



briefing

[#07/3]

Hybrid AU-UN operation in Darfur: Precedents, progress, and challenges

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October 2007*

Introduction

There has been significant movement by the international community to substantially improve the political and security situation in Darfur. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1769, passed in July 2007, mandated a new hybrid UN-African Union peacekeeping force for Darfur. This new UN-AU force could set important precedents on practical application of the doctrine of the responsibility to protect (R2P), a concept Canada has taken a lead in developing and promoting.

However, challenges remain, including persistent hostilities and fighting on the ground, diplomatic hurdles, and difficulties related to quickly setting up a huge hybrid force.

Background

The conflict in Sudan's western province of Darfur between rebels and government-supported militias known as the Janjaweed has killed at least 200,000 people and displaced more than two million since 2003. In 2004 the first of several ceasefire agreements was reached between the Government of Sudan and the rebel groups. None of these ceasefires have been observed in practice by either the Government or the rebel groups, despite the presence of an AU observer mission. While by 2007 the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) consisted of approximately 7,000 personnel it has

never been large enough or had a strong enough mandate to stop the killing. AMIS and the rest of the international community have also had to deal with Government of Sudan resistance to international intervention efforts.

Since 2004 Canada has contributed \$441-million for humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding, and reconstruction, making Canada the fourth largest donor to the Darfur mission (CBC News 2007). Canada has contributed trainers, equipment, vehicles, air transport support, and other technical and logistic assistance. Canada has also provided diplomatic support to the AU's mediation efforts.

The AU's mediation efforts led to the signing on 5 May 2006 of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) by the Sudanese government and one rebel faction—Minni Minawi's bloc of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A). A breakaway faction of the SLM/A and the rebel group Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) refused to sign the deal, demanding a greater share of the wealth and power. After the DPA, the SLA and the JEM split into several splinter groups, some along ethnic lines. At one point, nearly a dozen rebel groups existed (Pronk 2006).

Since the signing of the DPA, the Sudanese army, the Janjaweed, and multiple rebel forces have continued military activities in Darfur, resulting in a recent upsurge in violence, death, and displacement.

Developments in 2007

This year has seen momentum build towards the establishment of joint operations between the UN and AU in Darfur and the reigniting of the AU/UN-mediated political process to bring all rebel groups into discussions. In April the Sudanese government agreed to a UN “heavy support package” to strengthen the current AU force with an additional 3,000 UN troops, police, and civilian personnel, along with aircraft and other equipment. While not the robust force Darfur required, it was seen as an entry point to further negotiations on a peacekeeping force in Darfur.

Diplomatic gains were seen with the agreement on 8 June of a “roadmap” for the Darfur political process and for joint UN-AU operations. On 12 June the Sudanese government agreed to accept a hybrid peacekeeping force of approximately 26,000 troops. Seizing the moment, French President Sarkozy hosted an international diplomatic meeting. Peter MacKay, then Canadian Foreign Minister, and 18 other country representatives attended this one-day conference, but representatives of Sudan and the African Union did not. As a result, it was less of a planning meeting for a force in Darfur and more of an exercise to rally international resources for an AU-UN force. On 1 July the AU Summit signaled AU support for a joint force with the UN.

Hybrid peacekeeping force for Darfur: A new precedent

Ongoing diplomatic negotiations led to the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1769. The AU/UN Hybrid operation in Darfur, UNAMID, will incorporate existing AMIS and UN personnel and will consist of “up to 19, 555 military personnel; including 360 military observers and liaison officers, and an appropriate civilian component including up to 3, 772 police personnel and 19 formed police units comprising up to 140 personnel each” (UNSC 2007). The force will be mandated to restore security for humanitarian aid activities, protect civilian populations under threat, monitor and verify implementation of the 2004 ceasefire, and assist an inclusive AU/UN-mediated political process. While

UNAMID will be authorized to monitor the UN arms embargo that has been in place since 2005, it will not be empowered to seize illegally transferred weapons. Significantly, the resolution authorizes UNAMID to act under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, to take “necessary action” to protect its own personnel, to prevent interference in the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement, to prevent armed attacks, and to protect civilians.

A key element of the mechanics of the hybrid force will be the single command and control system under the UN. Close UN and AU collaboration will be required to ensure coordination of complex logistics and decision-making.

Sourcing troops for UNAMID could pose a challenge, as the AU is already struggling to raise troops for its Somalia mission. Resolution 1769 stipulates that infantry troops will be sourced primarily from African countries. Reports have indicated that troops or police officers have already been pledged by Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Malaysia, Nepal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda. South Africa is also “seriously considering” augmenting its existing contribution to the AU in Sudan. However, the African offers are not confirmed, and the Government of Sudan may need to allow in troops from Asia and other parts of the world as part of UNAMID.

Non-African countries, including Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Pakistan, Thailand, and Uruguay, have indicated that they would be willing to offer troops. China is soon to deploy 315 members of an engineering unit and medical team to UNAMID. Norway and Germany are ready to expand their Darfur contribution, primarily for air transport, while Britain intends to send military officers to join the peacekeeping force, despite “fears that the mission may become a target for anti-western jihadist groups” (Chamberlain 2007). Neither the United States nor Canada has plans to contribute further military personnel. On 2 August Canada announced that it would contribute an additional \$48-million to facilitate the transition of AMIS to the AU-UN hybrid force (CBC 2007). The

hybrid force is estimated to cost about \$2-billion in the first year.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on 28 August was quoted as saying that “the 26,000 required military and police troops have already been committed, however the UN still lacks in the specialized areas, like air transportation and experts in finance. We’d like to have contributions from non-African Union countries, particularly European countries” (CNN 2007).

To complement UNAMID, on 25 September the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1778, establishing a multidimensional peacekeeping force to be made up of European Union troops in eastern Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR). Rejecting the original idea for a UN mission, in June Chad President Idriss Deby agreed to an EU force. On 11 September the EU approved military plans to deploy the mission to Chad. The mission could see up to 4,000 troops on the ground by the end of 2007, with deployment beginning at the end of the rainy season in mid-October (Reuters, 2007). The bulk of troops will be French. The military and police deployment aims to help protect the 380,000 civilians in Chad and the CAR caught in the spillover of the Darfur conflict.

Parallel or linked: Working toward a political solution

While efforts were proceeding to establish an international force on the ground in Darfur, a parallel process was underway to arrive at a political solution. On 21 February talks were convened in Tripoli, Libya, to convince the coalition of non-signatory rebels to join the 2006 Darfur peace deal. The Libyan President attempted to convene the meeting with the Eritrean, Sudanese, and Chadian presidents; Darfuri rebel groups; and AU and UN envoys. The meeting did not go well: Chad’s delegation came late; Eritrea rejected the participation of the UN envoy; and most rebel groups stayed away. The Tripoli meeting prompted five of the rebel splinter groups to form a new alliance to present a “united front” for peace negotiations, but some of the bigger rebel factions,

including SLM/A, Greater Sudan Liberation Movement, and JEM remained outside the new alliance.

The second international meeting in Tripoli, held 16-17 July, included representatives from Sudan, UK, China, US, UN, EU, Russia, and Canada, among others, who met with the five Darfuri rebel factions forming the united front. This meeting concluded with an agreement to meet in August in Tanzania to set up a final round of peace talks.

This follow-up “pre-negotiation” meeting was held with “Leading Personalities of the Non-Signatory Movements to the Darfur Peace Agreement” from 3-5 August in Arusha (UN News Service 2007a). It ended with a pledge from the rebel groups represented at the meeting to present a common platform on a range of issues, including sharing of power and wealth, security arrangements, land and humanitarian issues, and final talks towards a political solution to the Darfur conflict at a meeting to be held 27 October.

Unfortunately, some important rebel representatives, including Suleiman Jamous, the Sudan Liberation Movement humanitarian commander formerly detained by the Sudanese government, and Abdul Wahid el-Nur, president of the SLA now living in France, did not attend the meeting at Arusha. El-Nur has presented a number of preconditions to his attendance in October, including full disarmament of the Janjaweed militias, removal of new settlers from Darfur, the return of Darfur internally displaced persons (IDPs) and deployment of the UN/AU hybrid force (Lampour 2007). Riek Machar, the Vice-President of Southern Sudan, is pressuring El-Nur to accept the peace negotiations without preconditions.

Following a high-level meeting of about 26 countries and regional groups to discuss Darfur on 21 September, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced the creation of a trust fund to support the October Darfur peace talks. A special negotiator will be appointed “to spearhead efforts to bring the many parties to the talks in Libya” to be conducted “under the auspices of the UN and AU envoys. The

Secretary-General has stressed the importance of the 27 October talks being as “inclusive and decisive” as possible (UN News Service 2007d).

Security challenges

The diplomatic gains could be jeopardized by continuing hostilities on the ground in Darfur. The rebel leader of a breakaway faction of the SLM, Ahmed Abdel Shafie, said in a statement that “continued violence in Sudan’s remote west meant ‘that the parties to the conflict in Darfur are not yet prepared to enter into genuine political negotiations’” (Heavens 2007). In recent months the security situation in Darfur has dramatically deteriorated, resulting in the evacuation of staff and the restricting of operations by many aid agencies. August and September witnessed a sharp increase in violence, with heavy fighting, government air force bombardment of civilians, and many physical and sexual assaults in IDP camps, resulting in hundreds of deaths in August alone (UN Office of the Spokesperson of the Secretary-General 2007).

A recent attack on AU troops, in which 10 soldiers were killed, 30 are missing and seven are badly injured (BBC News 2007), was the worst since their deployment to Darfur. It is being blamed on a splinter group that broke away from a faction called SLA United. There are also indications that Arab tribes, bandits, and factions accused of killing civilians are now fighting one another over the “spoils of war” (Gettleman 2007). Other reports suggest that the proliferation of small arms and the recruitment of child soldiers are on the rise. An Amnesty International report of 24 August stated that the Sudanese government is continuing to deploy offensive military equipment in Darfur, despite the UN arms embargo and peace agreements (Amnesty International 2007). According to reports cited by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the Sudanese armed forces and at least seven rebel and opposition groups in Darfur are recruiting and using children to fight (UNSC 2007b).

Insecurity in Darfur hurts efforts to achieve a political resolution to the conflict. The AU-UN hybrid force in Darfur and the complementary EU

force in Chad and CAR could help to improve security, especially if there is a coordinated approach between the peace process and security.

Canada and Darfur: Diplomatic tensions

Canada’s Foreign Affairs website states that, “in response to the deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation in Sudan, Canada suspended its government-to-government development program. Canada has maintained a ban on the sale of all military equipment to Sudan and the Government does not promote commercial activity in the Sudan” (DFAIT 2005). According to David Kilgour, a former Secretary of State, “Canada has not had any influence with Khartoum since President el-Bahir came to power” (Adeba 2007).

While Canada has been making a substantial contribution to AMIS, diplomatic relations with the Sudanese government have recently come under further strain. In August, a Canadian diplomat and an EU envoy were expelled from Sudan for “interfering in the internal affairs of Sudan” and contravening diplomatic protocols. They were reportedly inquiring about a prominent opposition leader Mahmoud Hassanein, who is detained for allegedly plotting a coup (Adeba 2007). While the EU envoy apologized and was permitted to stay, the Canadian government refused to apologize and retaliated by expelling a representative from the Embassy of Sudan in Ottawa (*New York Times* 2007).

The rash of expulsions from Sudan, including the head of CARE International, adds further complexity to an already tenuous diplomatic situation. How this tension will affect Canada’s contribution to the demanding challenge of supporting an effective UN intervention remains to be seen.

Sudan and the ICC

Repeated calls by the International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo, for justice in Darfur (UN News Service, 2007c) add another wrinkle to the resolution of conflict in Darfur. Two

Sudanese suspects have been indicted by the ICC for war crimes and crimes against humanity over attacks against four villages in West Darfur between August 2003 and March 2004, but have not yet been arrested by Sudan. Adding insult to injury, one of those accused of war crimes is currently Sudan's Minister of State for Humanitarian Affairs Ahmed Haroun, who has responsibility for Darfur's IDP camps. The international community's dilemma is how to maintain positive diplomatic pressure on the Government of Sudan to effectively establish UNAMID while accusing its top officials of war crimes.

Testing the responsibility to protect

Since the Darfur crisis first gained international attention in 2003, many have framed the required response by the international community within the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine. R2P states that, in cases where a state is unwilling or unable to protect its people, the international community has the responsibility to take collective action to protect them. R2P is applicable in cases of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. As an emerging norm in international law, R2P's recognition was given momentum by being endorsed by world leaders at the 2005 UN World Summit Outcome Document (UNGA 2005).

Canada played a key role in the articulation of R2P by sponsoring the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, and has continued to invest its resources and prestige in advancing the doctrine. Commentators have pointed to Darfur as "the real test of Canada's and the world's resolve to move the responsibility to protect to full recognition in international law" (Siebert 2006). A report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights concluded that, in Darfur, Sudan "is failing to protect the human rights of the population, in particular the right to life. The responsibility to protect includes carrying out investigations, prosecuting perpetrators and providing reparations to victims.... Despite clear evidence that members of its security forces were involved in attacks, the Government did not meet its obligations under international law to take effective action to prevent

the attacks, control members of its security forces and use of its equipment, pursue the attackers or intervene to protect civilians" (UN OHCHR 2007).

More than four years after the crisis has gone from very bad to even worse in Darfur, the international community has finally acted on its responsibility to protect by authorizing the AU-UN hybrid force. Resolution 1769 maintains the "sovereignty of the Government of Sudan," but does not explicitly reference R2P by reaffirming Resolution 1674 (28 April 2006) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, noting the provisions of paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (UNGA 2005).

General Secretary Dandala (2007) of the All Africa Conference of Churches, while acknowledging the mandate of the UN/AU hybrid force to use military force "where it sees that there is a threat to human life," believes that "the mandate should also include the use of force to create buffer zones between civilians and aggressors by the troops."

While this AU-UN force may be far too late in deploying for what the R2P doctrine envisioned as early international action to prevent atrocities, it could still provide some practical guidance in the application of R2P. To do so, clear rules of engagement for troops will be required. These will be a challenge to create because of the different operating procedures of the countries that contribute troops. These rules will be needed early and must be articulated clearly to provide maximum legitimacy for action in situations in which civilians require urgent protection. Otherwise, there will be fatal delays while rules are cleared through bureaucratic procedures.

Conclusion

The security situation and the political solution are intrinsically linked in Darfur and must be addressed comprehensively. As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon recently remarked after a visit to the region, "the Darfur solution cannot be piecemeal. If peace is to come, it must take into account all the elements that gave rise to the conflict" (UN News Service

2007b). Canada and the world face an enormous challenge in effectively establishing UNAMID in a politically volatile and insecure environment. The forthcoming peace negotiations in Libya on October 27 between the Sudanese government and the Darfur rebels provide an opportunity to address the causes of conflict, if all or most of the key stakeholders participate and are presented with incentives that satisfy their security concerns and their political goals.

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“and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2:4)