <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/country-profiles/sub-saharan-africa/sudan?profile=politics&pg=7> (3 July 2008).

65 Ibid, also 'Initiative franco-britannique sur le Darfour', on: [http://www.ambafrance-sd.org/article-imprim.php?id\\_article=358](http://www.ambafrance-sd.org/article-imprim.php?id_article=358) (2 July 2008).

66 'Sudden Divestment UK: Conservatives and Lib Dems Back Calls for Companies to Pull Out of Sudan', on: [http://72.167.8.38/images/stories/sduk\\_press\\_release\\_27\\_april\\_2007.pdf](http://72.167.8.38/images/stories/sduk_press_release_27_april_2007.pdf) (3 July 2008).

67 'UK Says Prepared to Host Peace Talks between Darfur Parties', *Sudantribune.com*, 9 July 2008.

during April 2004 and as president of the EU and host of the G8 summit in 2007. It has given large amounts of emergency aid, bilaterally and through the EU's Africa Peace Facility, to which it contributes 23%.<sup>68</sup> Germany also contributes 8.6% of the budget for UNAMID.<sup>69</sup> It has supported AMIS politically, financially and logistically.<sup>70</sup> The direct participation of German troops has been ruled out, however, as Germany's priorities are Afghanistan and Kosovo.<sup>71</sup>

Diplomatic visits between Sudan and Germany included a visit by the State Minister at the Federal Foreign Office, Gernot Ehler, and the Federal Government Commissioner for Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid at the Federal Foreign Office, Gunter Nooke, who visited Darfur in May and August 2006.<sup>72</sup> Germany is mainly an important external player in the conflict because of the large amounts of aid it provides and its diplomatic support for initiatives in the European Union and the United Nations.

France, the UK and Germany have used largely similar means to address the conflict in Darfur, although France has taken the most active role in addressing the crisis. The big three operate bilaterally as well as through the EU and the UN. Military commitments elsewhere can explain the reluctance of Germany and the UK to become militarily involved in the Darfur crisis. All three have expressed their support for AMIS. The violation of human rights by the government of Sudan is the main motivation and justification for the involvement of all three in the crisis. However, more direct threats to their national interests are prioritised over their commitment to human rights in Darfur. Rhetorically strong in its condemnation of the human rights violations, in practice Europe has committed little but humanitarian assistance, directed towards the consequences, but not the causes of the conflict. A senior UN official noted the dangers of this neglect by stating that

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68 <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/Aussenpolitik/RegionaleSchwerpunkte/Afrika/SudanDarfur.html> (4 July 2008).

69 Ibid.

70 '7th Report of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany on its Human Rights Policy in the Context of Foreign Relations' [in German], 15 June 2007, 266, on: <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/Aussenpolitik/Themen/Menschenrechte/7BerichtMRBuReg.html> (4 July 2008).

71 'Germany Rules Out Troops for Darfur', *Der Spiegel*, 1 August 2007, on: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,497682,00.html>.

72 <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/Aussenpolitik/RegionaleSchwerpunkte/Afrika/SudanDarfur.html> (4 July 2008).



the international community was 'keeping people alive with humanitarian assistance until they are massacred'.<sup>73</sup>

### **3.5 China and Europe and the Darfur Crisis: Rivals or Partners?**

By mediating between Khartoum and the West, China risked losing some of its influence with the Sudanese government. By pressuring the government in Khartoum to accept foreign intervention, Beijing probably did lose some of its local standing. Still, China remains the main diplomatic ally and economic partner of Sudan and the strong pressure from the West continued to make Chinese support indispensable for Khartoum. In spite of Europe committing aid and support for peacekeeping missions and putting pressure on the Sudanese government, its influence at the local level remains insignificant in comparison with China's.

In terms of the positions of Europe and China relative to the US, both sides have shown their worth to American foreign policy. Europe has manifested itself as a strong proponent of the same values that underlie US policy. Europe and the United States has suggested similar courses of action to deal with the crisis and they have mainly acted as one. China, on the other hand, proves an indispensable party to Washington when it comes to influencing the government in Khartoum. China is able to operate as a mediator and the US has praised China for using its local influence constructively. In the sphere of global governance, the outcome of the Darfur crisis shows a mixed result. Both Europe and China have had to compromise. Beijing managed to defend the principle that external parties can only intervene with the consent of the Sudanese government. However, behind the scenes China has had to put pressure on the Sudanese to go along with outside intervention. Europe has seen its sanctions against Sudan counterbalanced by China, and has had to go along with less pressure on Khartoum by the UNSC than it had wanted. Except in relatively minor areas, China and Europe do not act as partners in managing the Darfur crisis. This is mainly due to the fact that many of their interests are opposed. This is true with regard to the principles of state sovereignty versus interventionism, but also with regard to the status quo. China benefits from its ties with the current regime, while Europe would benefit more from a regime change. At the same time, a basis for joint management does exist, since both sides have an interest in stability.

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73 Quoted in N. Grono, 'Briefing-Darfur: The International Community's Failure to Protect', *African Affairs* 105/421, 2006, 628.



## 4. The Iranian Nuclear Crisis

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The National Council of Resistance of Iran, an Iranian opposition organisation in exile, revealed in August 2002 that Tehran was secretly developing uranium enrichment facilities. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) started investigations and Iran reported its nuclear facilities officially to the IAEA in February 2003. Iran claimed that the programme was set up to provide an alternative source of energy for domestic use and that the development of WMD runs counter to Islamic ideology.<sup>74</sup> Contradictory claims and further revelations of nuclear-related activity increased suspicion on the part of the international community about Iran's intentions. In an attempt to build trust and ensure Iran's future cooperation with the IAEA, Germany, France and the UK, as the EU-3, started a process of 'conditional engagement', whereby the continuation of trade was made dependent on Iran's improved behaviour.<sup>75</sup> Despite its initial successes, such as the signing of an Additional Protocol committing Iran to fuller cooperation with the IAEA and the suspension of uranium enrichment activities for two years, the EU-3 could not prevent that Iran continued uranium enrichment at Natanz on 10 January 2006.

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74 Wyn Q. Bowen and Joanna Kidd, 'The Iranian Nuclear Challenge', *International Affairs* 80/2, 2004, 258.

75 *Ibid* 268.

The crisis deepened as the possibility of a military conflict between Iran and the US, or between Iran and Israel, seemed increasingly likely. The official positions of both the US and Israel is that a nuclear Iran is not acceptable and that all options to prevent this are open. In 2002, Iran was included by President Bush in the Axis of Evil, along with Iraq and North Korea. The subsequent US attack on Iraq, for the reason that it allegedly possessed weapons of mass destruction, led to greater US-Iran tensions. Since 2001 the United States also maintains troops in Afghanistan. During the second term of President Bush, the US government somewhat lessened pressure on North Korea (which tested a nuclear device in 2006) and focused more intensively on the Iranian nuclear programme. The bulk of US troops are located close to Iran, far away from North Korea.

In addition to the EU-3, also Russia and China – as permanent members of the UNSC and because of their ties with Tehran – joined in the efforts to defuse the crisis. Together with the US they constitute the ‘Six Powers’ who jointly deal with Iran concerning its nuclear programme. On 31 January 2006, the Six Powers agreed to report Iran to the UNSC. Since then, four resolutions have been adopted requiring Iran to cooperate fully with the IAEA and suspend all uranium enrichment. Economic sanctions and an arms embargo have been imposed to enforce Iran’s cooperation.

#### **4.1 The Iranian Nuclear Crisis: China’s Interests**

China’s main local interests in Iran relate to energy resources. Iran is an important energy supplier for China, because the country has the world’s third-largest reserves of oil, as well as the second largest gas reserves in the world and a big future potential as current extraction rates are slow. This is due to US-led sanctions against Iran that have impeded the development of its oil industry and the destruction of much of its oil infrastructure during the Iran-Iraq war.<sup>76</sup> Like Sudan, Iran was economically isolated in the late-1990s. Western companies were hampered by the Clinton administration’s Iran-Libya Sanctions Act of 1996, prohibiting investments of over \$20 million in Iran’s oil industry. Chinese investments were a way out of economic isolation and were therefore mutually beneficial. China and Iran signed their first cooperative agreement in 1997. Multiple million dollar oil contracts followed in 1999, 2001, 2004. The two deals made in 2004 were worth \$20 billion and \$70 billion, respectively, and were both long-term contracts, securing Chinese

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76 M. Doraj and C.L. Currier, ‘Iran-China Relations in a Changing World’, *Middle East Policy*, XV/2, Summer 2008, 71.

rights to agreed amounts of oil and gas annually for periods of 25 and 30 years.<sup>77</sup> Iran is currently China's third largest supplier of crude oil.<sup>78</sup>

China also has economic interests in Iran other than access to energy. Bilateral trade is extensive and growing, totalling \$30 billion by the end of 2008, according to Assistant Foreign Minister Zhai Jun.<sup>79</sup> China surpassed the major countries of the European Union, notably Germany, as Iran's largest trade partner in 2006.<sup>80</sup> Tourism is also being promoted by making references to the Silk Road and Sino-Iranian ancient historical and cultural ties.<sup>81</sup> China is also involved in the weapons trade with Iran and played a large role in the build-up of the Iranian army since the revolution in 1979.<sup>82</sup> Iran is furthermore interesting to China because of its geographical location. Iran borders the Caspian Sea, the world's third largest reservoir of oil, and is developing plans for a pipeline to transport Caspian oil to Southern Iranian ports. China supports these plans as they will better facilitate oil shipments to Asia.<sup>83</sup> Iran and China share common interests in Central Asia. The most important regional organisation in Central Asia, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, is aimed mainly at regional security, drug trafficking and countering terrorism. These aims are all compatible with Iran's interests in the region. China expressed its support for Iran's ambitions to play a greater role in the region by granting Iran observer status in the organisation in 2005.<sup>84</sup> Improving the stability in Xinjiang province, home to China's largest Muslim minority, is another reason for China to maintain good relations with the Islamic Republic.<sup>85</sup> However, while China has an interest in improving the security of its third most important energy supplier, close ties with Tehran also create some dilemmas for Beijing. China wishes to protect its local interests, but at the same time the Chinese government wants to avoid a direct conflict with the United States. It is in Beijing's interest to avoid making a choice between abandoning its ties with Tehran and a worsening of its relations with Washington. This dilemma is likely to influence Chinese

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77 Ibid 73.

78 Energy Information Administration, 'Country Analysis Brief: China', last updated August 2006, on: <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/China/Full.html> (accessed 4-08-08)

79 Iranian Republic News Agency, 'Iran-China Trade to Reach dlr 30b in 2008', 14 July 2008.

80 Dorraj and Currier, 'Iran-China' 73.

81 J. Brandon Gentry, 'The Dragon and the Magi: Burgeoning Sino-Iranian Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century', *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, November 2005, 123.

82 J. Brandon Gentry, 'Dragon and the Magi' 119-122.

83 Ibid 73.

84 I. Berman, 'The Logic Behind Sino-Iranian Cooperation', *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, 4/4, 2006, 21. The SCO was established in 2001 by China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

85 Dorraj and Currier, 'Iran-China', 70.

policy towards Iran.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, China officially opposes the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Nuclear proliferation in the Middle East threatens the stability in a region that is the source of the majority of Chinese oil supplies.<sup>87</sup> The crisis in Georgia and the worsening of Western-Russian relations in the summer of 2008 further complicated the Iranian issue for China. From the beginning of the Iranian nuclear crisis, Russia has been the most supportive of Tehran among the six powers. If Russia limits its cooperation with the other members of the six power group and steps up its support for Tehran instead, there will be increased pressure on Beijing to choose sides. This may further stimulate China to play an active role as a mediator between Iran and the United States.

As with the Darfur case, the Iranian nuclear crisis affects China's interests not only in terms of local interests but also at the level of global governance. Here again, Beijing tries to uphold the principle of state sovereignty as much as possible. For China the Iranian nuclear programme is an international issue only if it is aimed at acquiring nuclear weapons and insofar as it violates international law. From the Chinese perspective, whether the Iranian government is anti-America or anti-Israel, and that it has close ties with Hezbollah and Hamas, are not relevant considerations. China therefore aims at preventing the political signature (pro- or anti-Western) being a factor in the imposition of UNSC sanctions. At the same time, China wants to avoid being regarded as an irresponsible global power that does not care about nuclear non-proliferation.<sup>88</sup> Beijing's reputation in this regard is highly relevant to its standing, and therefore influence, in international organisations.

#### **4.2 The Iranian Nuclear Crisis: China's Actions**

The fear of having to choose between Tehran and Washington and concerns over the course of the global governance debate are powerful stimuli for China to play a role in solving the Iranian nuclear crisis. Various diplomatic visits were arranged at the start of the crisis, intended to brief China on Iran's nuclear programme.<sup>89</sup> Deputy Foreign Minister Gholamali Khoshroo visited China on 11 August 2004 and Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki visited on 13-14 October 2005. Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing visited Iran in November 2004 and expressed China's opposition to referring Iran to the

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86 J. Brandon Gentry, 'Dragon and the Magi', 119.

87 Ibid 60.

88 Shen Dingli, 'Iran's Nuclear Ambitions Test China's Wisdom', *Washington Quarterly*, 29/2, 2006, 56.

89 Shen, 'China's Wisdom', 63.

UNSC during his visit, as this would complicate the issue, while stressing that Iran should operate within the framework of the IAEA.<sup>90</sup> Both China and Russia opposed an IAEA resolution drafted by the EU in 2005 that threatened to bring Iran before the UNSC. After ‘private consultations’ with China this threat was removed from the resolution’s content, but China still abstained when it was put to vote in the IAEA on September 24.<sup>91</sup> Iran reportedly cancelled an oil deal with India, who had voted in favour, afterwards.<sup>92</sup>

Only when Iran openly continued its uranium enrichment in January 2006, did China agree to refer Iran to the UNSC. Before sanctions were voted upon, the Six Powers offered Iran a ‘package proposal’, consisting of a guaranteed supply of nuclear fuel, cooperation on civil nuclear energy and economic cooperation in exchange for which Iran would pledge to continue cooperation with the IAEA in June 2006. Iran failed to meet the demands and a month later sanctions followed, also supported by China. The Security Council has adopted four resolutions on Iran since then, and China has voted four times in favour.<sup>93</sup> Wang Guangya, the Chinese Ambassador to the UN, in explaining the Chinese position after each vote stressed the Chinese preference for a peaceful solution to the crisis, to be achieved through dialogue and diplomacy. He also stated that China preferred the IAEA as ‘the main mechanism for dealing with the Iranian nuclear issue’, instead of the Council. China had agreed to sanctions despite its traditional reluctance to measures interfering in a sovereign state and its belief that sanctions would increase rather than solve international tension. Its decision to do so was motivated by its opposition to nuclear non-proliferation outside the IAEA framework.

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90 ‘Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing Pays a Formal Visit to Iran’, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press Release, 7 November 2004, on: <http://ie.china-embassy.org/eng/NewsPress/t169550.htm> (14 July 2008).

91 Shen, ‘China’s Wisdom’, 64.

92 Ninan Koshy, ‘India and the Iran Vote in the IAEA’, *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 27 October 2005.

93 Resolutions 1696 (July 2006), 1737 (December 2006), imposing economic sanctions, 1747(2007) sanctions toughened, arms embargo added, 1803 (2008) increased restrictions on the movement of Iranians and Iranian capital, on: <http://www.un.org>.

Wang Guangya, however, stressed in his comments that all sanctions were reversible as long as Iran returned to operate within that framework and that the sanctions were not intended to punish Iran, but to urge it back to the negotiating table.<sup>94</sup> Iran's non-compliance necessitated China to agree to tougher sanctions.

During the time that China was involved in addressing the crisis it continued to develop its business relations. Iran signed its most important oil deals with China after the news of its uranium enrichment activities had been made public. China even benefited from mounting US pressure on Japan to withdraw all but ten per cent of its stakes in the Azadegan oil field. China showed to be less receptive to US pressure and therefore became a more important trading partner for Iran.<sup>95</sup>

Bilateral diplomatic contact continued on a high level as well. President Ahmadinejad attended the Shanghai summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in June 2006. The Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi visited President Ahmadinejad in Tehran on 13 and 14 November 2007. Both sides praised their cooperation, while Yang also urged Iran to increase cooperation with the IAEA and continue negotiations with the EU-3.<sup>96</sup> On 14 July 2008 Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister visited Yang Jiechi in Beijing.

China has actively supported the multilateral approach, for example by hosting a Six Power meeting on the issue in Shanghai on 16 April 2008. In May 2008, Iran took the initiative and approached China, Russia, the EU and the UN with a nuclear package proposal on non-proliferation and international security issues aimed at reaching agreements. Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi stated in response to the proposal that it 'has positive points that could be used to create a favourable atmosphere for future talks'.<sup>97</sup> China also supported a new 'package proposal', offered by Javier Solana to Tehran on 14 June 2008, and attended negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme in Geneva on 19 July, a meeting that facilitated the highest level of diplomatic contact between the US and Iran since 1979. Despite high expectations, no compromise was reached as Iran refused to give up uranium enrichment and the US refused to continue negotiations unless Iran had given up enrichment.

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94 Statement by Wang Guangya after the adoption of resolution 1737, Press Release, Security Council meeting SC/8928, 23 December 2006, on: [http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unscl\\_press.asp](http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unscl_press.asp) (12 July 2008), and Statements by Wang Guangya after the adoption of resolutions 1747, 1803, Press Releases on 23 March 2007 and 03 March 2008, on: [http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unscl\\_press.asp](http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unscl_press.asp) (12 July 2008).

95 Dorraj and Currier, 'Iran-China', 72-73.

96 Press Release, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on: <http://www1.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t382102.htm> (16 July 2008).

97 Novosti Russian News and Information Agency, 25 May 2008.



### 4.3 The Iranian Nuclear Crisis: Europe's Interests

The main interests of the EU in Iran are energy resources, trade and investment, while the EU also has an interest in cooperating with Iran in regional security issues because of its interests in the stability of the region. Iranian gas reduces Europe's dependency on gas from Russia. Another interest is cooperation on combating drug trafficking through Iran from Afghanistan.<sup>98</sup>

A nuclear Iran might at some point in the future directly threaten Europe's security. The US government uses the perceived threat that Iranian nuclear missiles could pose to Europe as the central argument in favour of positioning a missile shield in Central Europe. Moscow vehemently opposes a missile shield that it says is aimed at Russia rather than Iran. The tensions between Iran and the US may thus be contributing to increased tensions between Europe and Russia. Because of its economic and diplomatic interests in Iran a military solution to the crisis is very much against the interests of the EU. The actions which the EU has undertaken reflect this position. The interests of the EU as a whole in Iran are largely similar to those of the member states in this study. The EU is not diplomatically represented in Iran and therefore most contact takes place through embassies of the member states.

France has substantial economic interests in Iran. France's exports to Iran are diverse and encompass the automobile industry, hydrocarbon technology, transport and financial services, while imports are mainly crude oil.<sup>99</sup> Iranian oil accounts for three per cent of French oil imports.<sup>100</sup> Iran was France's sixth oil supplier in 2006 and France's third leading customer in the Middle East.<sup>101</sup> French economic interests are damaged by the sanctions. The value of exports to Iran declined by 20.3 per cent in the period 2006-2007, totalling \$1.5 billion in 2007.<sup>102</sup>

France has interests at stake in the Middle East in areas where Iran is believed to be influential. Ties with its former colony (formally a League of Nations Mandate) Lebanon are strong and 2,000 French troops form part of the UN

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98 'EU Relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran', Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Brussels, 7 Feb. 2001, 6-7.

99 French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Economic and Political relations with Iran', on: [http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files\\_156/iran\\_301/index.html](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files_156/iran_301/index.html) (06 Aug. 2008).

100 Statistics from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, updated 10 Jan. 2006 (before international sanctions were enacted).

101 Energy Information Administration, 'Country Analysis Briefs: France', updated April 2007, on: <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/France/Full.html> (18 July 2008).

102 'France and UK Reduce Trade Ties with Iran', *Financial Times*, 17 July 2008.

mission deployed in Lebanon after the 2006 war with Israel. Syria and Hezbollah are important actors in Lebanon and both have strong ties with Iran. Given the risk that a nuclear Iran could directly or indirectly – by setting off US or Israeli countermeasures - threaten regional stability, it is in France's interests to stimulate Iran to end its nuclear programme.

British-Iranian relations have a long and complicated history. Britain was involved in the development of the Iranian oil industry at the beginning of the twentieth century. British Petroleum (BP) has its roots in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. Because of Britain's involvement in Iran in the last century and because Britain tends to follow US policy towards Iran, Britain is perceived as the 'old wolf of imperialism' and with more hostility than the other two European powers in Iran.<sup>103</sup> However, because the UK maintains a diplomatic presence in Iran, it has the capability to use personal diplomacy to mediate between the positions of the US and Iran.<sup>104</sup>

British interests in Iran centre on its energy resources and the potentially destabilising role that Iran can play in the Middle East, a region where Britain has traditionally had a strong presence. Trade between Iran and the UK was valued at £400 million in 2007 (2006: £431m).<sup>105</sup> Iran is Britain's sixth biggest trading partner from the Middle East and Northern Africa region. Britain's involvement in the Iraq war increased its interests in the stability and security of the Middle East.<sup>106</sup> Iran's foreign policy tends to work against British interest. Britain blamed Iran for giving support to various groups that work to undermine the Middle East Peace Process and for supplying Shi'a militias in Iraq with arms.<sup>107</sup>

Germany has vast and diverse economic interests in Iran. Within the EU, Germany is Iran's biggest trade partner. An estimated 1,700 German companies operate in Iran, including Siemens and BASF, and 75 per cent of Iranian small and medium-sized companies make use of German technology.<sup>108</sup> Many of these companies have been present in Iran for decades.

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103 Adam Tarock, 'Iran-Western Relations on the Mend', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26/1, 1999, 60.

104 Recommendation of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in: 'Global Security: Iran', Fifth Report of Session 2007-08, London: The Stationary Office Limited, 2 March 2008.

105 [https://www.uktradeinvest.gov.uk/ukti/appmanager/ukti/countries?\\_nfls=false&\\_nfpb=true&\\_pageLabel=CountryType1&navigationPageId=/iran](https://www.uktradeinvest.gov.uk/ukti/appmanager/ukti/countries?_nfls=false&_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=CountryType1&navigationPageId=/iran) (22 July 2008).

106 Mark Gasiorowski, 'The New Aggressiveness in Iran's Foreign Policy', *Middle East Policy*, 14/2, Summer 2007.

107 <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/country-profiles/middle-east-north-africa/iran/?profile=intRelations&pg=4> (22 July 2008).

108 'Trade Ties with Iran help Negotiations, German Politicians Say', *Deutsche Welle*, 29 Sept. 2007.

Siemens started doing business in Iran 140 years ago.<sup>109</sup> German-Iranian trade encompasses construction and engineering projects, steel, the automobile industry, energy and chemicals.<sup>110</sup> Germany's three main commercial banks also operated in Iran, but the Deutsche Bank, the Dresdner Bank and the Commerzbank all withdrew under US pressure in 2007.<sup>111</sup>

One of Germany's five foreign policy priorities is energy security and the diversification of energy supplies.<sup>112</sup> The fact that in February 2008 the German energy company RWE (*Rheinisch-Westfälische Elektrizitätswerk*) joined the Nabucco project as the sixth partner must be seen in this context. The Nabucco project will, when completed, transport gas through a pipeline from the Caspian Sea to Europe, through the Near and Middle East, to reduce Europe's dependency on energy supplies from Russia. Iran may be included as a gas supplier in the project and therefore Germany, as a stakeholder, has an interest in maintaining good relations with the country.<sup>113</sup>

The German-Iranian trade volume totalled \$7.1 billion in 2007. German exports to Iran declined by 7 per cent in 2006 and by a further 13.5 per cent in 2007.<sup>114</sup> The total volume of trade declined by 8.7 per cent in 2007. The German economy is negatively affected by the economic sanctions imposed on Iran and it is therefore in Germany's interests to solve the Iranian nuclear crisis swiftly. German companies are fearful that if economic sanctions force them to withdraw, Chinese and Russian companies will take their place.<sup>115</sup> The German government has put export credit guarantees in place that cover 65 per cent of all German exports to Iran.<sup>116</sup> The total value of these guarantees is \$5 billion.<sup>117</sup> In February 2007 the German Chamber of Commerce estimated that 10,000 German jobs would be lost if sanctions were toughened.<sup>118</sup>

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109 'Siemens and Iran: Business as Usual', *Réalité EU*, April 2008, on: <http://www.realite-eu.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=9dJBLNkGiF&b=2315291&ct=5266191> (18 July 2008).

110 'German-Iranian Economic Relations', *Réalité EU*, 13 March 2008.

111 'Trade Ties with Iran help Negotiations, German Politicians Say', *Deutsche Welle*, 29 Sept. 2007.

112 <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/de/Startseite.html> (18 July 2008).

113 'German-Iranian Economic Relations', *Réalité EU*, 13 March 2008.

114 German Federal Foreign Office, 'Economic Relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran'.

115 Kathy Gockel, 'Energy, Economic Interests Complicate Iran Dealings', The Stanley Foundation, 2007, on: [www.stanleyfoundation.org/resources](http://www.stanleyfoundation.org/resources) (18 July 2008).

116 'Europe and the Mullahs', *The Wall Street Journal*, 20 February 2007.

117 Philip H. Gordon 'Germany and Iran after the National Intelligence Estimate', Brookings Institution, January/February 2008.

118 'Europe and the Mullahs', *The Wall Street Journal*, 20 February 2007.

Germany has other interests in reducing tensions over Iran's nuclear programme. Firstly, President Ahmadinejad's denial of the Holocaust and threats against Israel make especially Germany an easy target for criticism about continuing business ties with Iran.<sup>119</sup> Secondly, Germany is mainly dependent on Russia for its energy supplies. Disagreement over Iran may prompt Russia to use this dependency as leverage on Germany to influence its policy towards Iran.<sup>120</sup> Thirdly, Germany has to take into consideration its good relations with the US. The US may hinder European companies in the US that continue to trade with Iran.<sup>121</sup> Germany can avoid having to make difficult choices if the crisis is solved diplomatically. Iran's cooperation would prevent the necessity of tougher economic sanctions.

At the overall level, Europe's interests which are at stake relate to energy, market access, and overall stability in the region. The danger of nuclear proliferation via Iran to anti-Western terrorist organisations is also something that European governments are likely to take seriously. Moreover, the Iranian nuclear crisis provides Europe with an opportunity to bolster its diplomatic influence in the Middle East. It is also an occasion to join the United States in promoting Western values, and therefore Western influence, both at the local level and in global governance. The European position combines the two aims of preventing a military conflict and getting Tehran to give up its nuclear programme.

#### **4.4 The Iranian Nuclear Crisis: Europe's Actions**

Although the EU is seen as having taken the lead in solving the Iranian nuclear crisis in the EU-3 context, this was an independent initiative by the 'Big Three', France, Germany and the UK and only two years later was fully supported by the European Council. Javier Solana, the High Representative of European Common Foreign and Security Policy, had expressed its support from the beginning.<sup>122</sup> The three foreign ministers visited Iran for discussions on the nuclear issue for the first time in October 2003. All other negotiations relating to trade between Iran and the EU were put on the shelf from then on. The talks led to the Tehran Agreed Statement in which the EU-3 recognised Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy under the Non-Proliferation Treaty and promised cooperation on economic and security issues when the nuclear

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119 Mark Landler, 'Germany Struggles to Unravel Economic Ties with Iran', *International Herald Tribune*, 20 September 2007.

120 Gockel, 'Interests Complicate Iran Dealings'.

121 'German Companies Feel the Pain in Sanctions-Hit Iran', *Deutsche Welle*, 16 July 2008.

122 Walter Posch, 'The EU and Iran: A tangled web of negotiations', in: 'Iranian Challenges', European Union Institute for Security Studies: Chaillot paper 89, May 2006.

issue was fully resolved. Iran signed the Additional Protocol of the IAEA and suspended uranium enrichment on a voluntary basis from 10 November 2003 onwards.<sup>123</sup> This was perceived as a major breakthrough in the crisis. European diplomacy had prevented the crisis from further escalation and built a bridge between the American and Iranian positions.<sup>124</sup>

During the following months, Iran was perceived as further obstructing the IAEA's access to nuclear facilities. As a result, the European and American positions converged, as both were now willing to refer Iran to the UNSC in case of further non-compliance and the provision of contradictory information.<sup>125</sup> The EU-3 presented Iran with a new incentive to continue working with the IAEA on 21 October 2004. This proposal included more economic benefits and cooperation and the delivery of light water reactors, in exchange for the suspension of uranium enrichment and full cooperation with the IAEA. This became the Paris Agreement, signed in Paris on 14 November 2004. In December 2004 negotiations started in three working groups on the transfer of nuclear technology, trade and cooperation and security. The key issue in the negotiations remained uranium enrichment. Iran was not legally bound to suspend enrichment and did so voluntarily to increase confidence among the international community. China supported Iran in this position on the ground that enrichment was an internal Iranian affair. The EU maintained that suspension was a prerequisite for further negotiations and that any resumption would lead to a referral to the UNSC.

The EU-3's diplomatic efforts continued to mediate between the position of the US and that of China and Russia in the context of a resolution which the IAEA board adopted on 24 September 2005. The EU convinced China and Russia not to use their veto against a resolution that found Iran to be in non-compliance with the IAEA statute, while referral to the UNSC, something the US insisted upon, was postponed.<sup>126</sup> Negotiations between Iran and the EU continued until December 2005, but the resumption of uranium enrichment on 9 January 2006 showed that the EU had not been able to convince Iran to cooperate in exchange for economic benefits. The EU-3 broke off negotiations.

Iran was now brought before the UNSC, where the EU played the leading role in ensuring a united international stance by adopting a 'twin-track'

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123 Eileen Denza, 'Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons: The European Union and Iran', *European Foreign Affairs Review* 10, 2005, 305.

124 Tom Sauer, 'Coercive Diplomacy by the EU: The Iranian nuclear weapons crisis', *Third World Quarterly* 28/3, T. 2007, 618.

125 Denza, 'Non Proliferation', 307.

126 Sauer, 'Coercive Diplomacy', 620.

strategy, mediating between the position of the US, on the one hand, and China and Russia on the other.<sup>127</sup> EU diplomacy achieved results in both tracks, as the US expressed its willingness to negotiate with Iran for the first time, subject to the condition that uranium enrichment was first suspended. The other track focused on getting support from China and Russia for the above-mentioned ‘package proposal’, in which the EU also succeeded. As stated above, Iran did not accept the offer and economic sanctions followed. During the negotiations, Javier Solana functioned not only as the EU’s main representative but also as the representative of the other powers, reflecting Europe’s central and mediating role in solving the crisis.

On 14 June 2008, Solana visited Tehran to offer a renewed and more extensive ‘package proposal’ to the Iranian authorities, to which Iran has yet to respond. EU foreign ministers stated on 22 July 2008 that they would not support military actions against Iran.<sup>128</sup> The EU’s strategy for dealing with Iran has so far succeeded in uniting China and Russia, on the one hand, with the US on the other. This has increased its international prestige, but has failed to produce real results. A failure to produce a breakthrough may damage the credibility of the EU as an international actor in the long term.<sup>129</sup> France has assumed an active role in solving the Iranian nuclear crisis within an EU context and as a member of the UNSC it has supported all four resolutions on Iran. France was part of the EU-3, together with the UK and Germany, and tried to solve the crisis through negotiations and the provision of incentives. Under President Chirac, France undertook various initiatives to normalise trade relations with Iran. A reciprocal agreement ‘protecting and encouraging investment’ came into force and Air France resumed direct flights between Paris and Tehran. Chirac also assumed a balancing role in the Middle East after the Lebanon war of 2006, mediating between American and Arab and Iranian interests.<sup>130</sup> However, under President Sarkozy France’s rhetoric and actions towards Iran have been less compromising and more directly in line with the US stance. Sarkozy stated in his first foreign policy speech that ‘increasing sanctions but also openness if Iran chooses to honour its obligations (...) is the only one [approach] that can keep us from facing a disastrous alternative: an Iranian bomb or the bombing of Iran’.<sup>131</sup> The number of staff at the economics section of the French embassy in Tehran has been reduced by a half over the period 2007-2008 due to less economic

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127 FCO, ‘Global Security: Iran’, 20 February 2008, 18.

128 ‘EU Nations Won’t Support Military Action Against Iran, Want to Keep Talking’, *International Herald Tribune*, 22 July 2008.

129 Sauer, ‘Coercive Diplomacy’, 631.

130 Patrice de Beer, ‘France and Lebanon: The diplomacy of tragedy’, 2006, on: <http://www.opendemocracy.net> (23 July 2008).

131 Nicolas Sarkozy, Speech at the 15th Ambassador’s Conference, 27 August 2007, on: <http://www.ambafrance-uk.org/President-Sarkozy-s-speech.html> (22 July 2008).

activity after international sanctions were imposed.<sup>132</sup> France's Total withdrew from a \$10 billion project in the Iranian South Pars field under pressure from the US and President Sarkozy in July 2008.<sup>133</sup>

The UK, as part of the EU-3, has been involved in negotiations on Iran's enrichment programme from the start and has also sponsored all resolutions adopted in the UNSC. British Prime Minister Tony Blair stated that he was certain that Iran sponsored terrorism.<sup>134</sup> The UK has also imposed unilateral sanctions on Iran. In June 2008 Prime Minister Gordon Brown decided that all overseas assets of Bank Melli, Iran's biggest bank, would be frozen. He announced that Britain will also take the lead in urging for more European sanctions in the oil and gas industry.<sup>135</sup> Britain's military presence in Afghanistan since 2001 and in Iraq since 2003 makes it more vulnerable to potential military actions by Iran. British soldiers were taken hostage by Iran's Revolutionary Guards twice, in 2004 and in 2007. Although both crises were solved diplomatically, Iran sent a strong signal of its power in the Persian Gulf.<sup>136</sup>

Bilateral diplomatic relations between Iran and the UK were normalised in 1999 and diplomatic visits were increasing before the nuclear dispute. After 2002, high-level diplomatic contact has been limited to visits in the context of the EU-3 dialogue. Foreign Minister Manoucher Mottaki visited the UK in January 2006 for an international conference on Afghanistan. The UK has spent over £ 1 million on Iranian projects to combat drug trafficking. The UK also provided assistance to the victims of the earthquake in Bam in 2004 and Prince Charles visited the disaster area in February 2004 as the representative of the British Red Cross.

British policy towards Iran most closely follows US policy, because of the shared military commitment in the region. The UK is also the most active power lobbying for additional European sanctions. However, a military solution is not in Britain's interest and it has therefore supported all existing initiatives to solve the crisis diplomatically.

Germany has assumed an active diplomatic role in trying to solve the Iranian nuclear crisis, mainly within the context of the EU as part of the EU-3, or the UN as part of the P5+1 construction. The P5+1 construction, the five

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132 'France and UK Reduce Trade Ties with Iran', *Financial Times*, 17 July 2008.

133 'Iran Isolation Grows as France's Total Cancels \$10 bn South Pars Gas Field Project', *The Times*, 11 July 2008.

134 AP, 'Blair: Iran sponsors terrorism', February 8, 2005.

135 'Britain and EU Step Up Iran Sanctions', *The Guardian*, 16 June 2008.

136 'What the End of the Hostage Crisis Means for the World', *The Independent*, 7 April 2007.

permanent members of the Security Council and Germany, elevated Germany's status as an important international actor. Germany's position on Iran has differed from the positions of its European negotiation partners on various occasions. During Bush's visit to Germany in June 2008, Chancellor Merkel emphasised Germany's preference for sanctions to be imposed against Iran only within a UN framework as this would include Russia and China.<sup>137</sup> The *Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie* (BDI, Federation of German Industry) had a similar position, stating that Germany must not make 'special sacrifices' related to its foreign trade in Iran and that sanctions outside a UN framework would distort business competition.<sup>138</sup> However, Merkel had stated earlier that 'Germany too' would scale down commercial activities in Iran if the country failed to cooperate.<sup>139</sup> During the negotiations in Geneva in June 2008 Germany, alongside Russia and China, argued for more time for negotiations before new sanctions would be considered, while the US and the UK pressed for a two-week time limit, which made Germany's different position once again clear.

Diplomatic visits outside the EU-3 context have not occurred at ministerial or higher level since 2003. In 2007, the Chairman of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee and a group of female members of the Iranian Parliament visited Berlin. In 2008, the Chairman of the German Bundestag Committee on Foreign Affairs visited Tehran. The German Ministry of Economics decreased the number of export credit guarantees for Iran over the period 2004-2007.<sup>140</sup>

To conclude, Germany, as an important business partner of Iran, has been active in solving the crisis diplomatically. It has done so strictly within multilateral settings as this ensures the involvement of the whole international community. Germany succeeded in maintaining its active role also after the EU-3 negotiation efforts failed in the P5+1 construction. Its willingness to become involved to such a high degree can be explained by its economic and energy interests in Iran.

#### **4.5 China and Europe and the Iranian Nuclear Crisis: Rivals or Partners?**

China continues to have strong ties with Iran, in spite of Chinese support for a number of UNSC resolutions directed against the Iranian nuclear

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137 'After Merkel Meeting, Bush Says Iran Options Open', *Deutsche Welle*, 11 June 2008.

138 Ibid.

139 'Merkel will Handel mit Iran einschränken', *Die Welt*, 12 Nov. 2007.

140 'German-Iranian Economic Relations', *Réalité EU*, 13 March 2008.



programme. European influence in Iran decreased as European companies withdrew from the Iranian market. As the European position gradually moved closer to that of the United States, Europe's value as a diplomatic ally grew. But at the same time the fact that China has a great deal of influence in Iran means that China, too, is an important potential partner of the US. In fact, Europe lost some of its value for the US when it cut its economic ties with Iran. In terms of global governance, the Iranian crisis induced both Europe and China to compromise. In order to obtain support in the UNSC, Western proposals for resolutions had to take into account the Chinese and Russian positions. But Beijing, in order to avoid an escalation of tensions between Iran and the US, has had to vote in favour of four UNSC resolutions.

To some degree, China and Europe have acted as partners in dealing with this crisis. Both sides share a preference for diplomacy, consensus-building and dialogue within existing frameworks. The Iranian nuclear crisis has provided an opportunity for Europe to present itself as an international actor with a preference for diplomatic solutions and multilateralism. By cooperating with Europe in the Iranian nuclear crisis, China added to the credibility of Europe's efforts. China thus recognises Europe's aspirations of being seen as a responsible and leading actor on the international stage through its involvement in the Iranian nuclear crisis, while also noting the Europeans' tendency to back US calls for tougher sanctions.<sup>141</sup> In press conferences on the Iranian nuclear issue, China has called on Iran to continue dialogue with Europe. European policy preferences and initiatives have therefore strengthened the role of China by allowing China to be integrated in the main international structure that worked on the crisis. This position also enabled China to ward off criticism of protecting Iran too much, while ensuring that the sanctions imposed did not hamper its trade with Iran.

However, there is growing pressure from Europe to apply sanctions. Germany tried to avoid unilateral European sanctions, but the UK and later also France have been pushing for more sanctions. China is reluctant to accept sanctions that would damage its interests in the oil sector. It has delayed the referral of Iran to the UNSC, because it wanted to wait for tangible evidence that Iran was in breach of the IAEA statute. China thus insisted on the correct application of existing structures, while Europe showed a preference for operating pre-emptively as it saw the Iranian threat as more imminent. As the European countries limit their economic relations with Iran, Chinese and European local interests become less similar. While China continues to have good relations with the Iranian government, Europe would benefit more from

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141 Huang Damin and Zhou Jun, 'Recent Development of EU Integration', *International Strategic Studies* 2, 2008, 80. 'EU's active participation in regional security and counter-terrorism will help to defuse the global hotspots of security': Ibid 80.

a change in regime. At the same time, differences in the global governance approach become more marked. Recent months have already shown a tendency for European states to impose tougher sanctions that are more in line with US policy. With local interests becoming less similar, the differences between China's and Europe's approach to global governance become more visible. This makes it more difficult for Europe and China to act as partners.

## 5. Conclusions

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The experience of Europe in dealing with the Darfur and Iranian crises suggests that China has an important impact on Europe's role in international security. This is most visible with regard to European influence at the local level. In both Iran and Sudan, local influence seems to a large degree to be mutually exclusive. While China has strong diplomatic and economic ties with these countries, Europe has weaker ties – especially in the case of Sudan. In both cases it is the decision of the European countries to scale down their economic involvement that has given China extra opportunities to strengthen its relationship with Sudan and Iran. A core element in the European approach actually consists of trying to isolate the Iranian and Sudanese governments, while a core element in China's strategy is to uphold and protect its good relations with the same regimes. The European strategy of downgrading or severing ties to put pressure on certain countries is seriously weakened by the fact that China provides an alternative source of economic and political support. In this sense, China's policy has a negative impact on Europe's position in international relations. At the same time, the use of economic sanctions by Europe boosts China's influence. When it is taken into account that Europe does not exist as a single security actor – whereas China really is a unified actor – the relative weakness of Europe's position is further emphasised.

To some extent, Europe benefits from its close security relationship with the United States. American leadership in international security can provide those who are allied to the US with added prestige and influence. Europe clearly

remains an important partner of the United States in dealing with global hot spots, as the Europeans and Americans tend to follow a similar approach. The growing international influence of (undemocratic) China enhances Washington's need for 'like-minded' (democratic) security allies such as Europe, Japan, and Australia. But at the same time, the strong local influence of China and its eagerness to avoid military conflicts in countries where it has large interests make Beijing a key partner for Washington when it comes to finding fundamental solutions to crises. China's rise does not end the close relationship between Europe and the US, but it does result in Europe not being the only major partner for the United States in dealing with crisis in regions such as the Middle East and Africa.

In terms of setting norms for global governance, the emergence of China also has a limiting effect on Europe's role. In the early 1990s, with the Soviet Union having collapsed and China keeping a low profile in international relations, the West was in an ideal position to set the agenda and define the norms for global governance. When it comes to international conflict management, Europe and the US prefer an outcome that contributes to the spread of democracy and open markets. While focusing on human rights violations and support for international terrorism as the key problems, Western governments promote (pro-Western) democracy as the best long-term solution. But the emergence of China and other non-Western nations as great powers requires the West to compromise. In order to retain the centrality of the United Nations and other international organisations in global governance, influential powers such as China must be included in the system. China, as a non-Western and non-democratic state, does not benefit from a global governance system that is aimed at spreading pro-Western democracies. Its sense of insecurity with regard to separatism within China is an added reason why Beijing is reluctant to allow international organisations to interfere in countries' domestic politics. This is a setback especially for Europe, because it relies more on soft power, norm setting, and multilateralism than the United States.

Naturally it is not just Europe whose international influence is restricted by China. The Chinese government also needs to compromise in order to keep the international system going and to keep European support for multilateralism. China faces not just the US but also Europe in many issues. At some point Iran and Sudan may want to balance their dependence on China by improving relations with Europe. However, in the regional security crises in Iran and Sudan, the current development is that Europe's role is receding while China's position is becoming more prominent.

Rivalry between Europe and China over influence in international security management exists, but this does not necessarily mean that the two cannot act as partners. There is also rivalry between China and the US, but also a

growing partnership in dealing with the North Korean nuclear issue. A Sino-European partnership can work out in two ways. First, the two sides can be complementary. While one side puts pressure on the local government, the other side acts as mediator. This is what happens in Sudan. The situation may constitute a partnership if Europe and China share the same aims: if they wish to resolve the crisis and restore stability rather than acquire greater influence at the cost of the other. The second form of a partnership is China and Europe both acting as mediators. This is what happened in the Iranian case. Both parties have been trying to prevent a military conflict by getting Iran to change its nuclear policy.

The Sudan and Iran crises also show that there are restrictions to the Sino-European partnership. Since Europe has smaller local interests than China, there also appears to be less inclination to aim at conflict resolution or prevention. Instead, Europe tends to push for more ideological objectives, such as promoting democracy and human rights or political change. These objectives do not necessarily constitute the best or the quickest way out of a crisis. This is most clearly visible in Sudan, but increasingly also in the Iranian crisis. China, on the other hand, often has a tendency not to become too involved in addressing a crisis. Beijing wants to avoid having to choose between good relations locally or good relations with the West. China may also feel that its local interests are not directly threatened by a security crisis. Chinese reluctance to approve sanctions or humanitarian or peacekeeping missions generally creates tension between Beijing and the European capitals over which course to take.

Wherever Europe and China have significant interests as well as influence – which is the case especially in Africa, but is also relevant in parts of the Middle East and Asia – they are bound to play a prominent role in international conflict management. Together with the United States, in many instances they may be the most influential actors involved. For the time being the relationship between Europe and China in regional conflict management is likely to be characterised by a mixture of cooperation and rivalry. There are too many opposing interests for there to be a large degree of cooperation. This is especially true in the sphere of human rights and state sovereignty. And yet both sides have a need for regional stability and for good mutual relations. Consequently, the potential for cooperation is always there. China and Europe will encounter one another in conflict management and security diplomacy more often in the future. The learning process of how to deal with each other has only just begun.



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