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Scenarios for Interventions in Darfur

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On January 12th, 2006, the African Union Peace and Security Council expressed its support for the transition of the African Union operation AMIS in Darfur into a UN operation. On February 3rd, such a transition was endorsed by the Security Council for the first time.¹ On August 31st, 2006, the Security Council decided to expand the mandate of UNMIS to support implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement and the N'djamena Agreement on Humanitarian Cease-fire on the Conflict in Darfur. The consent of the Government of Sudan for the deployment of a multidimensional United Nations peace operation in Darfur was invited;² the Government, however, never gave its consent. Subsequently, a high-level consultation in Addis Ababa on November 16th, 2006, outlined a three-phased approach for the United Nations' support to AMIS. First, a light support package was to be provided, followed by a heavy support package, after which finally the operation would be turned into an African Union-United Nations hybrid operation. On December 23rd, President Omer Al-Bashir reaffirmed his government's readiness to implement these Addis Ababa conclusions. Since then, however, the conflict in Darfur continued and AMIS came under attack several times within the first half of 2007. The implementation of the Addis Ababa conclusions ground to a halt with only the partial deployment of the light support package. Nonetheless, on 5 June 2007, the Secretary-General produced a report which contained the proposal for the deployment of the hybrid operation.³

Scenarios

The proposed hybrid operation is only one of the possible scenarios the African Union, the United Nations Secretariat, and the Security Council could potentially have chosen. If one decides to intervene in conflicts, one should, in principal, first analyze the problem so that the best solution can be selected. In other words, the scope of the problem should determine the solution as well as the interveners and their mandate. Having said this, there were only a number of possible scenarios for international involvement in the conflict in Darfur and the deployment of an enlarged peace operation:

- a) AMIS in Darfur could have remained the same, with a possible early start of a peace process on lower levels;
- b) AMIS in Darfur could have been reinforced and strengthened;
- c) UNMIS could have been extended into Darfur, as foreseen in Security Council resolution 1706 (2006);
- d) A hybrid operation in Darfur of AMIS combined with so-called United Nations Light and Heavy Support Packages could have been deployed;
- e) A regional operation, a multi-dimensional United Nations presence, in the border regions in Chad and the Central African Republic, as foreseen in Security Council presidential statement 55 (2006), could have been established;
- f) A humanitarian intervention in Darfur (either unilateral, coalition of the willing, EU or NATO) could have been undertaken.

Some of these scenarios were more likely than others - and those which were likely were not all potentially as effective. Although presently, the scenario of the hybrid operation has received the most international attention, it is likely that in the end a combination will result. This article reviews which factors determine the likelihood of certain scenarios becoming reality, and consequently which factors led the Security Council thus far to opt for the hybrid operation. Broadly speaking, there are six such factors which are discussed below.

Factors determining the likelihood of possible scenarios

Support of the local parties

Although the support of local parties is not a necessity for the deployment of a peace operation, it may be helpful. If conflicting parties do not want international involvement and perhaps choose to forcefully oppose it, the intervention requires a different mandate. Not every organization is able to perform each sort of operation. Pure peacekeeping with the consent of the parties can be performed by all organizations mentioned in the above scenarios. In case of enforcement actions, the AU would be the least likely organization to undertake them. The EU has, up until now, never really been involved in enforcement actions. The United Nations is acquiring these skills, but thus far enforcement operations are largely within the field of either a coalition of the willing or NATO. In the case of Darfur, the Government of Sudan has made it clear it will resist anything else but the present AU mission or a hybrid operation. In other words, any other sort of operation or any involvement of other organizations will be challenged by the government or its proxies and therefore requires peace enforcement capabilities - unless the government is pressured to change its mind.

Support of the Security Council

In principal peace operations need to be mandated by the UN Security Council. Consequently, in order to be carried out, a scenario needs to obtain the support of at least nine of the fifteen members of the Council. Moreover, the permanent members of the Council need to support the decision or at least abstain in voting. If one of them vetoes a draft resolution, it will not come into effect. Although theoretically, humanitarian intervention without the approval of the Security Council is possible, it is very uncommon.

In the case of Sudan, China has shown through its voting pattern in the Council that although it supports the deployment of the United Nations in Darfur, it only supports such a decision "with the consent of the Government of National Unity". Another permanent member, the Russian Federation, does not support an activist policy by the Council either, as in the case of Qatar;⁴ both China and Qatar have large oil interests in Sudan. Russia not only opposes intervention in Darfur because of fears concerning the consequences such an activist policy might have on international involvement in its own conflict in Chechnya, but also because of economic reasons i.e. maintaining good relations with the present government in light of its large defense and oil interests.⁵ In other words, unless Khartoum approves it, it is very unlikely that the Security Council will decide to deploy a peace enforcement operation.

Over-deployment/overstretch

Presently, armed forces of Western countries such as the United States, Great Britain and the Netherlands, are deployed in areas such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Their great numbers in those areas do not allow these countries to send a lot of forces into Africa. The armed forces of these Western states appear to be close to overstretching and overdeployment, and have few spare forces to send to an operation like Sudan.⁶

As a result, even if Western governments wanted to send their forces to Darfur, and especially if these forces were to be involved in peace enforcement actions for which large numbers are necessary, they do not have these forces at their disposal. A large-scale Western military intervention in Darfur is only possible once their forces no longer need to be committed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Currently, the best Western governments can do is send such specialized forces like Special Forces, engineering, etc.⁷

Perception/fear of danger for intervening force

In many Western countries, the experiences of Rwanda and Somalia in the mid-1990s have caused governments to become cautious on the subject of deploying forces in Africa. A widespread perception exists that Africa is a continent torn apart by ancient tribal conflicts, which are highly irrational and wherein the parties may easily turn against peacekeepers. As governments fear body bags, Kofi Annan's expression, "peace-keeping is like giving first aid to a wounded rattlesnake," is often blown up to the rule that African conflicts are not to be meddled in.⁸ This belief is further

strengthened by the general lack of Western interest in the continent. France is a notable exception, as it is very much involved in 'la Francophonie', in Africa and also militarily. It is not likely that Western troops, or a NATO or EU operation for that matter, will send large numbers to enforce peace in Darfur. This region in Sudan does not represent sufficient Western interests, and the public outrage over the conflict is not large enough. The pro intervention lobby is stronger in the United States than in Europe, but has thus far not been able to gain a strong foothold even there. This situation is not likely to change, unless a stronger connection between the government in Khartoum and terrorism appears. In that case, the United States might be triggered to actively seek regime change; however, up to this moment this has not been the case (see below). Until now, the mantra, "African solutions to African problems," has become an easy excuse for Western powers to wash their hands of active policies in Darfur.⁹

Perception/fear of escalation

In the case of Sudan, the fear of African conflicts is exacerbated by the fact that the government of Sudan might oppose a Western intervention or even a Western presence in Darfur forcefully, and that another war like the ones in Iraq and Afghanistan might result. During the 1990s, Sudan harbored 'terrorists' such as Osama bin-Laden. In the aftermath of 9-11, Khartoum has chosen to be more 'with' than 'against' the US government. If the West sought confrontation, radicals in Khartoum might project such Western forces in Darfur as a 'crusaders' plot' and reverse the balance again. These fears are further aggravated by the demonstrations following Security Council resolution 1556. Islamic radicalism seems to be just around the corner.¹⁰ The last thing Western governments need is a further escalation of the already far too intense conflict in Darfur.

Donor fatigue

Operations deployed by the African Union are generally not very intrusive as a result of a rather strong commitment by the organization to the principle of non-interference. In addition, they are generally less capable as a result of a chronic lack of capacity. UN Peacekeeping operations are paid for by the assessed contributions to the United Nations. Consequently, the United Nations has no budgetary problems as its funds are guaranteed. This is not the case with regional organizations such as the African Union. These organizations have to search for donor assistance when they deploy a peacekeeping force, as their member states are less able to contribute generously. However, nowadays Western donors appear to react less enthusiastically when confronted with another bill for another peace operation in yet another conflict in Africa.¹¹ As a result, AU operations are generally underfunded, deployed late, difficult to expand, and often replaced by UN operations if possible.

In the case of Sudan, this has resulted in problems funding AMIS. Consequently, the AU operation in Darfur has had a persistent lack of basic resources and has consequently been unable to operate effectively and efficiently. Although AMIS II has been much more robust, better resourced and equipped with better logistics than the 60 unarmed military observers of AMIS I, the operation still lacks important resources.¹² Even the Sudanese government calls upon donors to aid, but funds have not been pouring in.¹³

Concluding remarks

The above factors determined the likelihood of possible scenarios translating to reality, and consequently explain what led the international community at present to opt for the hybrid operation. What results from this analysis is the conclusion that nothing with-holds the United Nations from deploying a regional operation - a multi-dimensional UN presence - in the border regions in Chad and the Central African Republic. An early start of a peace process at lower levels can also still be stimulated. With regard to the force in Darfur itself, however, the international community concluded that only a more robust peace operation would contribute to a better situation in Darfur. Consequently, keeping AMIS the way it was would not help. At the same time, peace enforcement actions were not likely. The absence of the consent of the government in Khartoum to the deployment of such a UN operation made that scenario a remote possibility - it would most

likely be vetoed within the Security Council. A humanitarian intervention without the consent of the Council was and still is also far from likely. Not only did the organizations (i.e. NATO and the EU) and countries (e.g. the United States, the United Kingdom or the Netherlands) which were - and still are - most capable to undertake such actions lack the forces, but they also feared the dangers of Africa and escalation. Although it was probably far from the best solution, the further implementation of the plan for a hybrid operation in Darfur stemming from the Addis Ababa conclusions seemed and probably still is the only realistic possibility for the time being. Such a hybrid operation, however, still leaves a spectrum of possibilities. On the side, a relatively weak operation like AMIS becomes stronger the more it is strengthened with UN packages, until it is more or less a UN operation on the other side of the spectrum. Nonetheless, only if the situation changes in regard to the factors discussed in this article, will it be likely that a different sort of operation other than the hybrid operation is sent to Darfur.

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¹ UN DOC S/PRST/2006/5,3 February 2006.

² UN DOC S/RES/1706 (2006), 31 August 2006.

³ UN DOC S/2007/307/Rev.1, 5 June 2007.

⁴ UN DOC S/PV.5423, 25 April 2006 en UN DOC S/PV.5519, 31 August 2006.

⁵ Paul D. Williams & Alex J. Bellamy, "The responsibility to protect and the crisis in Darfur", *Security Dialogue*, 36(1), pp. 27-47, at pp. 32-37.

⁶ For details of recent troop deployments by EU states, see Giegerich & Wallace (2004).

⁷ Interview Patrick Cammaert.

⁸ Interview Frank van Kappen.

⁹ Paul D. Williams & Alex J. Bellamy, "The responsibility to protect and the crisis in Darfur", *Security Dialogue*, 36(1), pp.27-47, at pp. 35.

¹⁰ Paul D. Williams ft Alex J. Bellamy, "The responsibility to protect and the crisis in Darfur", *Security Dialogue*, 36(1), pp. 27-47, at pp. 37-38.

¹¹ Seth Appiah-Mensah, "AU's critical assignment in Darfur: Challenges and constraints", *African Security Review*, 14(2), pp, 7-21.

¹² Seth Appiah-Mensah, "AU's critical assignment in Darfur; Challenges and constraints", *African Security Review*, 14(2), pp, 7-21.

¹³ Letter Eashir to Ban ki-Moon, 8 March 2007.