

Evolving Trends in Peacekeeping: United Nations–African Union Hybrid Peacekeeping Operations (UNAMID) in Darfur

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Abstract

Peacekeeping has become a far more complex and multifaceted phenomenon due to the emerging non-traditional security threats and the changing nature of intrastate conflicts. This paper focuses on the evolving trends in peacekeeping operations and illuminates the transition from ‘traditional’ to a ‘robust’ and ‘hybrid’ peacekeeping model. In doing so, the paper presents the hybrid United Nations and African Union (UN-AU) peacekeeping model as a pilot project in Darfur. It further highlights the extent to which the model proved to be effective and inclusive, and secured financial and troop-contributing obligations jointly by the UN and AU. Furthermore, understanding the dialectics of ‘traditional’ and ‘hybrid’ peacekeeping operations has been analyzed through positive peace. Overall, the article highlights the essential contours of United Nations–African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) transition from AMIS and inquires its contribution towards peacebuilding and developing the state institution, thus ensuring sustainable peace and stability.

Keywords

Darfur, traditional peacekeeping, AMIS, UNAMID, hybrid peacekeeping, non-traditional security

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) was founded on the basic premise of saving future generations from the scourge of wars and conflicts, protecting fundamental human rights, ensuring equality for all, and promoting social development for better life standards (United Nations, 2015). The journey of human history in the last 70 years, after the inception of the United Nations, was quite turbulent; while no conflict to the scale of World War II resurfaced, yet the world has consistently witnessed human miseries in the form of interstate and intrastate conflicts. The most significant demonstration of the UN efforts for maintaining peace and stability is the ‘peace support missions’ around the globe to secure international peace. Through peaceful

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means, such efforts are necessarily in conformance with the principles of justice, International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and settlement of international disputes damaging peace prospects (e.g., Malan, 1998; Peck, 1998). The nature of contemporary peace operations has evolved over seventy years of experience, which has been accustomed to developing situations in the conflict-affected regions. Significant changes in the post-Cold War international security environment continue to pose challenges and, therefore, demand collaborative efforts as peacekeeping has become more complex and multidimensional. Hence, modern peacekeeping has transformed itself into a far more comprehensive arrangement for managing and building state institutions in political and socio-economic domains, often under unpredictable circumstances. This is due to the mere fact that most of the current peacekeeping missions are necessitated by intra-state, rather than inter-state, conflicts (Coning et al., 2010); a re-positioning from merely acting as a buffer between the two warring parties after their consent.

Peacekeeping, the most demanding undertaking of the United Nations, helps the conflict-prone and affected countries in creating conditions for sustainable peace. The UN peacekeepers (including the military, police, and civilian components from the international community), monitor, observe, and implement the peace agreement signed by the warring parties. Such assistance comes in many forms, including promoting confidence-building measures, human security, electoral support, power-sharing formula, and economic and social development, to name a few (Fukuda-Parr & Messineo, 2012; Jolly et al., 2009; Peck, 1998). Therefore, peacekeeping has proven itself to be a highly effective tool available to the UN to facilitate the host countries to navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace — the transition — and enduring stability.

In the case of Darfur, scholars have identified multiple factors that hindered the successful societal transition, such as numerous warring parties or stakeholders and the absence of any comprehensive peace formula. Furthermore, the transnational actors living in the neighboring regions added to the security complexity of Darfur (Neethling, 2009; O’Fahey, 2006; Sahil, 2005; Shinn, 2005, 2009).

Similarly, the African Union Mission’s deployment in Sudan (AMIS) witnessed the absence of a peace agreement and non-adherence to the proposed formula of peace. In addition, the resource constraints and capacity of AMIS had made the situation on the ground even more challenging (see, e.g., Henke, 2016; Vic Mansaray, 2009). A new model of inclusive peacekeeping with AU and UN cooperating for peacekeeping and peacebuilding under the flag of UNAMID was the first such experience of hybrid nature, where troops came from AU and financial resources came from UN (Luqman, 2012; Neethling, 2017). This new model set the pace of demonstrating transformation in the traditional way of peacekeeping with a larger body of stakeholders and greater acceptance to the host country.

Evolving Trends in Peacekeeping Operations

The peacekeeping has become more complex, multidimensional, and challenging in the evolving geopolitical landscape in the post-cold war global order and, therefore, needs strong theoretical underpinnings for critical investigation. In the case of Hybrid Peacekeeping Operations in Darfur (i.e., UNAMID), the idea of ‘positive peace’ provides incisive analyses. According to Fetherston (1994), the absence of war or conflict eventually paves the way for keeping peace and developing state institutions. Here, the idea should be considered “sets of structures which facilitate the

constructive resolution of conflict and positive human development” (ibid, p. 94, see also Adetiba, 2017; Fetherston, 2000; Oldrich, 2007). With regards to the UN peacekeeping, the attainment of positive peace hinges upon the effectiveness of third party intervention in the form of Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs). Such an intervention creates an ‘enabling’ environment, facilitating gradual conflict resolution and building state structures and capacities for sustainable peace and functioning institutions (i.e., nationbuilding).

In the case of Darfur, with the absence of the government writ beyond the limited geographies of Al Fashir, El Geneina, and Nyala (i.e., urban centres) and the presence of several decentralized armed militia groups (Flint, 2009), it was indeed challenging to envision the manifestation of positive peace. The absence of a comprehensive peace agreement also made the situation on the ground far more complicated due to the blurred conflict lines. In such scenarios of state with collapsing institutions, expectations and challenges for UNAMID were indeed perplexing.

To build a comprehensive picture of the transformation in the way peacekeeping has evolved, it is pertinent to recapitulate the cardinal aspects of traditional and other forms of peacekeeping. Such an overview will help to identify the pathway towards hybrid PKOs, i.e., from AMIS to UNAMID. It is evident that the traditional peacekeeping relied on the belligerents’ consensus and cooperation and was restricted to creating buffer zone(s) between the warring parties by the interposition of unarmed observers or lightly armed peacekeepers; subject to a ceasefire agreement. Then, the important tasks comprised monitoring of border or demilitarized zone (DMZ), ceasefire, truce or general armistice agreement, and supervision of withdrawal of forces. Traditional peacekeeping, therefore, was characterized as ‘Chapter VI Operations’ (Brahm, 2016, p. 7; see also Malan, 1997). However, it is essential to understand that the complex PKOs contain multidimensional functions, where the military is just one part of the overall political, diplomatic, humanitarian, and economic agenda(s).

These UN missions are mandated under chapter *VI* and *VII* with the prime aim of facilitating the development and sustenance of state institutions and infrastructure and delivery of humanitarian aid. The challenging dimensions include organizing elections; the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) of warring parties; repatriation and rehabilitation of refugees and internally displaced; and protection of safe areas (UN, 2007). Notably, the UN also demands regional organizations to play an effective role in maintaining peace and security in a specific context. With regards, AU has been forthcoming in supporting UN PKOs primarily as most of the operations are concentrated in Africa; hence, AU fulfills and owns its responsibility as a regional partner and/or stakeholder. Such cooperation comes under chapter *VIII* and, more importantly, provides a foundation from which the traditional peacekeeping evolved into a hybrid form of PKOs — both as an idea and as practice. As discussed in the following section, it is considerate of the fact that the post-cold war era brought specific changes in the overall construct of PKOs. Such a shift was primarily due to the changing nature, scope, and dynamics of conflicts (i.e., inter to intrastate conflicts) (see, e.g., Lijn, 2018).

The demise of the bipolar world and the aftermath of 9/11 events created new dimensions of conflict with the rise of Non-State Actors (NSAs) directly challenging the state’s writ with transnational lineages. The transnational terrorist organizations (such as Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabab, and Boko Haram along with their affiliates [e.g., Taliban, ISIS, and ISIL]), created unprecedented havoc in various

countries. Many of these militant organizations were the ones that emerged in different African countries.

Multidimensional Nature of PKOs

The transformation of nature of the conflict, rise of NSAs, and dwindling state institutions have led to the multidimensional evolution of PKOs; also known as 'robust peacekeeping' under Chapter VII (see, e.g., Sartre, 2011, p. 7). The evolved nature of PKOs positioned the peacekeepers as involved in self-defense and the defense of UN mandate. However, 'robust peacekeeping' must not be interpreted as 'peace enforcement' (e.g., Karlsrud, 2015; Thakhur, 1994) authorized under Chapter VII. Robust PKOs involve approval of UNSC and consent of warring parties on the use of force at the tactical level. Multidimensional PKOs involve monitoring ceasefire agreements, establishing a secure environment for humanitarian aid, and continuing the political process towards sustainable peace (e.g., Brahm, 2016). It requires multidimensional approaches containing civilian, military, and police components for dealing with the revival of state institutions in political, economic, security, human rights, rule of law, and criminal justice domains in the post-conflict environments.

Emphasis on Partnership with the Regional Organizations

The emphasis is on developing 'partnership approach' with the regional organizations for undertaking major tasks on the ground while the UN will continue to retain the core responsibility of imparting legitimacy and financial support. The UN-EU Joint Declaration of 2003 and the UN-AU Institutional Relationship promulgated after the Security Council meeting in Nairobi on November 19, 2004, are examples of evolving trends of UN's partnership with the regional organizations. There are 12 PKOs worldwide, out of which seven are in Africa (UN, n.d.). Capacities and sustenance levels of AU and other sub-regional organizations should be proportionately enhanced with respect to their increased engagement level in peacekeeping matters. The evolving nature of conflict and threat perception, especially in the African countries where the UN missions are already deployed and unstable regions where UN missions are not there, the NSAs activities affect the governance and security matrix of relevant countries. Such countries are involved in contributing troops for UN missions in Africa at the cost of declining security situations in their own territories, limiting their international cooperation capacity. Therefore, cooperative arrangements like UNAMID can be regarded as necessary and maybe a valuable model for deployment in other African countries.

Hybrid Peacekeeping Operations

Africa's conflicts require comprehensive and multidimensional approaches to successfully tackling emerging threats (Osabutey, 2011). The evolving collaboration between UN, EU, and AU in joint peace operations is characterized by legitimacy, resource craving, and shared values. The developing trends have provided a highly beneficial model of 'hybrid' operations (Prinsloo & Van Niekerk, 2017) in which the UN and the regional organization (such as AU, EU, and NATO) cooperate in various ways in the same mission (e.g., in Darfur, DR Congo, and Kosovo). Such coordination is manifested through strong cooperation between the regional organizations.

The situation in Sudan was much complex and challenging, demonstrating an overstretch by the UN as already the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS)

was extensively involved in support of peace agreement between Sudan and South Sudan. In contrast, the highly volatile situation in Darfur warranted another mission as it was beyond the capacity of UNMIS. The African Union took responsibility and established the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) in May 2004 (HRW, 2006). On July 31, 2007, the UNSC *Resolution 1769* authorized a hybrid UN-AU peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID).² This resolution coincided with a joint AU-UN meeting in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) in which the two organizations agreed on the mechanism for the generation of necessary plans for transition to the UNAMID, and on December 31, 2007, the transfer of Authority (TOA) took place (Agwai, 2007). Unlike other collaborative PKO's, UNAMID is configured as a joint inter-organizational mission with single command structure reporting to both the organizations. The concept of 'hybrid mission' in Darfur warranted to be led by the AU with predominantly African troops sourced from African countries, and the UN-mandated to supply enabling capacities, such as funding, logistics and equipment (Blanchfield et al., 2019).

Even though it is reporting to two organizations (i.e., the UN and AU), there is one Special Representative of Secretary-General (SRSG), one force commander, and one police commissioner operating under an integrated chain of command. The foremost objectives set-forth for UNAMID were Protection of Civilians (PoC) and implementation of Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) amid a very high degree of expectations on the transition from AMIS.

As mentioned previously, the idea of positive peace highlights the essential (pre)conditions for the road to peace; for instance, the peace agreement and warring parties' existence should facilitate the deployment of forces. However, DPA was not a comprehensive peace deal agreed by all the warring parties of Darfur; therefore, it lacked legitimacy. On May 05, 2006, it was signed between the largest rebel group 'Sudan Liberation Movement' led by Mini Menawi and the Government of Sudan (Department of State, 2006). Secondly, Sudan's Government was also not very cooperative to the missions as restrictions on the ground and air movements were frequent occurrences, which also hampered the timely movement of essentially required equipment and logistics. The situation became even worse after the indictment of the then President of Sudan by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in March 2009.³

Among significant challenges, facing UNAMID was the absence of peace to keep as the Government of Sudan and the parties to the conflict continued to pursue a military solution. The UN Secretary-General acknowledged that Darfur's stability and the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations depended on the unstinted support by all parties. The analysts demonstrated a pessimist view based on the prevailing circumstances casting doubts on whether the UNSCR mandate was achievable in Darfur. This was a tacit acknowledgement that the Brahimi criterion (Durch et al., 2003) was not met regarding the design, deployment, and operationalization of UNAMID. Some argue that peacekeeping has taken on the trajectory of seeking to protect civilians in war-affected zones without ensuring the political process's existence to address the fundamental problems that generate conflicts. For UNAMID, the Government of Sudan's obstructive policies hindered the deployment of force and impaired peacekeepers' credibility. The non-compliance and obstinate behavior of parties to the conflict have been witnessed in other missions as well, e.g., Democratic

² For details, see <https://unamid.unmissions.org/about-unamid-0>

³ For details, see <https://www.icc-cpi.int/darfur/albashir/pages/alleged-crimes.aspx>

Republic of Congo and Haiti; therefore, Darfur cannot be regarded as an exception. The peacekeeping should have a predominantly political outlook, which demands military and police deployment and other mission enablers after concrete peace agreement and the political process's commencement.

For UNAMID, where the nature of the AU-UN partnership is matured to a great extent, it is still evolving. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate this relationship in a hybrid form of paternalism. Here, in UNAMID, the AU troops perform the treacherous work on the ground while the UN mission staff facilitates mission support operations. UNAMID demonstrates a paradigm shift in AU and UN relations even though it is an asymmetric partnership, as the UN is far older and blessed with great resources and experience compared to AU (Durch et al., 2003). Therefore, in such an arrangement, the advice and resources are likely to continue unidirectional-flowing from UN to AU. However, as a regional organization, AU has relative advantages of proximity to the crises; therefore, it has a vital role in directing efforts to best suit and respect local sensitivities. Nevertheless, regarding design, conceptualization, complete ownership, and mission planning, it appears that the UN would continue to provide enabling environments due to scarcity of resources with AU.

Examining the Conflict Situation in Darfur after Transfer of Authority to UNAMID

Sudan presents a highly challenging environment. Despite its division into Sudan and South Sudan, Sudan — by landmass — is still among Africa's major countries. Darfur is also a vast region with highly underdeveloped infrastructure, abject poverty, and the lowest Human Development Index (HDI) (UNDP, 2009). The airports located in urban centres are also for routine passengers and cargo aircraft. These factors were not considered when UNAMID's deployment was initially conceived.

Furthermore, Darfur is also an isolated region and a harsh environment that poses challenges in sustaining the force.⁴ The next challenge is a command structure, which necessarily operates between two distant headquarters — the African Union in Addis Ababa and the United Nations in New York. Such arrangements have indeed caused several operational challenges. For instance, the Joint Special Representative (JSR) reports to both the mentioned headquarters. Furthermore, the organisations' specific cultures are momentous and observed to be ignored at the commander's peril. It is noteworthy that if two organizations have non-identical approaches to one situation, then inter-organizational conflict is likely to prevail. Therefore, a shared approach is highly desirable. In a mission authorized under *Chapter VII*, the force is often required to be mobilized quickly and decisively. In such circumstances, the capacity is a real issue as many of the nations which would have a real impact in Darfur are either unacceptable to the Government of Sudan, unwilling to operate in Africa, and/or too over-committed elsewhere to become meaningfully involved.

AU and most of its contributing nations have not yet fully matured to the extent that they can generate, train, deploy and sustain a mission of this size and provide the headquarters staff to make it fully functional. The troop-contributing countries are, therefore, unfamiliar with the difficulties of expeditionary operations. They are generally dependent on other countries and donors to provide adequate training, equipment, and airlift support. Resources are critical particularly if the peacekeeping is 'robust' as it demands equipment that remains in short supply.

⁴ The temperature during the summers exceeds 50° Celsius

Moreover, as mentioned previously, Darfur has been in a state of humanitarian emergency since 2003. Suffice to say, the causes are complex, confusing and have evolved over time. The Government of Sudan itself is a strong central authority but is very Nile-centric in its outlook (e.g., UNDP, 2009; World Bank, 2017). This is a significant grievance in Darfur and the most dominant root cause of the conflict. The writ of the central government in Khartoum was challenged first in 2003 when a group of Darfurians, denoting themselves as Sudanese Liberation Movement (SLM), rebelled (e.g., Heleta, 2008; Idris, 2013; Salih, 2008). Tired of the government's marginalization and neglect, they attacked the Al Fasher airport, destroying an aircraft and killing around 100 soldiers.

To suppress the rebels, the government, rather than using the army, sent in the armed militia known as the Janjaweed because of the army's doubtful loyalty. This only served to escalate the fighting out of control. Therefore, it was recognized that peacekeepers were required if there was to be any realistic chance of peace. Hence, the AMIS was deployed in July 2004 that was an observer mission relying heavily on donors who provided almost everything from food to Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC). Later, owing to the transfer of authority on December 31, 2007, AMIS formed the nucleus of UNAMID. Against this backdrop, the mission of UNAMID was defined to protect civilians, provide a secure environment in which the humanitarian agencies can carry out their work, and set the conditions under which displaced population can start returning to their homes (i.e., repatriation and rehabilitation). Darfur is a *Chapter VII* mission, but the lead is very much humanitarian in nature and envisions sustainable peace and stability in Darfur.

Nevertheless, the challenge is to ensure the cooperation between the humanitarian agencies and the military. Therefore, we need to be realistic about what can be achieved by external forces brought into the epicentre of such a complex situation and context, particularly when it does not enjoy the host government's full support and cooperation from other stakeholders. Hence, Darfur pretences significant challenges and limitations, such as the climate and the terrain, highly complicated political situation with numerous rebel groups, the ambivalent support of the Sudanese government, and the varying standards and levels of training across the deployed units. Consequently, UNAMID is uniquely complex and has faced tremendous challenges and criticism from media regarding its efficacy.

Nonetheless, UNAMID has made remarkable progress towards conflict resolution in the conflict-prone region of Darfur. The minimum preconditions for durable or sustainable peace and stability were absent (as the construct of positive peace exhibits and desires). In multi-dimensioned complex peacekeeping operations, the international and non-governmental humanitarian organizations' support is crucial in addressing basic human needs that eventually lead to the conflict's settlement. The mission's success in such circumstances often depends on fulfilling non-military humanitarian tasks (e.g., Fleshman, 2010). Critics also argue that despite some degree of success achieved by UNAMID, the mission was critically deficient in a military capacity and political backing was needed to protect the civilian population and adequately support humanitarian efforts. However, UN provides significant and sufficient resources with the budget for the year 2019/20 to the tune of US\$ 257,970,000 (UNAMID, 2020).

UNAMID has proved to be strengthening the tangible collaboration between AU and UN PKOs. It has been further recognized that that AU will endure seeking international support for peacekeeping. The Africans themselves are now asking to be partners in the design, execution, and implementation of PKOs (e.g., Forti, 2019). The

experience has also strengthened Africa's ability to manage and deploy peace forces quickly. Modern trends — such as 'robustness', 'integrated planning', 'multidimensional', and 'comprehensiveness' — provide guidelines for the planning and conduct of PKOs. 'Hybrid' missions are yet another modern trend; therefore, UNAMID in Sudan is the first Hybrid Mission of its kind and a test case for the future. Consequently, there is a greater need to analyze UNAMID to derive lessons and recommendations for future hybrid missions.

There are, nonetheless, political constrictions in confirming an effective collaboration between UN and AU, particularly when there is inadequate communication between both organizations' political leadership. The UNAMID model of peacekeeping if considered appropriate for future hybrid cooperation, especially in Africa, would present an innovative methodology for effectively managing the continent's obdurate crises. Despite shortcomings, complex command channels, and interoperability issues, UNAMID has been reasonably successful in achieving its mandate, and indeed the current situation is far better than 2008/09. However, regarding the political settlement and rehabilitation of the civilian population affected by a decade of conflict, robust international engagement is required (IRRI, 2016).

UNAMID has also been undertaking an appraisal of activities and adjusting good practices and lessons learned in subsequent documents for attaining optimum synergy and profiting results on the ground (UNAMID, 2019). However, there are several alternate views expressed on the efficacy and overall performance of UNAMID since it created huge expectations on its TOA from AMIS, without factoring the capacity and force protection to name a few teething handicaps, inhibiting the accomplishment of the mandate of eventual PoC, provision of humanitarian assistance, and rehabilitation of the displaced population (Muller & Bashar, 2017). Another intriguing aspect to be pondered for future research on Darfur is how, without the host government's concurrence, a mission in the field can succeed. On November 30, 2014, the Sudanese government asked UNAMID to leave as, from their perspective, it was instead helping rebels (Sudan Democracy First Group, 2016). Apart from creating credibility issues, such a situation also made the mission sustenance in most volatile and challenging environments almost impossible; therefore, UNAMID was viewed with suspicions by all parties to the conflict. As a whole, despite challenges, UNAMID has successfully sailed, and peace, to a great degree, is starting to appear in Darfur.

Conclusion

Peacekeeping is an ever-evolving concept. The principles are enduring; however, these must be applied with a modern reality check (keeping under consideration the contextual realities) that makes the concept practical in a specific setting. Furthermore, the operational and tactical considerations should ensure maximum chances of success. Peacekeeping remains at the cutting edge where ideas and practice meet. It is a microcosm of all the issues and tensions within the peace, security, and development dimensions of the international system. The UN Secretariat should clearly articulate the capacity and limitations that missions have to foster to achieve peace and stability. Over the last two decades, the UN peacekeeping has been undergoing a considerable transformation with multiple options (being) considered and implemented with the sole purpose of achieving efficiency and effectiveness. It has undertaken a range of missions in complex and challenging conditions and

transformed methods in which missions are planned and managed, both at headquarters in New York and in the field.

Lastly, it will be necessary to remain cognizant of the legacy inherited from any preceding missions, logistic support, ensuring political lead, avoiding peacekeeping overstretch, and diligence at the Security Council level. It is highly beneficial to consider the regional partners' status and any political overtones while ensuring the clarity of the chain of command and mandate of missions in the field. UNAMID provided a platform where traditional peacekeeping could be suitably modified for a more inclusive outlook and shared responsibilities of regional stakeholders. Despite several inadequacies, UNAMID's deployment has provided an alternate model to be further explored and refined for future PKOs.

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