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On May 3, 2017, the International Peace Institute (IPI), the Stimson Center, and Security Council Report organized a workshop on the challenges faced by the United Nations–African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). This was the fourth in a series of workshops bringing together member states, UN actors, and independent experts to analyze how UN policies and the June 2015 recommendations of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) can be applied to country-specific contexts.

This meeting note was drafted collaboratively by IPI, the Stimson Center, and Security Council Report. It summarizes the main points raised in the discussion under the Chatham House rule of non-attribution and does not necessarily represent the views of all participants.

# Applying the HIPPO Recommendations to Darfur: Toward Strategic, Prioritized, and Sequenced Mandates

JUNE 2017

## Introduction

In advance of the expected renewal of the mandate of the United Nations–African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) in June 2017, the International Peace Institute (IPI), the Stimson Center, and Security Council Report organized a workshop on May 3, 2017, on the challenges faced by UNAMID. This workshop aimed to help member states and UN actors develop a shared understanding and common strategic assessment of the situation on the ground in Darfur and to use that common assessment to inform the political strategy and design of UNAMID. The discussion was intended to help the Security Council make informed decisions with respect to the strategic orientation, prioritization, and sequencing of the mission’s mandate.

The first session of the workshop began with a discussion of the situation on the ground in Darfur. Experts presented a brief analysis of the security and political dynamics in Darfur (and more broadly in Sudan), and participants then discussed how UNAMID’s current political strategy could be adapted to respond to the evolving context. In the second session, participants discussed the highest priority objectives for the mission, and how to sequence them in order to advance the political strategy discussed in the previous session.

## Context Analysis and Political Strategy

Several factors have coincided to create an opportune moment to shift the political strategy in Darfur, particularly with respect to the relationship between the international community (including UNAMID, the AU Peace and Security Council, and the UN Security Council) and the Sudanese government:

- The relationship between the Sudanese government and the international community is showing signs of improvement. In January 2017, the US government announced its intention to lift trade sanctions on Sudan in July, subject to improved humanitarian access and halting of government support to groups that threaten civilians.
- The Sudanese government has also shown greater willingness to cooperate with UNAMID in the past few months. For example, the mission is now able to access some areas that had previously been restricted by the government, and the government issued a revised directive on humanitarian action, which is significantly less restrictive than the previous regulations.
- The Sudanese government has repositioned itself as an active, influential,

and constructive player in the region. This has led to further improvements in relations with close neighbors (such as Chad), as well as with neighbors on the Mediterranean, thanks in part to its collaboration with EU partners on migration issues.

- Former Chadian foreign minister Moussa Faki Mahamat has taken office as the new chairperson of the AU Commission. He brings with him considerable expertise and experience on the Darfur conflict, as well as relationships with Sudanese authorities.
- Divisions within the Sudanese government may incentivize President Omar al-Bashir to comply with political agreements. In particular, the Sudanese Armed Forces may be growing discontent with the government's use of militias (including foreign fighters) and with the elevation of the Rapid Support Forces, a paramilitary group controlled by the National Intelligence and Security Services and that includes a number of former Janjaweed fighters and leaders.

Despite these improvements, relations between the mission and the Sudanese government remain extremely difficult. The government continues to restrict the mission's access to areas such as Jebel Marra where violence is ongoing and to obstruct the mission's activities in numerous other ways (such as by denying visas to human rights monitors). The African Union, and particularly the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) chaired by former South African President Thabo Mbeki, continues to lead political engagement with the government.

## SECURITY, MILITIAS, AND REBEL GROUPS

An analysis of the current situation reveals that security has improved in some areas while remaining poor in others. The success of government campaigns against rebel groups over the past two to three years (including Operation Decisive Summer) has confined violence to a smaller area than before while also reducing the political relevance on the ground of the main rebel groups that have signed on to the 2011 Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD).

The government's reliance on and strengthening

of the Rapid Support Forces is alarming, given that these forces are believed to be a major perpetrator of serious human rights violations including attacks on civilians. There is also a troubling possibility that violence has decreased in West Darfur because non-Arab groups have fled the area. The Sudanese government claims many displaced people have returned to this region, but the corresponding figures for refugees returning from eastern Chad (where most of those displaced from West Darfur have fled) do not corroborate this claim.

The regional dimension of the conflict remains of critical importance. Some rebel groups are believed to have moved into Libya, where they are attempting to regroup. Militia groups move back and forth between Sudan and neighboring countries such as Chad, the Central African Republic, Libya, and South Sudan, which could further destabilize those areas. Many refugees remain in neighboring countries such as Chad and South Sudan.

Progress toward a political solution has lagged behind progress on security. The 2011 DDPD and the national dialogue process launched by the government in 2015 have produced frameworks for the political path forward, but both are flawed. The national dialogue has not been an inclusive process. Similarly, three key rebel groups have not signed onto the Doha process, many internally displaced persons remain skeptical that the Doha agreement will respond to their needs, many local communities feel that they have no stake in the process, and implementation has lagged. Following a 2016 referendum, Darfur remains divided into five states for administrative purposes. The mission's political strategy thus has to respond to variations in the nature and intensity of conflict in each state, as well as with five sets of state authorities.

## HUMAN RIGHTS, HUMANITARIAN ACCESS, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Despite the improvement in security in some areas, the human rights situation in Sudan has deteriorated over the past year. The types of violations vary across the country. In areas of active violence (whether related to militia activity or intercommunal tensions), human rights violations occur within the context of these clashes. In areas with large numbers of internally displaced persons,

violations include sexual violence, attacks by government or government-aligned forces on camps, and restrictions on movement. Further, as the government attempts to limit democratic space, violations include arbitrary arrest and attacks on freedom of assembly and expression.

The humanitarian situation remains seriously concerning and is compounded by a relative lack of interest in Sudan by the donor community. An estimated 2.6 million persons are displaced in Darfur; 1.6 million of these live in camps, where they are vulnerable to attacks by militias and reliant on humanitarian assistance because of the threats they face if they try to leave the camps to seek livelihood opportunities. Conditions in the camps fall below international humanitarian standards in many cases.

The population in Darfur has high expectations for transitional justice, but so far very little progress has been made on investigations or accountability mechanisms. For example, the DDPD provides for the creation of a truth, justice, and reconciliation commission, but this would require significant additional support, both operationally and politically, to implement.

### CORE DRIVERS OF VIOLENCE

The three core drivers of violence in Darfur at present are disputes over land and resources, the complex network of militias and paramilitary forces, and the weakness of rule of law and security institutions. These drivers are interrelated.

Land and resource disputes lie at the heart of many conflicts in Darfur—intercommunal conflicts between pastoralist and farming communities, attacks on civilians by militia groups seeking to assert control over land or resources, and the inability of some displaced populations to return to homes that have been occupied by militias. The absence of legislation to clearly elaborate land rights, the weakness of rule of law and security institutions that could adjudicate and enforce those rights, and the government's hostility to traditional conflict settlement mechanisms have prompted community groups and militias to use violence as a means of claiming land.

Militia and paramilitary groups continue to

inflict deliberate and incidental violence against civilians. Many of these groups are used as proxies by the government; in return for conducting attacks, they are permitted to loot their areas of operation. In West Darfur, in particular, they have moved from looting to seizing and occupying land, reportedly even changing the names of some villages. These groups have frequently changed allegiances, and some groups may now be harder for the government to control as they have become dissatisfied with their financial and political compensation and may seek to occupy a more formal position in the security sector.<sup>1</sup>

The weakness—and, in many places, absence—of rule of law and security institutions feeds into both problems. Unaddressed grievances and impunity can boil over into violence. This also prevents the return of displaced persons whose homes have been occupied by militia groups and who have no recourse to state institutions that could enforce and protect their land rights or provide assurances of security if they were to attempt to return.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR UNAMID'S POLITICAL STRATEGY

All these factors suggest that UNAMID's political strategy should shift in several ways. First, the mission should adopt a division of labor with the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), with the panel continuing to focus on engagement at the national level while UNAMID increases its engagement at the state level. The mission should develop tailored strategies for engaging with authorities in the five states in Darfur to address the implications of the DDPD, intercommunal tensions, militias, land use, and displacement.

Second, the mission should strengthen engagement with local communities and traditional leaders to address the core drivers of violence. The mission's efforts on this front have been received well by communities but have been limited, in part because the government has attempted to block political dialogue with local community leaders. The mission's recent improvement in relations with the government provides an opening to step up local mediation and engagement. This engagement should include sensitizing people in Darfur

<sup>1</sup> Jérôme Tubiana, "Remote-Control Breakdown: Sudanese Paramilitary Forces and Pro-Government Militias," Small Arms Survey, April 2017, available at [www.smallarmssurvey.com/fileadmin/docs/issue-briefs/HSBA-IB-27-Sudanese-paramilitary-forces.pdf](http://www.smallarmssurvey.com/fileadmin/docs/issue-briefs/HSBA-IB-27-Sudanese-paramilitary-forces.pdf).

on how the DDPD can affect their lives (not only the lives of those in Khartoum) to encourage them to have a stake in its successful implementation; supporting local dispute mediation and resolution; and supporting community dialogues to develop ideas for how to demobilize or integrate militia members into the state security sector.

Third, the mission should take advantage of the government's interest in the lifting of US sanctions by strengthening its public reporting. Continued access constraints on both the mission and nongovernmental organizations have reduced public information about attacks and about the links between militia groups and the government, stifling understanding of the conflict among the Sudanese population and the international community. The government's ability to retaliate against the mission for public reporting is limited if it wants to meet conditions for the lifting of US sanctions; the mission should capitalize on this opportunity.

## Prioritization and Sequencing

UNAMID's current mandate identifies three strategic priorities for the mission:<sup>2</sup>

1. The protection of civilians, the facilitation of the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the safety and security of humanitarian personnel;
2. Mediation between the Government of Sudan and non-signatory armed movements on the basis of the DDPD, while taking into account ongoing democratic transformation at the national level; and
3. Support to the mediation of community conflict, including through measures to address its root causes, in conjunction with the UN country team.

While these broad priorities remain relevant, the new mandate should be updated to reflect the changed context. Given the diversity of conditions and dynamics in different parts of Darfur, it is critical that the new mandate allows the mission flexibility to apply different approaches in different areas.

In some parts of the country, the mission should start to implement peacebuilding-focused activities. Efforts have been made in the past to shift peacebuilding responsibilities from the mission to the UN country team. However, experience over the past few years has shown that the country team has limited capacity, access, and funding to take on such activities. Under these circumstances, transferring peacebuilding activities out of the mission could call their continuation into question. The prioritization and sequencing of UNAMID's mandate should incorporate a realistic assessment of the UN country team's capacity. The process of further developing benchmarks leading toward an exit strategy offers an opportunity to align the interests of the Sudanese government, the UN country team, and the mission.

Based on the discussion at the workshop, the three priority areas above could be amended to take into account the changing context as follows.

### PRIORITY 1: PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS AND FACILITATION OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Activities under this priority should be amended to reflect that the types of protection activities needed are different in different parts of Darfur. In areas of active violence such as Jebel Marra, troops must remain deployed to work alongside civilians and police to implement physical protection activities. In areas where there is no active violence, the mission can shift from immediate physical protection to activities intended to create a protective environment in the longer term. In "gray areas" where there remains some risk that violence may reignite, some uniformed presence (troops or formed police units) will still be required to protect civilians through activities focused on building a protective environment.

### PRIORITY 2: MEDIATION ON THE BASIS OF THE DDPD

As described above, the mission should cooperate with the AUHIP, with the panel taking the lead on most engagement at the national level and the mission shifting to focus on democratic transformation activities at the state and local levels.

One area where UNAMID should begin to

<sup>2</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 2296 (June 29, 2016), UN Doc. S/RES/2296, para. 2.

engage strongly at the national level is on security sector reform. UNAMID does not have the capacity to support the full suite of security sector reform efforts. However, due to divisions between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the president and the government's interest in having US sanctions lifted, the moment is ripe for the mission to advance this agenda where it can use its comparative advantages. For example, the mission should report privately and publicly on abuses by the Rapid Support Forces, encourage oversight of and accountability for these forces, and publicly report when it is attacked by government-backed militias. The mission's efforts to support the integration of militia groups into the security sector (see below) should be accompanied by support to the government to develop a national integration strategy.

UNAMID and the AUHIP could provide political support for reinforcing the Sudanese police—the least empowered branch of the security sector—and deploying police to fill security vacuums in communities with less rebel activity. The mission could also provide operational support to the police, for example by having formed police units conduct mixed patrols with Sudanese police or by co-locating individual police officers at local police stations to mentor and advise them.

### PRIORITY 3: MEDIATION OF COMMUNITY CONFLICT BY ADDRESSING ITS ROOT CAUSES

The UN country team has shifted gears in Sudan from providing relief toward addressing underlying causes of violence. This has been reflected, for example, in pilot programs looking at durable solutions for internally displaced persons, efforts to better coordinate humanitarian and development activities, and the shift from annual to multi-year strategy plans that are linked to a development framework.

In areas where violence has receded, the mission should correspondingly shift toward addressing the three core drivers of violence identified earlier (land and resource disputes, militias and paramilitary forces, and weak rule of law and security institutions), taking note of its comparative advantages and limitations. The mission should work to promote the rule of law by engaging at two levels. At the national level, the mission should advance efforts to set up institutions and mechanisms such as the truth, justice, and reconciliation commission that are provided for in peace agreements. At the state and local levels, the mission should support the redeployment of state authorities (particularly police and justice officials), carefully applying the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy to avoid enabling human rights abusers and to manage risks.

With regard to disputes over land and resources, UNAMID should work at the state level to facilitate dialogue, mediation, and policy development. It could also support initiatives enforcing land rights, for example by monitoring and protecting pastoralists' migratory routes and by conducting joint patrols with the Sudanese police. Simultaneously, the AUHIP should push for an inclusive national dialogue on land use. UNAMID can also build on its successes with intercommunal mediation to address land use and ownership disputes in such fora.

With regard to militia activity, UNAMID should engage where it can to deter violence and support sustainable solutions. Mission personnel should engage with local community leaders and facilitate discussions between community groups and state or national authorities to find options for integrating militia into the state security sector to promote representative national security forces and discourage militia violence. Simultaneously, the AUHIP should engage at the national level to deter government mobilization of militias.

## Agenda

Wednesday, May 3, 2017

9:00–9:15 **Opening Remarks**

Arthur Boutellis, *Director of the Center for Peace Operations, International Peace Institute*  
Aditi Gorur, *Director of the Protecting Civilians in Conflict Program, Stimson Center*

9:15–11:00 **Session 1: Political Strategy**

*In this session, experts will present a brief conflict analysis, outlining the recent developments and the major threats to peace and security in Darfur. They will assess the progress that has been achieved toward the mission's benchmarks and the major challenges facing the transition. Participants will then discuss a political strategy for the mission that responds to the threats outlined in the conflict analysis.*

**Discussion questions:** *What does an analysis of the conflict in Darfur tell us about the drivers of the conflict? What is the political strategy underlying UNAMID's current mandate? Is that political strategy still viable, or does it need to be revised? What are the primary obstacles to successful implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur? What are the primary obstacles to the successful transfer of tasks to the Sudanese government and to the UN country team? What mission capabilities and approaches have proven effective at influencing the conflict? What is the current understanding of local capacities and effective local arrangements for peace? How can the Security Council remain engaged in support of UNAMID's political strategy?*

### **Chair**

Youssef Mahmoud, *Senior Adviser, International Peace Institute, and former member of HIPPO*

### **Speakers**

Daniela Krosiak, *Darfur Integrated Operational Team Leader, UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations*

Chloé Marnay-Baszanger, *Chief, Peace Missions Support Section, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights*

Wafaa Saeed, *Chief, Eastern & Southern Africa Section, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs*

Jérôme Tubiana, *Independent Researcher, Small Arms Survey*

11:00–11:15 Coffee Break

11:15–12:55 **Session 2: Prioritization and Sequencing**

*In this session, participants will identify the mission's highest priority objectives in order to advance the political strategy defined in the previous session. Participants will also discuss the sequence in which priority objectives should be undertaken. By sequencing the objectives, participants will aim to ensure that the mission is not burdened by too many tasks at the same time. Participants will also aim to sequence objectives so that the mission is not asked to carry out certain tasks prematurely, before the conditions for their success are in place.*

**Discussion questions:** *On the basis of the secretary-general's latest report and subsequent developments, which objectives in the current mandate should be prioritized? What aspects of the mandate has the mission been successful at implementing? What obstacles have prevented the mission from translating mandated tasks into action, and what conditions need to be in place for those tasks to be carried out? How could the mandate better allow the mission to adapt to changing conditions on the ground? How can UNAMID's mandate better facilitate progress toward the benchmarks identified as an exit strategy for the mission? When and how should the mission draw down?*

**Chair**

Ian Martin, *Executive Director, Security Council Report, and former member of HIPPO*

**Speaker**

Jessica Philips, *Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom to the United Nations*

## Participants

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Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt  
to the United Nations

**H.E. Dr. Adonia Ayebare**

African Union Permanent Observer Mission  
to the United Nations

**Lt. Col. Raoul Bazatoha**

Permanent Mission of the Republic of Rwanda  
to the United Nations

**Mr. Alexis Berthier**

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**Mr. Arthur Boutellis**

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