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African Union and United Nations Hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID): challenges and opportunities for peace in Sudan

General Martin Luther AGWAI, Force Commander, UNAMID



It was not self sustaining and depended to donor contracts for life and equipment support. It was for example strongly depending on donor contracts for communications and aviation support.

UNAMID is relatively a strong force with 19, 555 (currently 7, 497) from 26 countries (Both European, American, African and Asian countries); Self sustaining; with UN Integrated Support Services (ISS); with UN communications and aviation support. Its major contributors are Rwanda's and Nigerian contingents respectively with 2588 and 2906 soldiers and policemen. UNAMID is also working in conjunction with other International and regional Organizations: Care International, American refugee Committee International, International Committee of Red Cross, World Vision, Tear Fund, Solidarités, Unicef, UNFAO, UNFPA, UNDP, UNWFP, Médecins sans Frontières, etc.

The aim of the paper is to acquaint with UNAMID Operational Situation with a view to highlighting Challenges and Opportunities for attainment of Peace in Sudan's DARFUR. Darfur is a western Province of Sudan, with 503, 180 sq km inhabited by many ethnic groups. The Province, that is a size of France, has no roads and lacks communication infrastructures. Since 2002, its inhabitants are exposed to a long conflict that caused displacements, casualties and other material damages.

On one side, the government troops fight to maintain sovereignty of central government. They are supporting JANJAWEE militias that transformed the Province in a bounty of war and settled tribal scores within its inhabitants. On the other side, the Sudanese Liberation Movement Army, SLA/M, is fighting to increased power and wealth sharing for Darfur. The SLA/M is fighting against the long-term marginalization of Darfur and for an autonomous state within a unified Sudan.

From November 2006 to December 2007, the African Mission in Darfur, AMIS, is being transformed into United Nations Mission, UNAMID. The AMIS was not a sufficient force with only 7, 000 soldiers.

However, UNAMID is also facing strong challenges in Darfur. The Hybrid force faces a complex conflict where many factions defending various self interests are difficult to control: Government soldiers, POPULAR (PDF) DEFENCE FORCE, SUDAN LIBERATION ARMY (SLA), SLA/MINNI (SLA/M), SLA/WAHID (SLA/W), SLA/SHAFI (SLA/S), JUSTICE AND EQUALITY MOVEMENT (JEM), JEM-COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP (JEM/CL), JEM-PEACE WING (JEM/PW), JEM/AZRAQ (JEM/A), NATIONAL MOVEMENT FOR REFORM AND DEVELOPMENT (NMRD).

There are other challenges such as bad field with sands, stones, lack of water in different areas of Darfur, unaccommodating food for troops, too much rain, double dependence of the UNAMID to two Masters established on long distances: UN Security Council and General Secretariat in New York and the Head Quarters of the African Union in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia. There is also lack of powerful helicopters to overcome bad fields.

The hybrid force has to work on Incremental build up of Troop, Progress in certain political and legal agreements, Equipment & Infrastructure improvement, Fill key Mission and Force Head Quarters appointments as early as possible, Develop expeditionary capability (self sustaining) and mindset (training). It also needs to harmonize interoperability (doctrine, equipment...) and donor equipment package must be complete as soon as possible.

