

Towards a UN deployment in Darfur: avoiding destabilising repercussions for peacekeeping in Africa

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On 5 May 2006, a Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) was signed by the Government of Sudan (GoS) and one of the rebel movements in Darfur, the Minawi faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement.¹ Furthermore, on 16 May 2006, the Security Council of the United Nations (UNSC) adopted a resolution to strengthen the African Union (AU) mission in Darfur prior to the deployment of a United Nations mission.

In addition to ongoing and intense US lobbying, the above-mentioned developments constitute a major step in paving the way towards the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation in Darfur. If approved by the Security Council of the United Nations, the African Union could hand over its current mission in Darfur to the UN by the end of the year. In addition, the UN operation would be in charge of supporting the implementation of the DPA. This development raises three major concerns:

- 1) Darfur: a major challenge for a UN peacekeeping operation. First, a smooth implementation of the DPA is unlikely. The GoS has constantly expressed its opposition to a UN deployment in Darfur. Numerous armed groups in Darfur are not part of the DPA. Hence, significant opposition leading to political obstacles and major security issues is likely. Second, the Department of Peace Keeping Operations (DPKO) is currently overstretched. It manages 17 peacekeeping operations that encompass over 86,000 civilian and military staff. Obtaining additional resources – military or civilian – will be a key challenge for DPKO.
- 2) Budget constraints: destabilising repercussions for peacekeeping in Africa. The current budget of DPKO is over \$5 billion. In the framework of current UN planning for an operation in Darfur, this mission would cost over \$1 billion. This would come in addition to the budget of UNMIS, the UN Mission in Sudan:² \$969.47 million. Hence, peacekeeping in Sudan could represent over 40% of the whole UN peacekeeping budget. In that case, DPKO will not have the financial resources to address other conflicts for several years. Moreover, an additional increase in the DPKO budget is unlikely (see below). Funding peacekeeping in Sudan will thus lead to major downsizing of other peacekeeping missions. A too fast downsizing of ongoing missions could have a destabilising impact on fragile peace processes, in particular in DR-Congo.
- 3) Establishing stabilisation priorities: the need for a common agenda in African peacekeeping. In the current process, peacekeeping in Sudan could overshadow, and even marginalise, efforts to stabilise other African countries. Without questioning how difficult living conditions for civilians are in Darfur, there is an urgent need to develop compatible priorities and allocations of resources for African peacekeeping as a whole. Renewed instability can stem from a too fast downsizing of UN peacekeeping missions, in particular in DR-Congo (see below). Elections in DR-Congo will be a significant step, but might not be sufficient for a sustainable stabilisation of this country.

I- UN deployment in Darfur: a confirmed key challenge

Lobbyists from various quarters have been supporting the deployment of a 'robust international force' in Darfur. As a partial peace agreement was achieved on 5 May in Abuja, a key hindrance to such a deployment has disappeared. Even if some opposition remains, it is likely to be eventually overcome.

¹ In spite of a common acronym, the SLM is divided into two main factions. One is led by Minni Minawi (SLM-M), the second one by Abdul Wahid (SLM-AW). Both of them are contested within their respective factions.

² UNMIS supports the peace agreement between GoS and the former rebel movement in South Sudan.

However, a UN operation in Darfur will face major political and logistical challenges that may hinder its efficiency and its impact.

Advocating for Darfur: from George Clooney to John Bolton to Kofi Annan

There has been intensive lobbying from various sources in support of a major international deployment in Darfur. Humanitarian and human rights NGOs have constantly advocated for such an approach since 2004. In the past few months, they have benefited from the commitment of well-known Hollywood figures, such as George Clooney or Angelina Jolie. Since 2004 as well, UNSG Kofi Annan has continuously followed the Darfur issue. As a former head of DPKO during the Rwandan genocide, the UNSG has developed a personal concern about and sensitivity towards mass violence.

Moreover, Sudan is an issue in the context of the domestic politics of the United States. Although Sudanese intelligence is regarded as a partner in the 'war on terror' by the US intelligence community, the Sudanese regime is often stigmatised in the US, either by religious organisations – who support the 'Christians' in southern Sudan –, by human rights watchdogs, or by the US Congress, and within the US Administration.³ At the UN, the US ambassador, John Bolton, has taken a prominent position, and even undertaken initiatives uncoordinated with the State Department, to push for a UN deployment in Darfur.⁴ Moreover, the US Administration has significantly increased its influence within the UN in the wake of the 'oil for food scandal'. Prioritising Darfur and Sudan is also an operational example of the US's increased influence.

The governments of Russia and China have been the main 'opponents' of a UN deployment in Darfur. These two governments have significant commercial interests in Sudan. In particular, China imports more than 7% of its oil from Sudan.⁵ It is however very unlikely that they will veto a resolution that will allow a UN deployment: the last UNSC resolution of 16 May 2006 (see above p.1) was voted by China and Russia.

Challenges facing UN peacekeeping in Darfur

In such a context, the challenges of implementing a peacekeeping mission in Darfur tend to be overshadowed by these main players. Yet, political, security and logistical challenges could limit the impact of a UN peacekeeping operation. So far in New York, a major UN mission in Sudan appears to be the only available option to try to overcome these challenges.

Political and security challenges:

- Hostility within Sudanese inner circles: The GoS has constantly expressed its opposition to a UN deployment in Darfur. The Sudanese inner circles – around President Bashir and heads of intelligence services – perceive such a deployment as a way of destabilising them. In particular, they consider a UN deployment as a key support to the investigations of the International Criminal Court on massive human rights abuses in Darfur. Key members of the inner circles could be incriminated by these investigations. If the UNSC acts under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the agreement of the GoS is not necessary to deploy UN forces. Nevertheless, in such a case, UN forces would be likely to face significant security challenges initiated by factions within the Sudanese inner circles. If an apparent agreement is reached, it does not guarantee that some Sudanese factions will not try to undermine and even target the UN mission, in order to minimise the investigative capabilities in Darfur.
- Hostility of armed groups in Darfur: out of the four rebel groups in Darfur, only one signed the DPA. Even if partial peace agreements have been effective – in Burundi for example – this will represent a significant challenge. Furthermore, beyond the acronyms of rebel movements, a wide variety of agendas and rationales prevail. Under the terms of the DPA, local militias – aka Janjaweed and initially armed by the GoS – should be disarmed by the GoS. Both the government's will and capacity to do this remain uncertain. These local militias are opposed to a UN deployment. In addition to Sudanese armed groups, the attitude of Chadian rebels on Darfur soil should also be taken into account, as well as their connections with local militias.
- A fragmented political and social environment: the Darfur conflicts did not begin in 2003. Intertwining dynamics that go back a long way are at stake – economic rivalries, land issues, local power struggles, antagonisms between communities, etc. This has led to a highly fragmented environment, which has undermined local constituencies. Identifying actual

³ However, Sudanese intelligence has regularly cooperated with the US intelligence community in the 'war on terror'.

⁴ Interviews with western diplomats, New York, May 2006.

⁵ Different figures exist regarding the share of Sudanese oil in Chinese imports. 7% is a minimum estimation. It could be above 10%.

players beyond abstract categories – e.g., ‘traditional authorities’, ‘civil society’, ‘gender’ – is a crucial issue for any political process. Implementing DPA or supporting a Darfur Dialogue is likely to be regularly hindered by such a situation.

Logistical challenges:

As already identified by EU teams supporting the AU in Darfur, these stem from three main elements: the scope of the necessary deployment, the climate and poor infrastructures.

- Scope of necessary deployment: internally displaced persons’ (IDPs) camps are scattered, armed groups are often mobile and the border with Chad is porous. Hence, protection of civilians and ‘containment’ of armed groups’ activities cannot be assured by infantry units without numerous deployment points or strong air support.
- Climate: Water is a scarce resource in several parts of Darfur, and the climate issue is complicated by factors such as alternating sand storms and flooding. It is evident that no deployment can be accomplished without a sustainable water supply.
- Poor infrastructures: beyond the security issue, roads are in poor shape in Darfur, as a consequence of a lack of investment and frequent flooding. Air supply also faces major hindrances. Heavy carriers can only land in two airports in Darfur – Nyala and El Fasher. Other locations can only be serviced by helicopters or specific planes, such as C-130. This represents major additional costs.⁶

UN planning on Darfur: cost and potential efficiency of a static UN ‘robust force’

As often with UN planning, security and logistical dimensions are the focus of most attention.⁷ As a consequence of US and UNSG commitments to Darfur, as well as security challenges, the current UN planning envisages the deployment of a ‘robust force’ in Darfur. Three to four brigades (10 to 15,000 men) should be deployed. Up to a couple of thousand civilian staff could be envisaged for logistical and administrative management, as well as ‘substantive sections’.⁸ Such a deployment will cost \$1 billion: compensations for the Troop Contributing Countries (TCC), logistical costs,⁹ wages. Such an additional major deployment raises four major concerns:

- Lack of available civilian staff: DPKO is already overstretched. UNMIS has currently a vacancy rate – i.e. positions available but not filled- of 40% for civilian positions.¹⁰ If civilian staff cannot be hired, logistical, administrative and ‘substantive’ sections will be undermined.
- Lack of appropriate civilian staff: recruiting staff with suitable profiles is of great significance when addressing a fragmented environment such as Darfur. Identifying actual players and ‘engaging’ them politically is crucial for a peace process. However, in the absence of human resources policy in DPKO, such resources are especially rare in UN missions.¹¹ As illustrated by the Ituri example, players without constituencies have been involved in negotiations. This created more confusion than stabilisation. In a guerrilla situation and in absence of an efficient political approach, military operations can only partially contain violence.
- Obtaining military capacities: A significant number of troops should be transferred from the AU mission to the UN. DPKO has initiated discussions with potential complementary TCC (Troop Contributing Countries) but these cannot be finalised until a full assessment has been achieved by DPKO. Moreover, the AU mission does not have any military air support.

⁶ The UN usually use MI-8 helicopters. They can only carry 20 passengers or two tonnes of supply. When flying, a Mi-8 costs \$5000 per hour. In spite of their significant capacity – up to 100 passengers –, MI-26 are rarely used, because of their high costs.

⁷ Information in the following paragraph comes from UN sources interviewed in New York in May 2006, either military or civilian.

⁸ In UN language, this usually includes Political Affairs, Public Information, Human Rights, Child Protection, Gender, Demobilisation Disarmament & Reintegration.

⁹ In order to supply and transport its 15,004 troops, civilian police (1,100), military observers (733) and international civilian staff (888), MONUC has a fleet of 84 aircraft at a cost over \$300 million.

¹⁰ UNMIS sources interviewed in Khartoum in February 2006.

¹¹ As part of its ongoing reforms, DPKO has developed a recent but specific focus on human resources that are necessary for the whole scope of peacekeeping activities. It is unlikely however that it will produce any major changes before the UN deploy in Darfur.

Obtaining such resources is a recurrent challenge. UNMIS only has 50% of its military helicopters.¹² Similarly, hospital and 'military information'¹³ profiles are difficult to obtain.

- **Military efficiency.** Because of limited air support, a 'nomadic'¹⁴ style of operation is not viable and UN forces are therefore obliged to adopt static deployment. If military air resources are available, they can establish a quick reaction force.¹⁵ In addition to this constraint, limited 'military information'¹⁶ and lack of air surveillance significantly hampers the reactive capacities of UN forces. How efficient will a static force be when armed groups are mobile and IDPs camps scattered?

These issues are recurrent for peacekeeping operations. However, additional obstacles in Darfur increase these concerns: the likely hostility of the highly efficient Sudanese intelligence services and the fighting spirit and capacities of armed groups in Darfur. However, a major UN operation often has a deterrent impact on human rights abuses and occasionally manages to reduce them. It might also provide an umbrella for more sustainable improvements that might be implemented by other national or international players.

However, because of budget constraints, a UN deployment in Darfur is likely to have major repercussions on other peacekeeping operations. Hence, before a precise mission format is agreed upon, its consequences for other missions should be taken into account in view of the implications of allocating such a large amount of resources to a single mission.

II- Budget constraints: downsizing missions and destabilising fragile peace processes?

The DPKO budget is currently over \$5 billion. It has significantly risen in the past five years and it is unlikely it could rise further.

The primary financial contributor, the United States, pays a share of 26%. The US Congress currently refuses to increase the amount paid by the United States. Indeed, in the wake of the 'oil for food scandal', various Congressmen are conducting a 'UN bashing' campaign and aim at reducing the amount paid by the US. In New York, the US Permanent Representation constantly lobbies to rationalise expenses, but also to reduce costs and the number of peacekeeping missions. Thus, the Darfur operation will have to be launched at the expense of other existing missions.

Where to save money in order to deploy in Darfur?

In the current context, it will mainly affect peacekeeping in Africa. 75% of the DPKO budget is spent on 6 operations in Sub-Saharan Africa – not including expenses in New York. \$1 billion cannot be found without downsizing these missions. The UN mission in Burundi will be closed by December 2006. Its budget is \$307 million. In the past few months, the US Permanent Representation in New York has lobbied to close or, at least, obtain a major downsizing of the UN mission at the border of Eritrea and Ethiopia. If a closure of the latter was to happen, it would render 'available' \$186 million. But there will still be a shortfall of \$500 million.

Presently, three other missions are unlikely to be affected: UNMIS in Sudan (budget of \$969.47 million), UNMIL in Liberia (budget of \$760.57 million) and ONUCI in Ivory Coast (budget of \$438.17 million). The first two missions benefit from the support of the US Administration, the third from the support of the French government. As Permanent members of the UNSC, they are in a position to strongly influence the decision-making.

Though led by a former US ambassador, the UN operation in DR-Congo, MONUC, is thus likely to face significant lobbying for it to be quickly downsized. Several elements suggest that this may happen:

- **Size of budget:** the budget of MONUC is currently \$1.1 billion. It could be envisaged to downsize this by \$500 million, without incurring responsibility for closure of the mission.

¹² UNMIS sources interviewed in Khartoum, February 2006.

¹³ The UN *de facto* bans intelligence from its vocabulary. G2 and military intelligence are thus named military information.

¹⁴ Based on mobility of troops that requires strong and flexible logistical support. British and French armies often resort to this concept.

¹⁵ Civilian aircrafts for regular transport and supply do not fly after nightfall.

¹⁶ The equivalent of G2 (military intelligence) in usual military structure. Intelligence has so far been a banned word in the UN, with the exception of ONUC in Congo Kinshasa during the early 60s.

- Timing: the Congolese transition will end with the presidential and general elections in July 2006. Achieving elections is often the beginning of an exit strategy. MONUC's mandate ends in June 2006. An extension limited to 6 months and including the withdrawal of temporary reinforcements for the electoral period could be a first step before a major downsizing.
- Reputation: MONUC's reputation has been weakened on several occasions: due in particular to its inability to address major political and military crises, in particular in June 2004¹⁷ and to major 'sex scandals', i.e. sexual exploitation and abuses by peacekeepers, either military or civilian.¹⁸

These three points are not specific to MONUC. By comparing resources to the size of the country, UNMIL in Liberia and MINUSTAH in Haiti are especially well-endowed missions. Regarding timing: in Liberia, elections took place in November 2005. However, US officials consider that UNMIL should not be downsized without 'clear benchmarks' and sustainable stabilisation. UNMIL in Liberia, ONUCI in Ivory Coast, as well as MINUSTAH in Haiti, have shown similar limited capacities to address key issues: ONUCI and the crisis in Abidjan in January 2006, while UNMIL adopted a highly inappropriate schedule for DDR; this created tensions leading to casualties.¹⁹ Regarding sexual exploitation, this is a recurrent issue in situations involving expatriates. The humanitarian NGO Save the Children has recently issued a report on sexual abuses by UNMIL peacekeepers. In Bosnia, sexual abuses involving organised crime occurred with UN and NATO staff. But MONUC, like ONUB in Burundi, does not benefit from a major political 'sponsor'.

If this development in allocating peacekeeping resources takes place, a paradox must be stressed. Peacekeeping in Sudan could represent over 40% of the whole DPKO budget. If UNMIL and MINUSTAH in Haiti are maintained in 2007, more than 60% of the DPKO budget will be spent in three countries that matter for the US Administration and, to a lower extent, to US public opinion.²⁰ In spite of these priorities favourable to US interests, this comes at a time of major 'UN bashing' at the US Congress.²¹

A second key issue should be mentioned. The Darfur Peace Agreement states that elections should take place 'no later than the end of the fourth year of the Interim Period'. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan states an interim period of 6 years. Hence, \$2 billion will be spent over a period of three to six years in Sudan. This could significantly limit the capacity of DPKO to address other conflicts for several years.

Too fast, too large: the impact of downsizing missions in Burundi and DR-Congo

As mentioned by US officials for Liberia, 'clear benchmarks' are necessary before closing a UN mission. However, Burundi and DR-Congo might soon face the consequences of downsizing carried out too quickly and on too wide a scale, or even closure. Defeated factions might trigger violence after elections. Unchanged and abusive governance creates a breeding ground for conflicts.

- Burundi: closing a mission despite remaining tensions. Major improvements have occurred in Burundi thanks to the peace process. The civil war is over, even if remnants of a rebel movement still murder civilians. The elections have led to a changeover of political power. However, the land issue is likely to fuel major tensions that could escalate into ethnic opposition. Power struggles between winners of the elections are simmering and recently led

¹⁷ In June 2004, a major crisis happened in DR-Congo, following six months of intermittent but accumulated tensions. A rebel movement in Kivu took over a major city, Bukavu. This was followed by major demonstrations against MONUC. The Best Practice Unit of the UN made an in-depth assessment of the crisis management by MONUC in a report dated March 04, 2005. This report pointed out in particular the major weaknesses of MONUC leadership during the crisis, and drew specific attention to the Special Representative of the Secretary General and its Chief of Staff.

¹⁸ Regarding this major concern, it should however be remembered that this is a recurrent issue with all kinds of expatriates. In Bosnia, major abuses occurred with UN and NATO staff.

¹⁹ Similar criticism is often mentioned regarding MINUSTAH, the UN mission in Haiti.

²⁰ The US Government Accountability Office has recently stressed that a UN mission can save money for the United States. 'A U.S. operation in Haiti of the same size and duration [of MINUSTAH in Haiti] would cost an estimated \$876 million, far exceeding the U.S. contribution for MINUSTAH of \$116 million' (GAO Peacekeeping: Cost Comparison of Actual UN and Hypothetical U.S. Operations in Haiti, GAO-06-331 21 February 2006).

²¹ The initial version of this analysis was written on 17 May 2006, before the controversial dispute in June that opposed Deputy-UNSG Mark Malloch-Brown and US Representative to the UN John Bolton regarding 'UN bashing' in Washington.

to allegations of a military *coup*. In a country where the state is the main client for the private sector, formerly established businessmen have lost their connections with the decision-makers and publicly expressed their dissatisfaction.

- DR-Congo: an incomplete transition. Significant improvements have also occurred in DRC: withdrawal of foreign troops, establishment of a power-sharing agreement, etc. Nevertheless, the peace process remains fragile. Major violence is ongoing in Katanga. Violence in Kivu and Ituri is contained rather than solved by the UN presence.²² Corruption is still widespread and has led the Bretton Woods institutions to suspend their payment to the Congolese government. Xenophobia against specific communities remains high and could be further fuelled by the electoral campaign, in particular in Katanga and Kivu. Moreover, various Congolese leaders are currently trying to impose a new brand of xenophobic rhetoric at the core of the campaign. They have been developing a discourse about *Congolité*, which aims at excluding 'non-real Congolese' from the electoral process, including the current President. In a context of renewed tensions, the outcome of the elections and reactions of unsatisfied or defeated factions are difficult to anticipate.

As an example of a withdrawal carried out too quickly, the Haiti precedent should be mentioned. In 1995, a UN mission was sent to Haiti. An elected president was sworn in. The Haitian leadership changed but the system of governance remained largely unaltered. After an initial apparent success, the Haitian situation gradually but significantly deteriorated. Ten years after a first mission, a second UN peacekeeping operation has been established and has been confronted with even more difficult challenges. Similarly, the recent events in East Timor underline the impact of a military and civilian withdrawal conducted too quickly and on too extensive a scale.

²² MONUC military and civilian sources, interviews by telephone, May 2006.