

A plan for military intervention in Darfur

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This article contains a plan on how the African Union/United Nations hybrid force authorised by the UN Security Council in July 2007 could realistically and effectively use military power to save civilian lives in Darfur. It is envisaged that the international force, given its limited size, would mainly focus on protecting and policing refugee and internally displaced persons camps, rather than trying to stop all violence in the region. This intervention is unlikely to provoke a violent military reaction from the Sudanese government. In fact, a careful analysis of the conflict suggests that Khartoum has been engaged in a scorched-earth counterinsurgency rather than in an attempt to exterminate Darfur's 'black' population as an end in itself, and thus would stand to benefit from interveners' efforts to keep the camps demilitarised.

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Introduction

The conflict in Darfur, Sudan's westernmost region, has caused one of the worst man-made humanitarian disasters of the post-Cold War era. More than two million people have been displaced and at least 250 000 have died as a consequence of direct violence or because of malnutrition and diseases exacerbated by the conflict. Notwithstanding the oft-repeated rhetoric of 'never again', the international community did not take decisive steps to stop the killing of civilians for over four years. Only in July 2007 did the United Nations Security Council finally authorise the deployment of a robust UN and African Union force to protect civilians and facilitate humanitarian access (UN 2007b).¹ In September 2007, the Security Council also approved a joint European Union/UN force to be deployed in Chad's and Central African Republic's border areas with Darfur (UN 2007a).

Although many observers and non-government organisations have advanced plans for military intervention, these proposals generally fail to clarify what the specific tasks of the interveners would be, and often do not take into account the dynamics that led to the conflict as a relevant factor in deciding on the right response. In this paper a plan is presented on how the AU/UN force, together with the EU/UN contingent, could realistically and effectively use military power to save civilian lives in Darfur. The intervention plan is based on an analysis of the conflict and its causes, as an indispensable step in trying to anticipate the likely outcomes of the intervention and the reactions of local actors. The main conclusion is that the interveners, if they concentrate their energies on protecting and policing refugee and internally displaced persons (IDP) camps rather than trying to stop all the violence in the region, could save thousands of civilian lives, with low risk of provoking a violent military reaction from the government in Khartoum.

In the next section a case-study analysis of the conflict is provided, focusing on the possible causal mechanisms that led to the escalation of violence and on the strategies of local actors. The second section sets out the plan for military intervention, its main objectives and its likely outcomes in detail. This is followed by a conclusion in the third section.

Analysis of the conflict

Darfur comprises more than 30 ethnic groups, almost exclusively Muslim, who increasingly identify themselves either as 'Arab' or 'African'. This distinction is not based on physical traits (it is rarely possible to identify an individual's ethnicity on the basis of skin colour), but rather has a cultural dimension, based on identification or non-identification with the Arab world and claims of Arab or African descent.² The three

largest African groups are the Fur, the Zaghawa, and the Masaaleit. They are mainly sedentary farmers, although the Zaghawa are also nomadic herders during part of the year. The Arabs, instead, tend to be nomadic, herding camels in North Darfur and cattle in the South. In the past the relationship between Africans and Arabs was characterised by a mix of interdependence and economic competition over natural resources. The nomadic tribes traditionally had customary rights to migrate and pasture their herds in the farmers' areas, in return for which the animals fertilised the land and transported the harvests to the markets. Disputes were resolved by tribal chiefs through customary rules (De Waal 2004).

In the 1980s, however, as a consequence of regional drought and increasing desertification, the competition for land intensified. African farmers started to resent the Arab 'incursions' into their farmland, while the Arabs grew hostile to the seasonal presence of Zaghawa in Arab grazing areas. Khartoum played an important role in the escalation of tensions in Darfur, by weakening tribal institutions and the traditional dispute settlement system in favour of state institutions imposed from above. The lack of widely recognised mechanisms to defuse tensions pushed both Africans and Arabs to arm themselves.³ Between 1987 and 1989, Arab-African violence caused thousands of casualties among Fur farmers and Arab herders and low-level fighting between Arab and African communities has been endemic since then. According to O'Fahey (2004) the ethnicisation of the conflict has grown more rapidly since the military coup in 1989 that brought to power the regime of al-Bashir, which is not only Islamist but also Arab-centric. This has injected an ideological and racist dimension into the conflict, with the sides defining themselves as 'Arab' or 'Zurq' (black). During the 1990s, the African Darfurians grew frustrated by political marginalisation and government support for the Arabs. The 'blacks' complained about the central government's lack of interest in building and repairing roads and financing local schools and hospitals. Moreover, the Africans lamented that Arabs were awarded most top local administration posts.

Two specific developments are often cited as catalysing factors for the African rebellion that provoked the current conflict: the split in the ruling Sudanese Congress Party and the rapid progress in the negotiations between Khartoum and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) to end the North-South civil war.

From 1989 to 1999 Hassan al-Turabi played a significant role in the government led by President al-Bashir. Al-Turabi was the architect of an Islamist programme that reached beyond the Arab elites to include Muslim African peoples in Darfur and elsewhere. When al-Bashir ousted al-Turabi in 1999, many African Darfurians sided with the latter and left the government. In May 2000, they produced the so-called 'Black Book', a collection of grievances about the region's systematic marginalisation by the government since independence. Darfur's ethnic polarisation intensified, eventually leading to the alliance between the two African rebel groups, the secular Sudan Liberation Movement/Army

(SLM/A) and the Islamist Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). Al-Bashir, aware that most Darfurians would support al-Turabi, substituted local administrators with officers loyal to the regime. This caused an increasing intervention of local authorities in favour of Arabs against African groups (De Waal 2005b).

The second important development was the rapid progress in the peace negotiations between Khartoum and the SPLM/A. The failure of the African efforts to include the region in the peace process may have convinced them that the only way to obtain their goals was to take up arms, as the South had done 20 years before. The first major rebel attack, executed by the SLM/A, took place in February 2003, one week after the first round of government-SPLM/A peace talks in Naivasha, Kenya. A series of successful rebel offensives followed.

The government responded with a counterinsurgency campaign using Sudanese government forces and Darfur's Arab militias – the 'Janjaweed'. Khartoum's reaction was consistent with its previous practice of using Arab militias against the SPLM/A.⁴ Khartoum has employed the Janjaweed as ground forces, together with its regular military, for attacks against African villages. The conflict has caused the displacement of approximately 2,3 million Darfurians, of which 200 000 are in neighbouring Chad and the rest in camps within Darfur. The death toll has reached the level of 250 000 as a consequence of direct violence, malnutrition and diseases exacerbated by the conflict.⁵

In 2004, Khartoum and the rebels signed a short-lived ceasefire agreement. In 2004, the AU sent to the region a ceasefire monitoring mission, which gradually evolved into a complex peacekeeping operation, but its size (currently 7 000 personnel) and limited mandate have not allowed it to have a substantial impact on the conflict. In 2005, Darfur's rebel groups began to splinter and fight among themselves, thus further complicating the picture.⁶ In May 2006 Khartoum and the main SLM/A faction concluded a peace agreement, but the security in the region has not improved. In July 2007 the Security Council authorised the deployment in Darfur of a 26 000-strong AU/UN force, after more than a year of international pressure convinced Khartoum to acquiesce. In September 2007 the Security Council also authorised the deployment of a 3 300-strong EU/UN contingent in Eastern Chad and the north-eastern Central African Republic to protect civilians (in particular refugees and IDPs displaced by violence spilling over from Darfur) and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid.⁷ Violence in the region has mainly taken four different forms: clashes between government forces/militias and rebels; attacks on African villages by government forces and militias; violence on IDPs mainly by the Janjaweed, but sometimes also by government forces; and targeting of humanitarian workers and their vehicles, mostly by rebels and bandits.⁸

The dynamic that led to the escalation of violence in 2003 is consistent with the empirical finding that genocidal violence is usually a state retaliatory response to a

violent challenge to its authority posed by ethnic groups.⁹ Before the rebel offensive during the spring of 2003 there had been endemic low-level violence between Darfur's farmers and herders for almost two decades and a few attacks by government-sponsored Arab militias on African villages, but no large-scale government-militias campaign (see for example Flint & De Waal 2006:59-64). The Africans rightly accused Khartoum of siding with the Arabs in their disputes, but before 2003 government forces were on the whole not directly involved in the fighting. The government, arguably, was interested in keeping control over Darfur and did not consider the mass killing of 'blacks' a necessary or efficient means to achieve that objective.

The government offensive could be interpreted, using Benjamin Valentino's typology (2004:81), as a form of 'coercive mass killing in counter-guerrilla warfare', and thus a 'calculated military response to the unique challenges posed by guerrilla warfare' rather than simply the consequence of racist hatred, frustration or military indiscipline. Guerrilla forces depend heavily on the local population for food, shelter, supplies, hiding places and intelligence. The civilian support networks of insurgents are relatively easy and defenceless targets, so that governments often decide to attack the popular base of support rather than the guerrillas themselves. In this light, the attacks on villages have been attempts to destroy rebel bases and at the same time reduce the pool of resources for the insurgents, killing and terrorising potential supporters and recruits. The resettlement of 'blacks' in camps controlled by government forces represents a typical tool of counterinsurgency, too.¹⁰ The annihilation of the African population as such does not seem to have been the goal of Khartoum. If the objective were simply annihilation, the killing probably would have taken place at a much faster pace during the first stages of the conflict, and we would have witnessed a more systematic targeting of IDPs.

The Arab militias may be engaged in 'dispossessive mass-killing', again using Valentino's typology, aimed at ethnically cleansing Darfur of their economic rivals, but this does not explain why Khartoum's direct involvement in the violence started in 2003, after the rebel attacks, and not before. The argument that the government was waiting for an excuse to start executing a plan it had previously made is not convincing if one looks at the pattern of displacement. If there had been a government plan to get rid of the African population in Darfur, one would have expected many more refugees in Chad and fewer IDPs in Sudan.¹¹ Thus, Khartoum seems to have adopted a counterinsurgency strategy using the Arab militias as a proxy army. However, notwithstanding the overwhelming evidence of close military coordination between Janjaweed and government forces,¹² the militias are, at least in part, fighting their own war against their historical rivals, taking advantage of increased government support. Khartoum's control over the militias seems to have eroded over time (De Waal & Flint 2007).

The factors that pushed the 'blacks' to rebel are more difficult to understand than those behind the government response. One interpretation focuses on the perception of the

marginalisation of the region and the 'blacks' in it,¹³ which has intensified since the 1999 split in the Sudanese ruling party.¹⁴ This interpretation could explain why the 'blacks' wanted to rebel and why those reasons were particularly strong in 2003, but not why they initiated a military campaign that they had a very low probability of winning on the battlefield and that would very likely have provoked a genocidal retaliation. In fact, the enormous disparity of military resources between the two sides would lead one to rule out the possibility that the rebels miscalculated their chances of defeating the government forces without external intervention.¹⁵ Similarly, it seems unlikely that the rebels did not consider the near certainty of a military response from Khartoum and that they were not aware of the fact that such a response would not show significant restraint in its scale and indiscriminate nature, given the record of the North-South civil war. To be sure, as the US predicament in Iraq illustrates, the outcome of a counterinsurgency campaign is not predetermined by the sheer imbalance of military resources on the field; however, counterinsurgency is much easier when government forces do not face significant constraints on the violence that they can use against the civilian population.¹⁶ It also seems unlikely that the rebels believed that the government would attack the 'black' population without being provoked, because before the rebel offensives Khartoum was not engaged in genocidal violence.

If there was no miscalculation on the part of the rebels about their chance of military victory, nor a failure to understand the likely consequences of their actions, the rebel attacks can be explained either as irrational or as a consequence of 'the moral hazard of humanitarian intervention' (Kuperman 2005). A possible explanation based on irrationality would be that the 'blacks' reached such levels of frustration as a consequence of marginalisation that they decided to rebel, without considering the likely costs associated with that course of action. According to moral hazard theory, the rebel groups take offensive actions against the state to provoke violent retaliation on the civilian population in order to attract international attention and eventually intervention of some sort in their support. This moral hazard mechanism played a decisive role in the decisions of the Bosnian Muslims and the Kosovo Liberation Army to rebel against the Serbs (Kuperman 2005). Whether or not a similar dynamic is at play in Darfur is unclear. In order to find a reliable answer, it will ultimately be necessary to determine what the rebels' intentions were when they started their attacks, either by directly interviewing their leaders or analysing some sort of rebel 'memoirs'. Obtaining such information is, for obvious reasons, more likely to be possible once the conflict ends.

What can be done at this stage is to try to infer the strategy of the rebels from their actions. If moral hazard is playing a role, we could expect to see a repeated pattern of provocations and violation of ceasefires by the rebels, in a similar way as it happened in Bosnia and Kosovo (Kuperman 2005). An analysis of UN Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) reports for the eight-month period following the 8 April 2004 ceasefire agreement between Khartoum and the rebels reveals an ambiguous

picture.¹⁷ Before October 2004 the violations were mainly committed by Arab militias attacking African villages and IDPs, while no major rebel violation of the ceasefire was reported. In October there was a significant increase in the reported number of ceasefire breaches and rebel attacks on government positions, together with government aerial bombardment (IRIN 2004c). Interestingly, the then UN Secretary-General's special representative for Sudan, Jan Pronk, said at the end of October that SLM/A and JEM were responsible for much of the recent violence in Darfur (IRIN 2004b).¹⁸ In November several rebel attacks against government installations and police officers were reported (IRIN 2004a). A March 2005 report by the ICG (2005) shows the same trend of increasing rebel ceasefire violations at the end of 2004 and at the beginning of 2005, together with violations by government forces and Janjaweed. This evidence is in part consistent with the hypothesis of moral hazard, but more information is necessary to explain why the rebels did not try to provoke the government in the first months after the ceasefire agreement. Moreover, it will be necessary to test the validity of the alternative hypothesis, namely that the increased number of rebel attacks since October 2004 was due to the fact that the rebel groups at that time started experiencing some form of breakdown of their chain of command and becoming less unitary actors (ICG 2005:9–12).

Another way to investigate the rebels' strategy is to observe their behaviour in the negotiations with Khartoum. In fact, it has been claimed that the rebels' refusal to accept AU humanitarian and security proposals in September 2004 – which were instead accepted by Khartoum – is evidence of moral hazard (Kuperman 2004). In particular, the adoption of the security proposal, including the cantonment of the rebels in certain areas protected by AU forces, would have significantly reduced the rebels' ability to provoke government retaliations, thus limiting their leverage on the international community. However, the rebels explained their refusal to sign the security protocol with the risk of becoming 'sitting ducks' for government air attacks in the 'protected areas'.¹⁹ Observers at the Abuja talks between Khartoum and the rebels reported that the rebels hardened their positions and made unrealistic demands anticipating that the Security Council would condemn the Sudanese government in an imminent resolution (ICG 2005).²⁰ This suggests that the rebels are highly aware of the role that the international community could play in the conflict and are trying to attract international support for their cause.²¹ However, further empirical evidence is necessary to definitely establish whether moral hazard is playing any important role in Darfur.

The intervention

The aim of the military intervention proposed here is to save civilian lives by focusing on protecting IDP and refugee camps from violent attacks; policing the camps to avoid their militarisation; and protecting the delivery of humanitarian aid. The rules of engagement

would permit the use of deadly force for the achievement of these three objectives and for self-defence. The intervening force would total about 29 300 personnel and would mainly be comprised of infantry troops and police, and a rapid reaction force (composed of attack helicopters and air assault infantry), reinforced by armoured vehicles, ground transportation assets and support personnel.²²

The objective is not to stop the fighting between rebels and government forces or, more generally, the violence outside the camps. In order to achieve these more ambitious goals it would be necessary to execute a full-scale peace-enforcement intervention, which has historically required a force ratio of 20 per 1 000 of population in situations of great unrest (Quinlivan 1995).²³ In order to reach such a ratio in Darfur, it would be necessary to deploy about 120 000 troops.²⁴ Even if the level of unrest is assessed as lower – requiring, for example, a force ratio of ten per 1 000 of the population – a significant number of military resources (60 000 troops) would still be necessary to succeed. An intervention of this size is unlikely to be undertaken in cases in which the national interests of the intervening state(s) are not at stake.

An alternative strategy would be to mount air attacks on Sudanese industrial (in particular oil-related) assets, to compel Khartoum to stop the violence against the ‘black’ population and rein in the militias. This strategy presents several problems. First of all it would be based on the assumption that Khartoum is able but unwilling to put an end to the violence, while it is likely that the Janjaweed enjoy a high degree of independence from the government. Moreover, the bombing could exacerbate the conflict, emboldening the rebels to escalate their attacks on government positions, causing in turn more government genocidal retaliations. Finally, there is a risk that such an intervention would be perceived as an act of aggression, in particular if conducted by the US, and also could cause a sharp increase in oil prices. Furthermore, a US campaign of coercive air bombing could make Khartoum loath to cooperate in the US-led war on terror. Air power could also be used for battlefield interdiction, targeting government forces and Janjaweed.²⁵ But this strategy is problematic too, because of the difficulty of finding suitable targets given the intermixing of civilians and militias and the fact that the Janjaweed attack in relatively small units mainly on horseback and thus leave a very small ‘signature’.

The military tasks associated with the first objective of the proposed intervention – the protection of the camps – would essentially be the same as for the protection of ‘safe havens’. A safe haven is a ‘sheltered refuge within an area of conflict where the displaced can go’, but which does not require that large areas of a country be cordoned off (Posen 1996:98).²⁶ There is no well-established methodology for calculating troop requirements for protection of safe havens; the necessary size and type of protection force would depend mainly on the number, capability and determination of the assailants, and on the level of protection desired.

An important historical precedent is the NATO-UN safe haven policy in six towns and cities during the war in Bosnia. This strategy was successful in deterring the Bosnian Serbs from overrunning the safe areas for two years. However, the Serbs executed several limited attacks on the areas to test NATO-UN resolve. NATO's very limited use of air strikes in response to these episodes – mainly a consequence of the vulnerability of UN troops to Serb retaliation – led to a gradual erosion of the credibility of its deterrent, culminating in the unopposed Serb takeover of two safe areas in 1995.²⁷ This case illustrates the need for the intervener to display its willingness to take risks in order to preserve the credibility of its threats and to accompany deterrence with actual defensive plans.

The siege of Khe Sanh during the Vietnam War illustrates a worst-case scenario precedent for the defence of a safe haven. In 1968, for a period of three months, 6 500 US marines and South Vietnamese troops were surrounded by 22 000 North Vietnamese soldiers and Viet Cong irregulars armed with heavy guns, mortars and rocket launchers. Although Khe Sanh was not taken by the assailants – in large part thanks to the support of US air power and artillery fire – the defenders suffered heavy casualties (Prados & Stubbe 1991). One way to determine the number of troops required to protect the camps in Darfur would be to use a similar defender-assailant ratio as in the Khe Sanh siege, approximately 1 to 3.5. Making the conservative assumption that the Janjaweed number about 40 000, this would mean that 11 500 troops would have to be deployed to protect the camps.²⁸ The rapid reaction force, comprising 3 000 of the 11 500 troops devoted to the protection of the camps, would play a crucial role in the protection of the camps. This force would likely be sufficient to deter militia attacks and repel them if deterrence fails. Not all the violence on the displaced population would be prevented, but it would probably be reduced significantly. High casualties among the defenders seem less likely than in the case of the Khe Sanh siege, given that the Janjaweed are considerably less well armed than the North Vietnamese were, and the current unsystematic pattern of militia attacks on camps suggests a lower level of determination.²⁹

The second objective of the intervention is the separation of militants from refugees and the preservation of the civilian character of the camps. Darfur's displaced population lives in more than 300 camps. The interveners, in coordination with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), would set up new, bigger camps, where logistically possible, to exploit 'economies of scale'³⁰ in the protection of the safe areas and, more importantly, screen the displaced population at the moment of entry into the camps, so as to separate militants from civilians.³¹ Once established, the camps would be policed to prevent their transformation into bases for the rebels.

The importance of preventing the militarisation of the camps is related to the fact that displacement crises have historically proven to be important causes of continuation and exacerbation of conflict. Humanitarian aid often feeds conflict by providing militants

with the resources (such as food, medicine, vehicles and communication equipment) necessary to continue fighting (Lischer 2005). There is a risk that refugee camps could become rear bases for rebels, whose attacks across the border would invite retaliation against the camps and spread the conflict to a wider region.³² The potential for this type of escalation clearly exists in Darfur.³³ IDP camps are not likely to provoke international war but the dynamics through which humanitarian aid affects conflict apply to them as well: they risk becoming military bases for the rebels, from where they can attack while taking advantage of the protection provided by the intervening force and of humanitarian aid. The militarisation of the camps in Darfur would defeat the whole purpose of their protection, because it could provoke Khartoum into attacking their inhabitants.³⁴

About 15 000 troops are to police the camps. Although no generally accepted methodology exists to establish whether this number is sufficient, a combination of deductive reasoning and historical analogies permits a rough assessment. Perhaps the most important precedent in which some form of policing of refugee camps was attempted is Congo (then Zaire) in 1995 and 1996. The UN Secretary-General had two alternative plans for policing the camps inhabited by about 1,2 million Rwandan Hutu refugees. One required the deployment of 5 000 troops to gradually establish security in the camps, while the other entailed the deployment of up to 12 000 troops to achieve the additional goal of isolating Hutu political leaders and militants in separate camps from the rest of the refugees (UN 1994). After the international community failed to act, the UNHCR hired 1 500 Zairian elite soldiers to provide security in the camps. The first contingent, deployed from February 1995 to January 1996 and composed of well-trained and disciplined soldiers, improved security conditions in the camps, which were policed with a force ratio of about one per 1 000 of displaced population.³⁵ The intervening force in Darfur is more likely to achieve the full objective of preserving the civilian character of the camps for several reasons. The force ratio in Darfur would be higher – about six per 1 000 of the population in the camps, given about 2,5 million displaced persons.³⁶ Moreover, policing activities would be much easier if an initial screening process is followed to separate armed elements from civilians, which was not done in Congo.³⁷

If it is true, as seems likely, that Khartoum wants the ‘blacks’ to ‘behave’ rather than to exterminate them, the government would not be interested in attacking camps inhabited by unarmed elements. The intervention may actually be seen in a positive light by Khartoum, as it would reduce the negative publicity associated with the violence on IDPs, while depriving the rebels of important resources. More generally, the fact that Khartoum has refrained from directly attacking AU troops, and its reluctant acceptance of the AU/UN hybrid force, strongly suggest that the Sudanese government would not militarily challenge the interveners. Efforts to clearly communicate the limited objectives of the intervention to the government would be crucial for reducing the risk of Sudanese misperceptions. The Janjaweed, on the other hand, might still want to attack the camps and Khartoum might not be able or willing to restrain them. Here the

military superiority of the interveners should be sufficient to deter such attacks and to repel the lightly armed aggressors if deterrence fails.

The rebels are likely to oppose the interveners' efforts to maintain the civilian character of the camps, but the international force should be robust enough to deal with this problem, as discussed above. In addition, a systematic use of hit-and-run tactics to push the interveners to leave would not be consistent with the rebels' interest in attracting international support: the withdrawal of the international force, in fact, would amount to a green light for Khartoum to launch an all-out campaign to exterminate the rebels and their supporters. On the other hand the rebels, moved by a logic of plunder and warlordism, could react to the reduced possibility of extracting resources from the camps by stepping up attacks on the flow of humanitarian aid and on villages.

Outside the camps, Sudanese army and militias may still fight against the rebels and attack villages, thus causing more displacements. In the worst-case scenario, the displaced population could reach four million people if all the 'blacks' were to leave their villages as a consequence of continued attacks.³⁸ While the protection requirements would not be significantly affected by an increase in the displaced population (given that they are calculated on the basis of the number and capability of the assailants), the ability of the interveners to police the safe havens would be reduced – but the force ratio would still be more than three times as big as in Zaire. In this scenario it would be necessary to reassess whether the troops available could still effectively perform their tasks or whether reinforcements would be necessary.³⁹

The third objective of the intervention is the protection of the flow of humanitarian aid. Such protection is potentially costly in terms of military resources and casualties, as relatively simple and inexpensive weapons systems – land mines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), light-weight shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) and light anti-tank weapons – could be used by assailants to stop aerial and overland humanitarian aid and attack their military escorts.⁴⁰ The small-scale attacks on humanitarian workers in Darfur, however, do not reveal a strong determination to systematically stop humanitarian assistance, but are probably better understood as a form of plunder. Mounted infantry and escort helicopters could protect overland convoys, while the rapid reaction force used for the protection of the camps would intervene in cases where a convoy comes under fire.⁴¹ For the same reasons discussed above, it is unlikely that Khartoum would feel threatened by military escorts of humanitarian convoys and that it would systematically attack humanitarian supplies.

The intervention does not aim to bring about the end of the conflict, but simply to alleviate in the short term the suffering of the civilian population and buy time for international diplomacy. The presence on the ground of an international force would be necessary until a level of security sufficient to permit the voluntary return of the

displaced to their homes has been established. An analysis of the challenges associated with finding a long-term solution to the conflict is beyond the scope of this paper, but it should be noted that the military intervention will probably have an important impact on negotiations. The creation of protected areas would decrease the pool of resources for the rebels, while at the same time attenuating one of the main causes of the international condemnation of Khartoum. As a consequence, the rebels may become more willing to make concessions, while the Sudanese government may become emboldened and more reluctant to compromise. Extra international pressure on Khartoum may therefore be necessary to convince it to make necessary concessions regarding the sharing of power and wealth.

Conclusion

The military intervention plan for Darfur outlined here highlights the fact that the protection of a displaced population is not necessarily a neutral form of involvement in a conflict, but it can have important effects on the balance of forces on the battlefield. Simply providing support and protection to the population from which the rebels – the weaker side – are drawn, can prolong and exacerbate the conflict and at the same time generate incentives for the government – the stronger side – to target the international force. Thus, the potential interveners in a conflict like Darfur would face an alternative between a ‘total’ intervention against the stronger side and a ‘limited’ intervention to prevent the weaker side from exploiting international protection and humanitarian aid, which can therefore be considered biased in favour of the stronger side. The first option would often be unattractive, because of the high costs that its implementation would entail and the risk of generating incentives for other minorities to rebel. The second option is more promising in many respects. Although it does not lead to a final settlement of the conflict through a decisive victory, it does have the advantage of making the achievement of the humanitarian goal of saving civilian lives, at a sustainable cost, possible.

This is not to say that there will be no risks associated with this type of limited intervention. The proposed plan of intervention in Darfur is based on the assumption that Khartoum would not oppose militarily the intervening force, but such a reaction could take place. Political and military planners have to decide what form the intervention should take and try to anticipate its likely outcomes, while bearing in mind that the ‘fog of war’, even when military power is employed for humanitarian purposes, cannot be eliminated.

A final consideration on the role of international mediation is warranted. Although it is still unclear whether or not the ‘black’ rebellion can be explained in terms of moral hazard, the case of Darfur underlines that international pressure should be brought to

bear with great care and after having analysed the dynamics that led to the conflict. If the objective of the international community is to save lives, its policies must be based on an understanding of the interests of the actors involved so as to find the most effective ways to change their behaviour in the desired direction. In the years of negotiations and resolutions over Darfur, the international community should have applied pressure more resolutely and systematically on the rebels to stop their attacks and start serious negotiations with Khartoum. This could have significantly reduced the violence, because the Sudanese government would have had far less incentive to continue its counterinsurgency measures. A more balanced international response in situations similar to Darfur could reduce the risk of emboldening the weak side and generating dynamics that prolong the conflict. Obviously sending the right message to both sides at the same time is not a simple undertaking, in particular because the message to one side can undermine the credibility of the one sent to the other. However, serious efforts in this direction are necessary if the international community wants to prevent the escalation of violent conflict rather than intervening with military force when mass killing has already occurred.

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Notes

- 1 However, it will probably take several months before the international force reaches full strength and operational capability.
- 2 As a consequence of a long history of intermarriage, internal migration and 'mobility' between African and Arab groups, almost everyone in Darfur has dark skin and African features (De Waal 2004 and 2005a).
- 3 The civil war in neighbouring Chad made small arms easily available in Darfur.
- 4 During the 1980s and 1990s, Khartoum had deployed Arab militias from Darfur and neighbouring Kordofan against communities in SPLM/A-controlled areas of Bahr-el-Ghazal (the province to the south of Darfur). Similarly, in 1991 to 1992, the government had used Darfur's Arab militias against SPLM/A infiltrations in Darfur supported by local sympathisers. The success of the repression of the SPLM/A-Darfur rebel movement cemented the alliance between Khartoum and the Arab militias (Ryle 2004). Khartoum may have considered it especially important to resort to the Janjaweed in 2003, given that a very high percentage of the regular Sudanese military is composed of African Darfurians who would not have taken up arms against their 'brothers' (Igiri & Lyman 2004).
- 5 There is no general agreement on the total number of deaths resulting from the conflict. The figure of 250 000 should be considered a conservative estimate (see Hagan & Palloni 2006 and Reeves 2006).
- 6 Some SLM/A factions and JEM subsequently formed a limited military coalition, the National Redemption Front (NRF).
- 7 The Security Council's resolution does not explicitly define the overall size of the force, limiting itself to setting at 300 the maximum number of UN police to be deployed. The EU component of the force is

- expected to consist of 3 000 to 4 000 troops – primarily French (IRIN 2007). The following analysis is based on the assumption that the overall size of the EU/UN force will be 3 300.
- 8 Over time the conflict has also taken the form of a proxy war between Sudan and Chad, which host and support each other's rebel groups. Recently, fighting has occurred between Arab tribes that support the government and some that have remained uninvolved or sided with the rebels (ICG 2007).
 - 9 For a discussion of the literature finding that during the Cold War period victim groups often violently provoked their own demise, see Kuperman (2005). The author also compiled a database of post-Cold War genocidal violence, showing that four cases out of six in the database (one of them is the Darfur conflict) fit the pattern of retaliatory genocidal violence.
 - 10 Forced population resettlements were used, for example, by UK and US forces in Malaya and Vietnam, respectively, albeit accompanied by much less brutality.
 - 11 The actual pattern of displacement is instead consistent with counterinsurgency logic, because the government can more easily prevent rebel activities in IDP camps within Darfur than in refugee camps across the border.
 - 12 According to a number of sources, attacks on villages are coordinated between the Janjaweed and the Sudanese military and the militias are supplied with weapons, uniforms and communication devices – in particular satellite telephones – by the government. Moreover, Khartoum has been integrating a number of militias with its official security apparatus. Human Rights Watch (2004b) has obtained a series of Sudanese government documents that prove Khartoum's policy of support for the militias.
 - 13 This explanation is consistent with the literature on rebellion that focuses on 'relative deprivation' as the main explanatory variable (see Gurr 2002).
 - 14 Moreover, as discussed above, the Africans' desire to rebel might have been reinforced by their fear of being excluded from the North-South peace process. However, the rebels may also have interpreted the SPLM/A-government negotiations as an important political opportunity for Darfur, because they would ultimately lead to the participation in the government of the SPLM/A, which is sympathetic with the African Darfurians.
 - 15 For data on the military resources at Khartoum's disposal, see International Institute for Strategic Studies (2003). There is no precise information on the size of the rebel forces, but the ICG (2003) estimated that the SLM/A had about 6 000 members. Eric Reeves – a Sudan researcher – estimated a total size of about 30 000 for all the rebel groups in Darfur (e-mail correspondence, 29 April 2005).
 - 16 This point is illustrated by the relative ease with which Saddam Hussein repressed Shia and Kurdish rebellions by resorting to mass killing.
 - 17 The reports that were analysed cover the period between 8 April 2004 and 10 January 2005. The choice of 10 January as the final date of the search is arbitrary, with the underlying rationale being that a period of eight months after the conclusion of the cease-fire agreement should be long enough to reveal the patterns of compliance with or violations of the agreement. The reports are available in the 'archive' section of the IRIN website, at www.irinnews.org [accessed 15 June 2005].
 - 18 Compare this with the article posted on Sudan Watch 2004.
 - 19 See IRIN (2004d), for a summary of the points of disagreement between the rebels and Khartoum in the AU-sponsored September 2004 negotiations.
 - 20 This is not necessarily direct evidence of moral hazard, but it suggests an attention to the position of the international community that is consistent with that theory.
 - 21 This awareness has likely been influenced by the experience of the North-South conflict, during which international pressure played a key role in convincing Khartoum to make concessions to the rebels.
 - 22 The following analysis is based on the assumption that the AU/UN force will be able to reach full operational strength and will be comprised of well equipped and well trained troops. This is not going to be easy given Sudan's insistence on a 'predominantly' African intervening force.
 - 23 The number of troops required for this type of intervention can be a function of the population of the area, the size and capability of the enemy forces, the size and type of terrain and the capability of the intervening force.
 - 24 Darfur has a population of about six million.
 - 25 For a military intervention plan centred on the use of air strikes against Sudanese military assets to stop the genocide, see Rice (2007).

- 26 In Darfur such an intervention would prove a better solution than the creation of a single large 'safe area' of the type established by 'Operation Provide Comfort' in Northern Iraq, because ethnic groups are intermixed. The creation of a safe area in Darfur would require the engagement of the interveners in activities that look essentially like ethnic cleansing. In addition, the creation of a safe area could imply *de facto* secession of Darfur – or part of it – from the rest of Sudan, which would be politically unpalatable and likely be violently opposed by Khartoum.
- 27 The UN Protection Force's (UNPROFOR) mandate was to deter Serb attacks, not to actually defend the safe areas in case the deterrent failed (Seybolt 2007).
- 28 It is difficult to estimate the size of the Arab militias active in Darfur, because many Janjaweed have been 'absorbed' into the regular Sudanese security apparatus. Human Rights Watch (2004a) estimated the number of Arab militias at about 20 000.
- 29 The Janjaweed use horses and camels or pick-up trucks. Their main weapons are rifles and grenade-launchers.
- 30 The advantage of bigger camps, which are easier to protect, must be balanced against the need to avoid overcrowding, which could cause health problems and psychological distress among the displaced. Humanitarian organisations have developed criteria for camp construction, concerning for example the minimum distance between tents, the number and location of latrines and the required amount of water per person (see Sphere Project 2004).
- 31 'Militant' (or 'combatant') and 'armed element' are not synonymous terms. A militant that has not permanently given up the idea of fighting remains a combatant even if he/she does not carry weapons. Maintaining the civilian character of the camps would require excluding the militants at the entry points. While this could prove to be very difficult during in the initial screening phase, the camps would at least become weapon-free zones.
- 32 This type of dynamic is at the root of the regional conflict that started in eastern Congo in 1996 and caused about three million deaths, mainly as a consequence of malnutrition and disease. The conflict could have been prevented if the rebels had been disarmed and the camps policed.
- 33 Darfur's violence is spilling over not only into Chad, but also into the Central African Republic, to which 2 600 people from Darfur have escaped.
- 34 An important factor in explaining the determination of the Bosnian Serbs to attack the safe havens is that they were not demilitarised (see for example Gordon 2001).
- 35 The next contingents, coming from regular units of Zaire's armed forces, were much less disciplined and contributed to insecurity in the camps (Boutroue 1998; UNHCR 1997).
- 36 The figure includes the 2,3 million Darfurians displaced in Darfur and in eastern Chad, as well as almost 200 000 IDPs in eastern Chad. In practice the force ratio would be higher, because some of the troops allocated to protection of camps from external attacks would participate in policing activities when there are no outside threats.
- 37 The force to population ratio proposed here is in the middle range of the Secretary-General's proposed number of four and ten troops per 1 000 displaced. Of course a higher ratio would be a 'safer bet', but it cannot be accommodated within the 29 300 troop 'ceiling' for the international mission. In any case, the more aggressive plan of intervention in Zaire entailed the separation of Hutu leaders and militants from the rest of the refugees, a more ambitious goal than the demilitarisation proposed for Darfur.
- 38 This figure derives from Eric Reeves' estimate that the Africans represent 60 to 65 per cent of Darfur's population and the Arabs 40 to 35 per cent (e-mail correspondence, 12 June 2005).
- 39 The protection of the flow of people to the camps is not proposed as a necessary part of the intervention, because the available evidence suggests that attacks on people moving from their villages to the camps is not a widespread phenomenon.
- 40 For a discussion of the military tasks associated to the protection of humanitarian aid operations, see Seybolt (2007, ch 5).
- 41 2 800 troops would be devoted to convoy protection. This figure is dictated by the need to allocate sufficient resources to the other two tasks while respecting the overall ceiling of 29 300. A bigger force could allocate more resources to the task of protecting humanitarian convoys and therefore guarantee a higher level of protection.

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