

The background image shows a dusty street in a village. In the foreground, a man in a blue shirt leads a donkey pulling a cart loaded with blue barrels. In the middle ground, a white Toyota pickup truck with 'TOYOTA' on the back is driving away, followed by a white SUV with 'UN' on the back. Another white SUV with 'UNAMID 1906' on the back is visible. In the background, there are simple buildings with thatched roofs and trees. A person is riding a bicycle on the left side of the street.

Assessing the Effectiveness

of the United Nations-African Union
Hybrid Operation in Darfur
(UNAMID)

Ralph Mamiya & Wibke Hansen

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Contents

Acknowledgements	5
Acronyms	7
List of figures	11
List of tables	13
i. Executive summary	15
UNAMID's impact 2007-2017	16
Lessons, challenges and the way forward	19
Recommendations for future support to Darfur	21
ii. Introduction	25
iii. Framework and methodology	29
Framework	29
Methodology	30

1. Context analysis: The conflict in Darfur	33
The politics of the periphery	34
The politics of the centre	37
The politics of violence	38
2. Evolution of the mission: 2004-2017	45
The early political frameworks	45
The mediation	50
Darfur after Doha	52
The military solution	55
3. Impact of UNAMID 2007-2017	59
Impact along UNAMID's core mandates	60
Dilemmas and lessons from UNAMID's first decade	76
4. Transition in a revolution: Challenges, approaches, lessons	81
The transition	82
The revolution	84
The new dispensation	86
Renewed negotiations	88
The horizon	90
Challenges, approaches and lessons	93
5. Conclusions	101
Lessons from UNAMID	102
Looking ahead – Considerations for a future presence in Darfur	104
Weighing the risks and benefits of leaving Darfur	108
6. About EPON	109
7. Appendix: EPON Darfur focus group data	111

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Acronyms

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Database
AMIS	AU Mission in Sudan
AOR	Area of Responsibility
AU	African Union
AUHIP	AU High-level Implementation Panel
AUPD	AU High-level Panel on Darfur
CAR	Central African Republic
CDR	Conseil Démocratique Révolutionnaire
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease (2019)
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DDDC	Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation
DDPD	Doha Document for Peace in Darfur
DIDC	Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultation
DJSR	Deputy Joint Special Representative
DPA	Darfur Peace Agreement
DPKO	UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DPO	Department of Peace Operations
EPON	Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network

EU	European Union
FPU	Formed Police Unit
GCSS	Governance and Community Stabilization Section
GoS	Government of Sudan
HIPPO	UN High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations
ICC	International Criminal Court
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
JMST	AU-UN Joint Mediation Support Team
JSR	Joint Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the UN Secretary-General
LJM	Liberation and Justice Movement
MINUSCA	UN Stabilization Mission in the CAR
NCP	National Congress Party
NUPI	Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
OAU	Organization for African Unity
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
OIOS	UN Office of Internal Oversight Services
PCA	Permanent Court of Arbitration
POC	Protection of Civilians
PSC	Peace and Security Council
ROL	Rule of Law
RSF	Rapid Support Forces
SAF	Sudan Armed Forces
SLA	Sudan Liberation Army
SLA-AW	Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid faction
SLA-MM	Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi faction
SLF	State Liaison Function
SLM-TC	Sudan Liberation Movement-Transitional Council
SPLA/M	Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement
SPLM-N	Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North

SPM	Special Political Mission
TCC	Troop-Contributing Country
TMC	Transitional Military Council
UN	United Nations
UNAMID	UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNIFIL	UN Interim Force in Lebanon
UNITAMS	UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan
UNMAS	UN Mine Action Service
UNMIS	UN Mission in Sudan
UNMISS	UN Mission in South Sudan
UNSC	UN Security Council
UNSG	UN Secretary-General
USG	Under-Secretary-General
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

List of figures

Figure 1: Map of Darfur with UNAMID deployment

Figure 2: Deployment of UNAMID uniformed personnel over time

Figure 3: Conflict incidents and fatalities in Darfur 2003-2020

Figure 4: Security actors of first resort

Figure 5: New displacements in Darfur, 2003-2017

Figure 6: UNAMID and UNCT priorities in relation to SLFs

Figure 7: Map of SLFs in Sudan

List of tables

Table 1: Interviewee categories

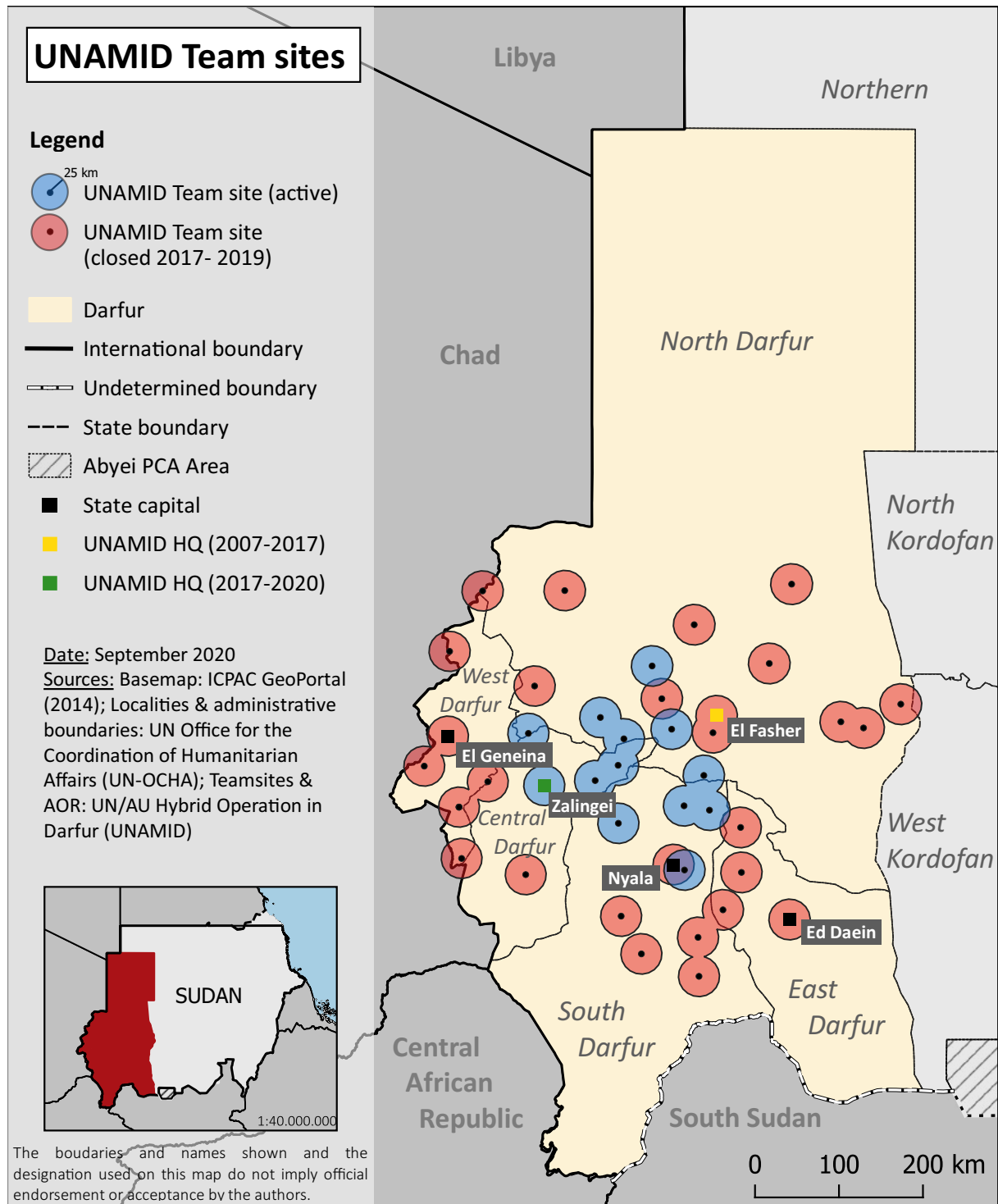
Table 2: Timeline of political process and events in Sudan, 2003-2020

Table 3: Changes in troop and police ceilings, 2007-2020

Table 4: UNAMID's transition 2017-2020

Table 5: Disaggregated focus groups

Figure 1: Map of Darfur with UNAMID deployment



i. Executive summary

The African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) deployed the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) in 2007 to address a conflict between the Government of Sudan and rebel groups that led to conditions that some characterised as a genocide. UNAMID initially deployed to Sudan with an authorised strength of nearly 20,000 troops and more than 6,500 police, the largest peacekeeping operation in the world at the time. Today, less than one quarter of that force remains, concentrated largely in the Jebel Marra area. With 1.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), a deep humanitarian crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and rising levels of violence, Darfur in 2020 is far from being a stable place as UNAMID – the AU and UN’s most important crisis prevention tool on the ground – appears set to depart.

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The years since UNAMID’s deployment witnessed a moribund peace process and, between 2014 and 2016, a scorched-earth military campaign by the government against the rebels that killed thousands of civilians. By 2017, faced with a hostile government that made further progress unlikely as well as waning interest and tightening budgets from powerful countries, the UNSC and AUPSC initiated UNAMID’s transition and a fairly rapid drawdown, with a view to an end date for UNAMID in 2020.

The scenario on which the transition concept was based, however, was never realised, as Sudan underwent momentous political change in 2019. A popular uprising against the ruling system beginning in December 2018 deposed the country's long-time leader, President Omar al-Bashir, in April 2019. A transitional government and a military-civilian Sovereign Council now seek to rescue a struggling economy, reform a repressive security and justice system, and make peace with the people on Sudan's peripheries. The government and two of the three main Darfur rebel groups endorsed their latest peace agreement in late August 2020 in Juba ("Juba Agreement"). The Juba Agreement offers the best hope for peace in Darfur in more than a decade, but it also creates risks as non-signatories jockey for power.

Violence in Darfur has increased since the fall of al-Bashir, with more than 77,000 people newly displaced from mid-2019 to mid-2020, and the UN's new political mission in Sudan, the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), much delayed in its deployment. Despite significant risk to Darfur's stability, strong voices in the UNSC and the Sudanese government continue to advocate for UNAMID's closure by the end of 2020.

UNAMID's impact 2007-2017

UNAMID's mandate evolved from a more expansive set of tasks that reflected the comprehensive language of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) in 2007 to a focus in 2014 on three strategic priorities that remained valid until 2020: (1) mediating between the government and non-signatory armed movements; (2) protecting civilians, monitoring human rights, and facilitating humanitarian assistance; and (3) providing support to the mediation of community conflict.

The Mission's experience shows how difficult it is to execute mandates and to maintain the trust of the population when protection, human rights, and inclusive politics run counter to government policy.

Overall, this assessment finds that, faced with obstruction from the host government, almost no political leverage and a volatile security situation, UNAMID had a modest impact on the situation in Darfur during its first decade, with very limited impact in some areas. This was despite the fact that the Mission dutifully fulfilled mandated tasks in many areas. The Mission's experience shows how difficult it is to execute mandates and to maintain the trust of the population when protection, human rights, and inclusive politics run counter to government policy.

To understand UNAMID's impact in Darfur, it is important to recognise that the Mission lacked key factors generally considered necessary for success. First, the al-Bashir government

objected to UN peacekeepers from the outset, consenting only after protracted negotiations, but never truly cooperated with the Mission, engaging instead in persistent and strategic obstruction. Second, international stakeholders, including the AU and UN, did not have a consistent political approach to the Sudanese government on Darfur. This resulted in a mission that lacked the strategic backing to play an effective political role or to push against government restrictions vigorously. The Mission was also charged with supporting and implementing two deeply flawed peace agreements that it had little role in designing, the DPA and the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD). Finally, UNAMID never received many of the key military enablers that were part of its original conception and faced shortfalls in military and police operational capacity throughout its tenure.

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Support for the political process

The political work to resolve the Darfur conflict preceded UNAMID's deployment, continued during its tenure, and appears set to continue after the Mission leaves. The fact that the government and two of the three original rebel groups only recently concluded the latest peace deal, 17 years after the Darfur conflict began, is a testament to the political gridlock involved. In this respect, UNAMID had little impact in mediating the conflict, though it was no more or less successful than its predecessors and its co-mediators during that time. The Mission nonetheless contributed significantly to bringing Darfuri voices, including those of women and civil society representatives, to political discussions that might otherwise have been the sole province of politicians and soldiers.

Protecting civilians, promoting human rights, and facilitating humanitarian access

There are two simple, opposing narratives for UNAMID's impact in civilian protection. Firstly, that UNAMID failed in its single-most important mandate, hampered by an obstructive government, by Mission leadership too willing to bend to the government's demands, and by troops unwilling to take action even when they were present at the site of violations. Alternatively, UNAMID could be viewed as implementing its protection mandate as well as any other peace operation – almost none of which use any proactive force to protect civilians, much less use force against host government proxies – and by remaining on the ground, even in a compromised state, saving tens of thousands of lives. Both of these narratives have truth to them, though the final judgment lies somewhere in between.

The continued importance of UNAMID's imperfect protection is reflected in the concern many communities have expressed at the imminent withdrawal of the Mission.

While the al-Bashir government obstructed UNAMID's protection and human rights efforts in countless ways, the AU and the UN never showed the same persistence in standing up to the Sudanese government's harassment as the government did in restricting the Mission. UNAMID also had its share of protection failures, tragic incidents in which peacekeepers took no action despite clear threats to civilians. These failures resulted in deaths and losses that should not be forgotten.

At the same time, UNAMID succeeded in deterring the worst abuses of the civilian population in Darfur, protecting thousands of people and facilitating the distribution of humanitarian assistance. The continued importance of this imperfect protection is reflected in the concern many communities have expressed at the imminent withdrawal of UNAMID and in their belief that the presence of UNAMID provides them with some degree of protection and security.

Managing intercommunal conflict and supporting institutions

While best known for its mandate to protect civilians, UNAMID was also mandated to mediate intercommunal conflict and to support local institutions, including the institutions created by the DPA and DDPD. The Mission has carried out important work in these areas, and there is hope that these efforts will be reinvigorated under the transitional government.

For a decade, UNAMID lacked a key ingredient for peacebuilding: a committed government partner.

Fundamentally, however, these tasks were peacebuilding mandates and, for a decade, UNAMID lacked a key ingredient for peacebuilding: a committed government partner. Mediating intercommunal conflict is immensely difficult when the government has armed one set of communities as a proxy militia. Supporting local rule-of-law institutions, such as traditional courts, is similarly challenging when the government has spent more than a decade replacing respected community leaders with its loyalists. Training government police is also a questionable approach to improving security in IDP camps when IDPs have lost trust in government authority. For all of these reasons, UNAMID's potentially important work in mediating local conflict and supporting local institutions made only modest progress, but shows greater promise in the new political landscape.

Lessons, challenges and the way forward

The primacy of coherent politics

The degree of western media coverage that accompanied UNAMID's deployment may have implied that the Mission had strong political backing from the UN, AU and other international stakeholders. The ensuing years, however, showed that each international actor had different expectations and objectives for the Mission and different goals in dealing with the Government of Sudan. This swiftly and severely undermined the Mission's credibility with the government, the rebels and ultimately with the population. As a result, the Mission was frequently attacked, harassed and challenged, with little response from the UNSC or AUPSC beyond rote and ineffective condemnations.

The political process also suffered from a lack of coherence among the AU, UN, the US and other international actors, each of whom had their own political approach to Darfur. Particularly in the early years of the conflict, numerous and sometimes competing envoys were involved, including UNAMID, a separate AU-UN Joint Chief Mediator, the AU High-level Panel on Darfur (later the AU High-level Implementation Panel), as well as bilateral initiatives and forums. While the peaceful resolution of conflict is always ultimately in the hands of the parties, this created opportunities for the Sudanese government to play a variety of international actors off of one another and to disrupt what was initially significant political attention and pressure.

Host state consent and cooperation

UNAMID was severely impacted from the outset as it struggled to get the government's legal consent to deploy and had to function without government cooperation. Host nation consent is a bedrock principle of peacekeeping, yet the legal formality of consent to a peace operation can easily be conflated with the host nation's willingness to cooperate with a mission on the ground. While UNAMID's planners knew that working with the al-Bashir regime would be challenging, the Sudanese government made clear just how wide the grey zone of cooperation can be and how it can be used to obstruct operations.

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There is no clear answer as to what UNAMID should have done with regard to these issues and there are many counterfactual alternatives (the most extreme of which was withdrawal of the Mission). However, without real host government commitment or incentives to bring the

reluctant host government on board, a process-oriented approach to managing consent may have limited impact. The UNSC and its future missions will need to recognise that the proposed core priorities of a peace operation – whether the protection of civilians (POC), human rights or mediation – need to have a significant degree of commitment from the government. The ability – and at times leverage – to foster such commitment highly depends on maintaining political focus.

The hybrid partnership

UNAMID's hybrid design, while originally a compromise, created opportunities for greater political leverage that evolved over time, but took many years to mature. The hybrid partnership was always a political rather than an operational one and should be recognised as such. Every interlocutor with whom the study team spoke agreed that, for routine operational purposes, UNAMID was effectively a UN mission: its structures, processes and procedures – military, police and civilian – were all based on UN operations. However, the AU brought political advantages when engaging with the Sudanese government, often delivering messages that would have been difficult for the UN to send.

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The inconsistent political approaches of the AU and UN to Darfur in the Mission's early years, along with the lack of experience in both the AU and UN with this type of collaboration, prevented the benefits of the hybrid approach from being fully realised. The hybrid partnership became more effective from 2014 onwards, as joint ways of working became more established, and the AU and UN approaches to Darfur became more coherent. While the recently mandated UNITAMS (June 2020) will be a UN mission rather than an AU-UN hybrid, the political partnership with the AU remains highly relevant as the new mission navigates a complex relationship with a new government whose preferences are still very much shaped by sovereignty concerns.

Exit without peace

The UNAMID experience highlights that good transition planning is important, but that the UNSC and Secretariat should be wary of attaching fixed dates to situations that remain fluid and unpredictable. The Mission's planned exit (underway at the time of writing) was prompted by a hostile government that made advancing mandate objectives appear unlikely, waning UN Member State interest, and budgetary constraints rather than progress towards an inclusive peace. Sudan's popular uprising then fundamentally changed the political situation.

The uncertainty created by al-Bashir's fall has increased violence in Darfur while the new political dispensation has created new opportunities for cooperation with the government. Yet discussions on UNAMID's exit remain based on fixed dates rather than conditions-on-the-ground, resulting in an apparent disconnect between the peace and security situation in Darfur and the continued political momentum of UNAMID's exit.

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UN Country Team cooperation through the State Liaison Functions

During its transition, UNAMID and the UN Country Team (UNCT) established State Liaison Functions (SLFs), seconding UNAMID staff and using the assessed peacekeeping budget for programmatic activities implemented by UN agencies. While this may sound like a small and logistical step in an era of "integrated" peacekeeping missions, it is nothing short of a bureaucratic and budgetary miracle. (The fact that UNAMID was not an integrated mission makes this approach even more remarkable). While the SLF concept was a pilot and can be improved upon, it stands as an important proof-of-concept for what can be accomplished through cooperation among UN entities and creative approaches from Member States. This kind of forward-thinking and willingness to experiment will be required in effectively supporting the transformation in Sudan and steering the transition from UNAMID to a follow-on presence in a situation that comes with unique political opportunities but also enormous challenges and risks.

Recommendations for future support to Darfur

The recently endorsed peace agreement in Juba, South Sudan, offers the greatest hope for peace in many years, but stability in Darfur is far from certain. As with previous agreements, key armed constituencies are not signatories, including the rebels led by Abdul Wahid al-Nur, who refused to join the process, and Arab militias, which have never had representation in any of Darfur's peace processes. The region is far more militarised than it was 20 years ago, and the political changes will undoubtedly create winners and losers, creating risks of escalation. The Juba Agreement provides an important framework, however, that the UN and AU should support. The Agreement sets out different roles for the UN, which could be filled by UNAMID or UNITAMS, but require a sufficient field presence. In all cases, this report emphasises a flexible and agile approach that retains a strong connection to the political discussions in Khartoum as well as to security developments on the ground.

Advice to the joint security force

One of the UN's most important roles in Darfur could be providing advice and capacity-building to the joint security force between the Government of Sudan and the signatory rebel groups, a 12,000-strong unit that the Juba Agreement calls for establishing by January 2021. This joint security force will have a set of important responsibilities around law and order and protection, which may prove challenging given the questionable disciplinary records of elements on both sides. Advising this force will include political, strategic and training roles, but fundamentally this should be recognised as a political enterprise rather than a technical exercise.

Monitoring

Monitoring of the Juba Agreement's implementation by the UN is both a requirement of the Agreement and an important role for fostering sustainable peace. The first months and years of the Juba Agreement will be critical for building trust between the government, signatory rebels, non-signatory rebels, and the population. The UN can serve as an impartial actor should disagreements arise between the rebel and government elements of the joint security force. Identifying and mediating such disputes early on will be vitally important to avoid a relapse into conflict.

Human rights capacity

Human rights capacity will be crucial for protection in Darfur. UNAMID should continue its human rights monitoring as long as possible, and any successor (whether UNITAMS or another configuration) should work closely with the Sudan country office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR). The fact that the strongest military actor in Darfur, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), has a history of human rights abuses creates serious concerns. A continued monitoring presence for conflict early warning and human rights monitoring remains important. Such a monitoring presence could operate alone or in cooperation with state authorities, including any prosecutor or Special Prosecutor, national human rights body, or other relevant national or state organs.

Residual protection issues

While stability has improved in Darfur since the worst periods of the conflict, protection concerns remain. The government has submitted a protection of civilians strategy to the UNSC that reflects internationally accepted standards and practices. It is a solid foundation for the new government and an important step to which many countries should look. The strategy lacks key details, however, and raises concerns that the good intentions of its drafters may not be realised on the ground. The UN should not lose sight of the need to empower the government, while

also supporting protection needs where the government may need time to fill that role. While the government appears to prefer a Chapter VI mission at the time of writing, there are strong arguments in favour of retaining, ad interim, a limited international military and formed police capacity in Darfur in support of government protection efforts.

State-society liaison and support to the police

Many communities in Darfur, particularly in IDP camps, remain distrustful of authorities, yet a sustainable peace in Darfur requires a reinvigorated political dialogue between the government and various Darfur communities. In the near term, supporting trust-building through a liaison function is a potentially important role for the UN and an essential function to realise the complex negotiations that will be required for durable solutions for IDPs. While this need not be management or physical protection of the IDP camps, the presence of a mission (on at least a mobile basis) can facilitate relations with authorities. Continuing UNAMID's work around community policing and police reform will be important in this respect.

Local conflict resolution

With many protection concerns originating in intercommunal dynamics, an independent and impartial conflict resolution capacity is important. As the January 2020 violence in El Geneina showed, there is currently no single government actor that fills such an independent and impartial role. Building trust in such an actor (whether at the state or national level) is crucial, and the government should be part of these activities. However, a UN presence will have an important role to play. Trust in security institutions in Darfur will also turn on the success of a security sector reform process that begins in Khartoum and extends to all corners of the country.

ii. Introduction

This study is part of the larger effort of EPON and its members to conduct research into the effectiveness of specific peace operations jointly and to collate these reports and research results. The study includes an assessment of UNAMID’s strategic impact from 2007-2017 using the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON) methodology and an examination of UNAMID’s transition (2017-present) that focuses less on impact and more on early lessons and considerations for the future of UNAMID and the UN’s new political mission, the UNITAMS.

UNAMID deployed in 2007 without two factors generally considered critical for peacekeeping success: the cooperation of the host government and a viable peace agreement.

UNAMID deployed in 2007 without two factors generally considered critical for peacekeeping success: the cooperation of the host government and a viable peace agreement. The Darfur conflict began in 2003, and it has captured the attention of the public in the west since 2004 when large-scale attacks on civilians and the burning of villages led to frequent comparisons with the Rwandan genocide. A lengthy negotiation process preceded UNAMID’s deployment and the government’s formal consent was only obtained after agreement that the Mission would be a hybrid operation of the UN and AU. This formal consent never translated into cooperation, however, and UNAMID continued to face political and logistical obstruction from the government for many years. The Mission deployed on the basis of the 2006 DPA, which lacked commitment from major rebel groups and led to a fragmentation of actors and a more chaotic situation on the ground, rather than serving as a stable foundation for peace. The 2011 DDPD

suffered from many of the same problems six years later, including an attempt to bring more rebel groups into a “big tent” agreement that, overall, failed to reduce fighting on the ground.

After seven years of peacekeeping, the government opted for what it called a “counterinsurgency strategy” against the rebels.

UNAMID’s mandate, which started out with a relatively broad portfolio of tasks, was adapted several times but not significantly altered during its first six years. In 2014, partly in light of difficulties the Mission had in making progress across its spectrum of mandated tasks, the AUPSC and UNSC refocused UNAMID’s tasks around three priorities that, though rephrased and regrouped several times, remain valid until today:

1. Protecting civilians, monitoring and reporting on human rights, facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance and safety and security of humanitarian personnel;
2. Mediating between the government and non-signatory movements; and
3. Supporting the mediation of community conflict.¹

After seven years of peacekeeping, the government opted for what it called a “counterinsurgency strategy” against the rebels from 2014-2016, which killed thousands of civilians and largely dislodged the rebels from their foothold in Darfur. Though the conflict as such remained unresolved, security conditions improved to the extent that thinking about UNAMID’s exit became possible and the Mission’s “transition” de facto began in 2017. The UN Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the AU Commission introduced a “two-pronged approach” in which the Mission bifurcated its peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities: withdrawing from many areas and concentrating its troops around areas of ongoing conflict. The 2018 transition concept was based on a continuation of the two-pronged approach, a much smaller area of operation for UNAMID’s uniformed component, combined with a steep drawdown of the Mission’s strength and new modes of integration between UNAMID and the UNCT. UNAMID fairly rapidly turned into a much smaller mission with a much slimmer budget.

Two years later in 2019, a popular uprising in Sudan brought about the ousting of long-time ruler Omar al-Bashir, fundamentally altering the political context. Al-Bashir’s fall was followed by a four-month rule by the military, a transitional government, and a new era of government cooperation with UNAMID. By this time, UNAMID was already reduced to 25% of its initial personnel strength and its peacekeeping effort was largely limited to the Jebel Marra area. Despite continued attacks on civilians in Darfur, the UNSC and AUPSC did not fundamentally change the trajectory for UNAMID’s transition, although they did extend its mandate

¹ AU Peace and Security Council communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.(CDXXV) (24 March 2014); UN Security Council Resolution 2148 (S/RES/2148, 2014).

until December 2020 (at the time of writing) and the UNSC mandated a special political mission to support Sudan's transition as of January 2021.

The Juba Agreement creates an ambitious and potentially far-reaching political framework to address the root causes of Sudan's civil wars. It will almost certainly, however, create winners and losers.

The new government also initiated new peace talks with Darfur rebel groups, culminating in the Juba Agreement between the Transitional Government of Sudan, the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) and the SLM-MM in August 2020. This agreement creates an ambitious and potentially far-reaching political framework to address the root causes of Sudan's civil wars. It will almost certainly, however, create winners and losers in the medium term and generate instability in the short term. Crucially, two of the main militarised constituencies in Darfur – rebels led by Abdul Wahid al-Nur, who have a large following in Darfur's IDP camps, and many Arab nomad groups, which have never been represented in any of Darfur's peace processes – are not part of this latest agreement.

These profound changes during UNAMID's tenure make it difficult to assess the Mission's effectiveness in a continuum that stretches from 2007 until today. And while lessons from UNAMID's first decade will be highly relevant to future peacekeeping contexts, it is the experiences from UNAMID's more recent past that are relevant to current policy decisions on completing UNAMID's transition and on future engagement in Sudan. Therefore, we address both in two separate parts: we first provide an assessment of UNAMID's strategic impact for the period 2007-2017 using the EPON methodology, and then focus on early lessons from UNAMID's transition and considerations for the future of UNAMID and the UN's new political mission, UNITAMS.

iii. Framework and methodology

EPON defines effectiveness as “the overall strategic impact of a peace operation, understood as reducing conflict dynamics in the area of operation over a particular period of time, in the context of its mandate and resources.”² Each research report provides a strategic-level assessment that reflects the complexity of the objectives of a peace operation, the environment in which the objectives are pursued, and the means at the disposal of the operation rather than evaluating an operation as if it was an isolated programme. EPON attempts to capture a broad range of factors that affect the ability of the mission to implement its mandate.

Recognising the difficulties of measuring impact in conflict situations, EPON uses a set of qualitative and quantitative methods with the best data available. In developing the analysis, EPON incorporates a range of perspectives, including from communities, civil society, governments in host states, peacekeeping staff in civilian, police and military components, and officials from the UN and regional organisations.

Framework

EPON has developed a common methodological framework and analytical tools to understand the extent to which a mission has made progress on its mandated tasks and the extent to which it has had impact on the ground in terms of security, political processes, and the broader conflict

2 EPON, 2019 Methodological Framework for EPON Case Studies (on file with authors), p. 2.

dynamics. Specifically, this study includes a context and conflict analysis, an assessment of the operation's effects, and it identifies the key explanatory factors.

Applying this framework to UNAMID, EPON has generated five subsidiary lines of inquiry that guided the research in Darfur:

- What are UNAMID's key mandated tasks and strategic objectives?
- What activities has UNAMID undertaken to achieve these objectives?
- What capacities does UNAMID have or lack to achieve its mandate?
- What impact did UNAMID's activities have on the political and security situation in Darfur, and how did these activities influence critical conflict drivers?
- Which factors – external or internal – enabled impact, and which factors hampered or prevented impact?

The EPON methodology takes into account that a mission can be very efficient in fulfilling its mandate while still having only limited impact. Therefore, we differentiate, where appropriate, between congruence (of activities with mandated tasks) and relevance (in terms of impact on conflict dynamics).

Methodology

An interdisciplinary team conducted research on UNAMID between January and July 2020 through desk studies of primary and secondary resources, semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and community consultations. The team spent two weeks in Sudan at the end of January to conduct interviews and consult with stakeholders in Khartoum and different locations in Darfur. Interviews were also conducted with former and current AU and UN officials at the Addis Ababa and New York Headquarters.

Interviews

Altogether, 147 individuals were interviewed and consulted individually or in small groups. In total, 25% of these interviews were with women and 75% were with men. The percentage of interviewees by category is shown in the table below.

Table 1: Interviewee categories

Category	Number of interviewees	Percentage of interviewees
UNAMID personnel (current or former, not including senior leadership)	48	32%
Current or former UNAMID senior leadership	4	3%
Non-mission UN political staff (such as mediation teams, current or former)	4	3%
UN Country Team (current or former)	15	10%
UN Headquarters	7	5%
International NGOs	9	6%
AU representatives	6	4%
Diplomatic community in Sudan	5	3%
Government of Sudan	19	13%
Representatives of rebel movements	4	3%
Sudanese civil society	12	8%
Community members (not including large focus groups)	14	10%

Community consultations and focus groups

In addition to the above interviews, this study reached out to approximately 700 community members in Darfur. This included an additional estimated 200 persons participating in community consultations with the study team in El Geneina (West Darfur) and the Golo area (Jebel Marra). Through cooperation with Dr Musa Ismail of the University of Zalingei, focus groups with an additional 500 individuals (residents and IDPs) in Central Darfur, North Darfur and South Darfur were conducted. The Appendix includes an explanation of the methodology followed and the results from the focus groups conducted with the University of Zalingei.

Obtaining reliable data is always a challenge in conflict contexts, and Darfur provides a stark example of these difficulties. During the al-Bashir regime, the government routinely denied the Mission, humanitarians, journalists, and others access to various areas. The government also applied political pressure to limit and curtail reporting by UNAMID or the UNCT on conflict data. Finally, after years of conflict, many communities are partisan for or against the government, which can colour perceptions. All of these factors make reliable data more difficult to collect compared to in other peace operation contexts. Data in this report is assembled from the best sources and estimates available, including the ACLED dataset.

1. Context analysis: The conflict in Darfur

The Darfur conflict is usually dated from 2003, but a better date might be 2001, when members of the Fur and Zaghawa ethnic groups, frustrated by repeated raids from pastoralist groups and perceiving the government to be aligned against them, formed a quiet alliance and made contact with the neighbouring Masalit.³ Leaders from these three groups became the core of the two Darfur rebel movements that emerged in 2003: the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), a confederation of Fur, and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM).

The heart of the Darfur rebels' stated political goals is greater economic and political representation for Darfuris in the state. This narrative of marginalisation was summed up in a publication allegedly authored by members of JEM called the *Black Book: Imbalance of Power and Wealth in Sudan*, which circulated among Darfuris in 2000. It described how power in Sudan – political, economic and judicial – was held by a small group coming from three ethnically defined social groups along the Nile. Despite having been one of the most powerful independent sultanates of the Sahel for more than 200 years, Darfur was now one of the poorest places in the world by many measures.

The imbalance between the centre (Khartoum) and the periphery (Darfur) formed a weak foundation that would not bear the weight of a series of additional destabilising factors. Decreased rainfall and increased population growth in Darfur since the 1970s led to greater competition

3 Julie Flint and Alex de Waal, *Darfur: A New History of a Long War* (Kindle Edition, Zed Books, 2008), loc 1461.

over resources. Ethnic identities – “Arab” and “African”, though these labels are complex, as discussed below – had taken on greater prominence, exacerbating tensions. After years of war between Chad and Libya on Darfur’s borders, the region had become militarised, with weapons increasingly available. Khartoum had also governed Darfur the same way it had most of its periphery – with austerity in the best of times and with cruelty in the worst – but it also took a series of decisions to privilege the interests of “Arabs” in Darfur in ways that threatened “African” groups enough for them to take up arms. Each of these factors contributed to the outbreak of conflict, but the harshness of the government response then sparked such condemnation from the AU, UN, US and other actors that the cost of satisfying fighters on the ground rose remarkably. In addition, these factors remain unaddressed and continue to fuel instability in Darfur today.

The politics of the periphery

Darfur’s vast expanse supports a range of livelihoods, from the arid and underpopulated north to the central highlands and the southern clay and sandy goz soil. As in much of the Sahel, Darfur’s people depend on a combination of farming and pastoralism, though some communities lean heavily towards one or the other. This mix of livelihoods and communities has given rise to a set of ethnic communities and identities that are commonly referred to as “Arab pastoralists” or “African farmers”, but these labels oversimplify a much more complex reality. Many camel pastoralists in the north and many cattle pastoralists in the south do not speak any of Darfur’s Nilo-Saharan languages, but only Arabic. Their origin-stories invoke Arab lineages from Andalusia or the Arabian Gulf, their histories involve Arab migration, and their social groups have Arabic names: Baggara (cattle-herders) and Abbala (camel-herders). In contrast, many (but not all) speakers of Nilo-Saharan languages are associated with farming livelihoods and cultures. The Fur, Masalit, Birgid and Berti cultures and languages are all associated with farming.

Darfur’s mix of livelihoods and communities has given rise to a set of ethnic communities and identities that are commonly referred to as “Arab pastoralists” or “African farmers”, but these labels oversimplify a much more complex reality.

These associations between language, culture and livelihood are loose, however. Zaghawa speakers, for instance, are frequently categorised as an “African” group, but they were mostly pastoralists and traders until twentieth-century droughts pushed many of them towards farming. The Berti community, also generally categorised as “African”, has their own language, but it is nearly extinct, and most of the Berti people speak Arabic. Similarly, some communities that

self-identify as “Arab” have long engaged in farming, and others have increased farming activity in recent decades.⁴

Despite the fluidity of Darfuri identities over the years, these cultural differences sometimes acquired ideological force. The pre-colonial Darfur sultanate was ruled by a Fur-speaking aristocracy and a system of feudal agricultural estates (“hakura”). The arid north and muddy south, where the Arabic-speaking pastoralists lived, were at the edge of state power. During the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (1899-1956), however, British colonialists used their racial theories to classify and rank Sudan’s diverse cultures, privileging Arab identifiers.⁵ During Libya’s military ventures in the Sahel in the 1970s and 1980s, Arab culture was used to mobilise support.

Questions of ethnicity also became enmeshed with questions of land and political power. Under the Darfur sultanate, holders of feudal land titles accommodated a variety of ethnic groups, and very few areas were ethnically homogenous.⁶ Over time, however, this pre-colonial period has been simplified and idealised by some communities – including the rebels that negotiated the DPA – who view an ethnic “homeland” within Darfur as either a stolen entitlement or an undelivered promise.⁷ Pastoralist communities in particular, such as the Zaghawa, Abbala and Baggara, held few recognised land claims because they lived on the frontiers of the Darfur sultanate. The gap between Sudanese state law, which views most land in Darfur as unregistered, and traditional land claims, which view most land as having a clear authority with whom to negotiate access, has also created confusion and competing claims.⁸ As Jérôme Tubiana notes, modern land disputes in Darfur involve distinct questions of access to resources, such as water and pasture, and the symbolic mark of prestige, leadership, and political power that has been conferred in control over land. Both of these factors have been key elements in the conflict.⁹

The changing climate in the Sahel and broader demographic trends put significant strain on the land and resources. Darfur experienced a “structural break” in climate patterns around 1970, with average annual rainfall in El Fasher falling approximately 30% between the periods 1920-1970 and 1970-2002.¹⁰ At the same time, the population in Darfur (as in many parts of the

4 Jérôme Tubiana, ‘The War in the West’, in John Ryle, Justin Willis, Suliman Baldo, and Jok Madut Jok (eds), *The Sudan Handbook* (Digital Edition, London, Rift Valley Institute, 2012), pp. 229-232 (Rift Valley).

5 Flint and de Waal, 2008, loc 324.

6 Sean O’Fahey, ‘Ethnicity, Land, Legitimacy: A Review of “War in Darfur and the Search for Peace”’ (African Arguments, 17 March 2008), <africanarguments.org/2008/03/17/ethnicity-land-legitimacy-a-review-of-war-in-darfur-and-the-search-for-peace>.

7 Ibid; Tubiana, ‘The War in the West’, 2012, pp. 229-232. As Tubiana notes, this can be considered a conflation of the “hakura” system with the “Dar” system, the latter having some precedent for a stronger ethnic character, though as noted the Dar of the Fur people (Darfur) was always ethnically diverse.

8 John D Unruh, ‘Indigenous land rights and conflict in Darfur: The case of the Fur tribe’, in Alan C. Tidwell and Barry Scott Zellen (eds), *Land, Indigenous Peoples and Conflict* (Routledge, 2016), p. 9 (author’s pre-publication version).

9 Tubiana, ‘The War in the West’, 2012, p. 232.

10 Michael Kevane and Leslie Gray, ‘Darfur: Rainfall and conflict,’ *Environmental Research Letters* 9 034006 (2008) 3(3): 4-6. Kevane and Gray state that the consistent rainfall average from 1970-2002 argues against a relationship between climate change and the outbreak of conflict in Darfur in 2003. They buttress this argument with comparisons with other African countries that experienced a similar “structural break” in rainfall with no apparent conflict consequences. This

developing world) rose remarkably, from 1.5 million people in 1956 to more than six million today (a 400% increase).¹¹ This put pressure on livelihoods, particularly pastoralists in north Darfur, such as the Zaghawa and Abbala. These groups began moving farther south and in greater numbers. Prior to this, Darfur had often faced years of low rainfall, and the customary conflict resolution mechanisms had generally dealt with the demands on resources. This new and sustained influx was different, however. Communities that held traditional feudal titles became nervous due to the high number of migrants arriving and how long they seemed to stay. The arriving nomads, meanwhile, were concerned about access to land and, without any claims under the hakura system, they turned to other forums, including state courts.¹² This created increased rivalry between communities with increased violent conflict, as dispute resolution mechanisms became less effective and “Arab” and “African” identities took on increasing resonance.

Darfur experienced a “structural break” in climate patterns around 1970, with average annual rainfall falling 30%. At the same time, the population in Darfur rose remarkably.

By the early 1980s, Darfur was under greater stress but may not have experienced serious conflict without the influence of neighbouring actors in Libya and Chad. Conflict between the two latter countries, primarily through the support of proxies and involving a civil war within Chad itself (1979-1982), had been ongoing since the late 1960s, and the western regions of Darfur frequently felt the effects. Darfur became a rear-base for militias, which often recruited from among Darfur’s pastoralist groups. Defeated in Chad, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi’s proxy (Conseil Démocratique Révolutionnaire, “CDR”) created camps in Darfur, recruiting and arming local “Arab” pastoralists as fighters, while Chadian president Hissène Habré armed Zaghawa and Fur communities.¹³ During this time, Abbala militias formed under the future indictee of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Musa Hilal. The Abbala militias were given the moniker “janjaweed”, the first time this label was applied to ethnic militia rather than armed bandits.¹⁴

report does not argue that rainfall changes alone are sufficient to explain the Darfur conflict but, as set out in this section, the change in climate created pressure on livelihoods that resulted in increased tensions.

11 Tubiana, ‘The War in the West’, 2012, p. 234.

12 Unruh, 2016, pp. 10-11.

13 Flint and de Waal, 2008, loc 978-989.

14 Ibid, loc 1001. It should also be noted that at certain points in the Darfur conflict, notably 2008-2010, the government mobilised non-Arab militias to fight the rebels and communities perceived to support the rebels.

The politics of the centre

Darfur's marginalisation preceded the regime of former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, but the politics and economics of his administration are inextricably linked to the evolution of the conflict. Al-Bashir, a young army officer, came to power following the economic collapse under his predecessor, the democratically elected Sadiq al-Mahdi, and with the financial and ideological backing of the Sudanese Islamist Hassan al-Turabi.¹⁵ Al-Turabi's network of Islamic financial institutions supported al-Bashir's rise, but his ideology soon brought trouble for the new president. The US placed Sudan on the state-sponsors of terrorism list in 1993, followed by economic sanctions in 1997, for harbouring the likes of Osama bin Laden and members of other groups the US deemed terrorists. Some of these individuals were connected to actual or planned terrorist attacks.¹⁶ Al-Turabi also allegedly supported a botched assassination attempt of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, marginalising Sudan from much of the Arab world.

Cut off from much of global trade and burdened by international debt, the regime sought efficiencies. One of these was to govern on the cheap, investing almost nothing in development outside of Khartoum and, using the blueprint of the British, leaving local matters in the hands of Native Administrations (traditional authorities provided with semi-official status).¹⁷ A second, more insidious efficiency was the militia strategy: relying on irregular or paramilitary groups, often recruited from pastoralists who had long lived at the margins of society, to undertake roles that another government might offer to the police or military.¹⁸ Al-Bashir did not invent this militia strategy – previous Sudanese regimes and the British colonial power had utilised pastoralist militias in the same way to fight adversaries in Darfur and South Sudan – but it became a centrepiece of his approach to the Darfur conflict.

Al-Bashir did not invent this militia strategy but it became a centrepiece of his approach to the Darfur conflict.

The militia strategy was cheaper from the perspective of economic as well as moral investment. The political culture of Khartoum's elite had long been insular and, while the elite treated one another with politesse even when faced with treason, Sudanese people on the countries' peripheries were shown no quarter.¹⁹ The militia strategy was also important because it protected the regime. Even though al-Bashir commanded the military and al-Turabi had worked to install Islamist loyalists in its secular ranks, any institution that accrued too much power

15 Alex de Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, Politics and the Business of Power* (Kindle Edition, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2015), loc 2092.

16 Preeti Bhattacharji, 'State Sponsors: Sudan' (Council on Foreign Relations, 2 April 2008), <cfr.org/backgroundunder/state-sponsors-sudan>.

17 De Waal, 2015, loc 2188.

18 Ibid, loc 2140.

19 Ibid, loc 2240, 2251.

could pose a threat. In the almost three decades of al-Bashir's rule, he formed or strengthened a constellation of paramilitary organisations. Some of these organisations had full state authority, such as the National Intelligence and Security Service; others had semi-official status, such as the Popular Defence Forces; and others received government advice, arms and support, but remained outside the formal chain of command, such as the *murahaleen* (Baggara militias that raided communities in south Sudan during the civil war).

The use of militias was a logical step to keep costs down, but they had a self-reinforcing impact in Darfur. The Sudanese military was only beginning to recover from the purges of its experienced officers and lacked experience in desert warfare when the Darfur rebellion began in 2003.²⁰ The early SLA and JEM victories over the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) only raised the government's reliance on *janjaweed* militias and the Arab communities that made up these forces. This, in turn, increased the cost of the communities' loyalty.

The al-Bashir/al-Turabi partnership ended acrimoniously in 1999, but al-Turabi remained an influential player in Sudanese affairs, including in Darfur. Al-Turabi had long recognised that youths from rural areas might hold his Islamic ideals most fervently and he cultivated Darfuri protégés, including Darfuri from African tribes. One set of protégés would go on to found the JEM and author the *Black Book* that set out the rebels' political grievances.²¹

The politics of violence

The politics of the centre and the politics of the periphery converged in Darfur during the late 1990s with violent results. Seeking to shore up political allies in West Darfur, the al-Bashir regime appointed Arab "Amirs" (a title of customary authority) in the traditional Masalit homeland ("Dar"), suggesting a parity of land rights with the Masalit.²² Arab groups, long frustrated at having little land of their own and perceiving government support, became aggressive, with talk of Arab supremacy increasingly common. Enmity with the Masalit ensued and violence followed, with skirmishes of increasing intensity from the mid-1990s to what became known as the Masalit war in 1999.²³ Fur leaders like Abdel Wahid al-Nur and members of the Zaghawa tribe took notice of the organised and well-armed Arab militias and, perceiving no protection from the government, began organising in their respective communities. The SLA and JEM formed soon after, seeking training, weapons and funding and beginning a small but escalating series of attacks by 2003.

20 Flint and de Waal, 2008, loc 2083-2074.

21 Ibid, loc 402.

22 Ibid, loc 1046.

23 Ibid.

The government response – supporting militias that burned villages, raped women and killed civilians – shocked the conscience of many around the world. As Alex de Waal writes, “[t]he logic of the massacre was habit, blunder and escalation.”²⁴ The “habit” de Waal refers to was the Sudanese militia strategy whereby the government armed pastoralists – the janjaweed – to fight where their own troops could not and to take the land and loot of civilian population as payment. The perception that JEM was a proxy for al-Turabi and his Islamists also pushed Khartoum towards a heavy-handed response. As in southern Sudan, Darfur became an “ethics-free zone” for the militias.²⁵ This transformed the Darfur conflict from another round of low-scale fighting (as experienced during the 1990s) into the situation of mass displacement and suffering that caught the world’s attention. The “blunder” came in the form of the government’s military misjudgement of the rebel’s capacity and its political miscalculation of the price of a peaceful resolution. Despite all of the foregoing factors, it is very possible that more attention and a bit of investment early on could have either bought off the rebel leaders or diminished their support.

The “escalation” of the conflict arose not only from the government response but also from the attention of the international community. Many countries around the world, particularly in the west, took notice of Darfur faster and with greater interest than in any of Sudan’s other conflicts, perhaps more than any of Africa’s conflicts until that time. In a year that marked the tenth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, comparison between the two situations was frequent, including by the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan.²⁶ In the US, a large advocacy campaign focused on Darfur during an election year, leading the country’s lower legislative house and Secretary of State to declare the situation in Darfur as “genocide.”²⁷ There was also a sense among some UN officials who worked on Darfur at the time that the US was eager to shift attention from its controversial 2003 invasion of Iraq with an issue couched more squarely in human rights concerns. All of these factors led to numerous calls for an international military intervention.²⁸

The apparent support from the international community effectively raised the political price that the rebels demanded from the government. Two of the three main rebel leaders, Abdul Wahid and Khalil Ibrahim, rejected the government’s offer in the 2006 DPA, a move that many observers now view as misguided.²⁹ After the DPA, the cost of satisfying the rebels became extremely high. As the cycle of negotiations continued, the rebels’ political goals, seemingly so concrete in 2003, became less tangible as peace conferences became forums for bargaining over government positions, and rebel splinter groups fought on the ground in Darfur to win a seat at the negotiating table in whichever international hotel would host the next round of discussions.

24 De Waal, 2015, loc 1867.

25 Ibid.

26 BBC News, ‘Mass rape atrocity in Western Sudan’ (BBC News, 19 March 2004), <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3549325.stm>>.

27 H.Con.Res.467 – 108th Congress (2003-2004), <<https://www.congress.gov/bill/108th-congress/house-concurrent-resolution/467>>.

28 Flint and de Waal, 2008, loc 3165.

29 See, for example, de Waal, 2015, loc 1879.

The militia strategy became more expensive as well. While the janjaweed were initially paid in land and spoils, by 2010, most of the land had been claimed and the resources were depleted. The pastoralists began demanding more, fighting one another and the government to show their value. Khartoum eventually empowered an Abbala leader, Mohammed Hamdan “Hemedti” Daglo, as commander of a more formalised janjaweed paramilitary, the RSF. Hemedti’s loyalty was secured by allowing him to extract value from Darfur’s gold mines, a valuable commodity in a country where the official inflation level has skyrocketed from 20% in 2016 to 140% in 2020.³⁰

Many of the causes and drivers of conflict have not been addressed and Darfur today remains a violent place. Key issues around land rights for pastoralists and settled communities remain largely unaddressed. Darfur’s 1.6 million IDPs remain vulnerable, with few clear plans for durable solutions.

As discussed further in the final sections of this report, the only currently active rebel force in the Jebel Marra is a faction of the SLA led by Abdul Wahid al-Nur (SLA-AW), while JEM and the SLA faction led by Minni Minawi (SLA-MM) endorsed the Juba Agreement with the government in August 2020. Many of the causes and drivers of conflict, however, have not been addressed and Darfur today remains a violent place. More than 200 civilians were killed between September 2019 and September 2020 in patterns of violence that have changed little in the past 17 years.³¹ Key issues around land rights for pastoralists and settled communities remain largely unaddressed. Darfur’s 1.6 million IDPs remain vulnerable, with few clear plans for durable solutions.³² The dominant military-security actor, the RSF, is primarily made up of the conflict’s “victors”, who appear to have continued economic interest in maintaining significant political influence in Darfur, regardless of a changed regime in Khartoum.

30 ‘Sudan Inflation Rate’ (*Trading Economics*), <tradingeconomics.com/sudan/inflation-cpi>.

31 Analysis of ACLED data on violence against civilians, <acleddata.com/data-export-tool>.

32 Catherine Wachiaya, ‘Sudan’s internally displaced yearn for peace to return home’ (Geneva, UNHCR, 4 May 2020), <unhcr.org/news/stories/2020/5/5ea866564/sudans-internally-displaced-yearn-real-peace-home>.

Table 2: Timeline of political process and events in Sudan, 2003-2020

Year	Events
2003	Start of the Darfur conflict (significant attacks begin, although rebel groups began mobilising from 2001)
2004	Agreement on Humanitarian Ceasefire on the Conflict in Darfur between the Government of Sudan (GoS), SLA and JEM AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS) deployed
2005	Situation in Darfur referred to the ICC (S/RES/1593)
2006	5 May: Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) signed by GoS and SLA-MM Jan Eliasson (UN) and Salim Ahmed Salim (AU) lead the AU-UN Joint Mediation Support Team (JMST)
2007	UNAMID is established on 31 July 2007, taking over from AMIS on 31 December 2007
2008	JEM attacks Omdurman. GoS rules out talks with JEM and cuts diplomatic ties with Chad Eliasson and Salim resign. Djibril Yipènè Bassolé appointed as Joint Chief Mediator for Darfur Creation of AU High-Level Panel on Darfur (AUPD), reconstituted as the AU High-level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) in 2009 GoS launches the Sudan People's Forum
2009	Doha Process: negotiations between GoS and JEM commence under the auspices of Bassole and the State of Qatar First ICC arrest warrant for al-Bashir issued on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity
2010	Creation of the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM), a new movement led by Eltigani Seisi Mohamed Ateem National Elections: The National Congress Party (NCP) wins 73 out of 86 National Assembly seats allocated to Darfur; nine Darfuris appointed to cabinet
2011	South Sudan secedes after a peaceful referendum Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) signed by the GoS and LJM Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) formed by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) and Darfuri rebel movements
2012	UNAMID Joint Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the UN Secretary-General (JSR) takes the lead in the mediation process (until 2014)
2013	Levels of intercommunal and government-rebel violence spike

Year	Events
2014	<p>UNAMID Review: AUPSC and UNSC refine UNAMID's strategic priorities</p> <p>President al-Bashir announces an all-inclusive national dialogue</p> <p>AUHIP takes the lead in the mediation process</p> <p>Operation Decisive Summer (I)</p>
2015	<p>Operation Decisive Summer (II)</p> <p>GoS commences National Dialogue</p>
2016	<p>GoS conducts "counterinsurgency campaign" in Jebel Marra</p> <p>GoS holds a referendum on the administrative status of Darfur, ends Transitional Darfur Regional Administration</p>
2017	<p>Two-pronged approach for UNAMID: peacekeeping in Jebel Marra, and peacebuilding in the rest of Darfur</p>
2018	<p>Popular protests begin. President al-Bashir declares year-long state of emergency in response</p> <p>Security Council approves transition concept taking note of the 2020 exit date</p>
2019	<p>President al-Bashir is ousted by the military. Transitional Military Council (TMC) takes power</p> <p>Constitutional Declaration: TMC and civilian protest movement agree on the establishment of a transitional government and power-sharing during a transitional period to conclude with general elections after 39 months</p> <p>Inauguration of Sovereign Council and Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok</p> <p>Negotiations with rebel movements from different parts of Sudan, including Darfur, commence in Juba</p>
2020	<p>Security Council extends UNAMID until the end of 2020 and mandates the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS)</p> <p>Juba Agreement initialled by the GoS, SRF, and SLA-MM in August. SLA-AW has not joined the process/agreement</p>

Figure 2: Deployment of UNAMID uniformed personnel over time

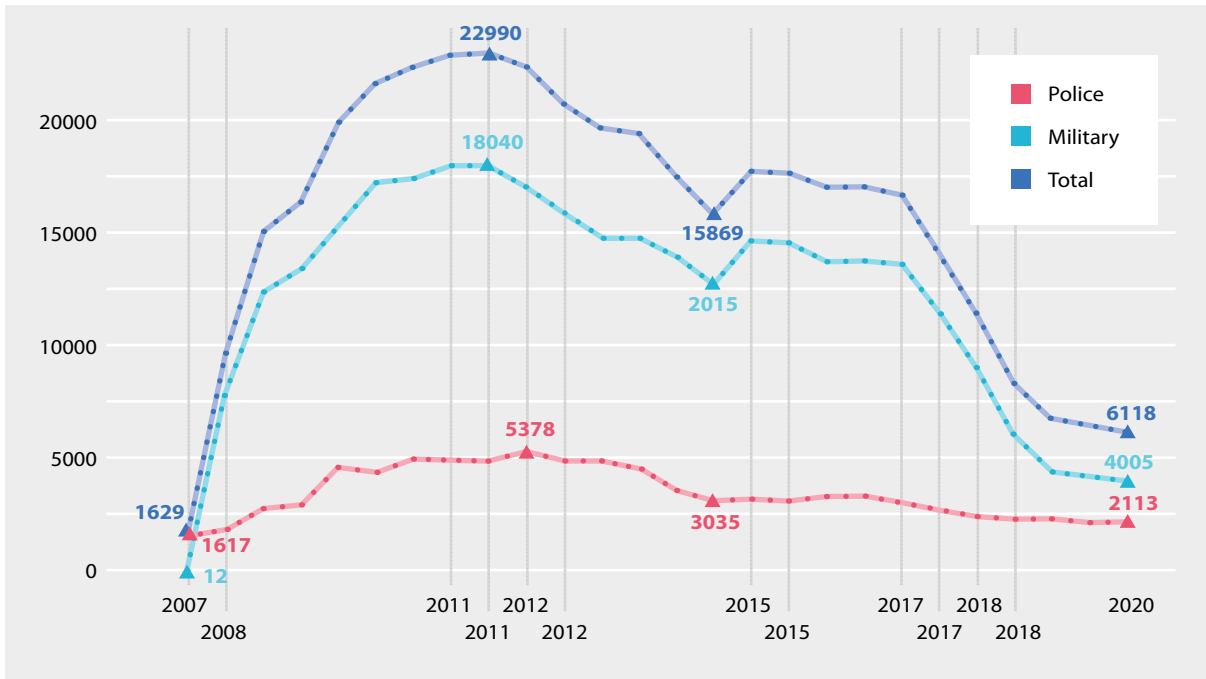


Table 3: Changes in troop and police ceilings, 2007-2020

Resolution, date, and timeframe for reductions	Military	Police	Formed Police Units (FPUs)
S/RES/1769, 31 July 2007	19,555	3,772	19 (of max. 140 each)
S/RES/2063, 31 July 2012 (within 12-18 months)	16,200	2,310	17 (of max. 140 each)
S/RES/2173, 27 August 2014	15,845	1,583	13 (of max. 140 each)
S/RES/2363, 29 June 2017 (Phase 1: within six months)	11,395	2,888 (including FPUs)	
(Phase 2: 31 January-20 June 2018)	8,735	2,500 (including FPUs)	
S/RES/2429, 13 July 2018	4,050	2,500 (including FPUs)	

2. Evolution of the mission: 2004-2017

The early political frameworks

The political process and peacekeeping efforts to settle the Darfur conflict started long before UNAMID deployed. By March 2004, talks in Ndjamená under the auspices of Chad and the AU led to the Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement (Ndjamena Agreement),³³ and a follow-up agreement on the modalities for ceasefire monitoring (2004 Addis Ababa Agreement). The 2004 Addis Ababa Agreement established a monitoring mission, the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS), as the operational arm of the ceasefire commission.³⁴

The talks that began in 2004 led to the DPA in May 2006, a more comprehensive document in the model of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M)³⁵. In a presage of future Darfur peace processes, however, negotiations around the DPA dragged on for years, pushing mediators to

33 Humanitarian Cease Fire Agreement on the Conflict in Darfur (Ndjamena, 2 April 2004), <<https://peacemaker.un.org/sudan-darfur-humanitarian2004>>.

34 Agreement with the Sudanese Parties on the Modalities for the Establishment of the Ceasefire Commission and the Deployment of Observers in the Darfur (Addis Ababa, 28 May 2004), <<https://peacemaker.un.org/sudan-darfur-ceasefire-commission2004>>.

35 Jean-Marie Guéhenno, *The Fog of Peace* (Kindle Edition, Washington, DC, Brookings Institution Press, 2015), loc 3884.

speed up the process and pressure the rebels to accept compromises. Divisions over the DPA process emerged within the SLA, which split in 2006 into a faction under Abdul Wahid (SLA-AW), a Fur leader who pressed for greater political representation, and a faction under Minni Minawi (SLA-MM), who at the time led the most significant rebel military presence.³⁶ Minawi ultimately signed the DPA, taking a position in the Khartoum government, while Abdul Wahid and JEM refused, leaving the DPA broad in scope but narrow in acceptance.³⁷

Minawi ultimately signed the DPA, while Abdul Wahid and JEM refused, leaving the DPA broad in scope but narrow in acceptance.

The DPA included important elements for a sustainable peace, including disarmament of the irregular janjaweed forces; integration of rebel fighters into the Sudanese Armed Forces; the establishment of a Darfur Regional Authority; the holding of a referendum on the administrative status of Darfur; and representation of Darfuris (nationally and locally) in government and other institutions. Unfortunately, the DPA left out key details, such as a definition for the term “janjaweed” or “armed militia”. The DPA may also have overestimated the potential of international guarantors to ensure implementation of some of the agreement’s most difficult elements.³⁸ The negotiations also failed to include the voices of civil society or to give Darfur Arabs, particularly the “landless” Abbala tribes, any representation.

It should be remembered that negotiations for the DPA began during the historic peace process between the Government of Sudan and the SPLA/M, when the framework for a democratic “New Sudan” embodied in the CPA appeared to offer real hope of transformative change in the country. At the same time, the ongoing CPA negotiations increased pressure to deliver on Darfur. As Alex de Waal writes about the DPA negotiations, “the sheer scale of the violence in Darfur, the depths of the humanitarian crisis, and the way in which the Darfur conflict was holding up the implementation of the CPA and thereby poisoning the very chances of democracy throughout Sudan, meant that the AU and its international partners decided they had to move more quickly.”³⁹

36 International Crisis Group, ‘Darfur’s Fragile Peace Agreement’ (Washington, DC, International Crisis Group, 20 June 2006), p. 1, <<https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/darfurs-fragile-peace-agreement>>.

37 Guéhenno, 2015, loc 3928.

38 As Alex de Waal writes, “Therefore no-one should be surprised that the main criticism of the DPA is ‘how can this be implemented given that the two sides don’t trust each other?’ It is a fair point. The answer lies in looking at the mechanisms for monitoring and verification in the text of the DPA, and the international engagement and international guarantees provided, outside the DPA, by the United States, the UN and other international partners.” In retrospect, it is clear that these guarantors were insufficient. See Alex de Waal, ‘Guarantees for the DPA’ (All Africa, 14 July 2006), <allafrica.com/stories/200607140757.html>.

39 Ibid.

From AMIS to UNAMID: Consent and discontent

AMIS deployed in mid-2004 and was expanded from a small observer mission to a larger operation by October that year. The violence in Darfur arose at a critical time for the AU, which had only been established four years earlier as a reconfiguration of the Organization for African Unity (OAU). One of the most significant differences between the OAU and the AU was the latter's emphasis on human rights. With the Rwandan genocide still in recent memory, the AU's Constitutive Act provided a basis for collective intervention to stop war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity.⁴⁰ These principles weighed heavily on the minds of the AU officials wrestling with the Darfur conflict.

On the ground and in the face of continued violence, AMIS struggled with limitations in terms of its resources, capacities and mandate.

On the ground and in the face of continued violence, AMIS struggled with limitations in terms of its resources, capacities and mandate. AMIS was only the second AU peace operation, and the organisation's planning and logistical capacity was not prepared for a challenge on the scale of Darfur.⁴¹ As one former AMIS staff member said, "AMIS was never planned; it just happened."⁴² After the DPA, the conflict became more fragmented as the armed opposition groups splintered and new ones emerged.⁴³ Furthermore, with the DPA lacking agreement from major rebel groups and opposed by many IDPs, AMIS encountered an increasingly hostile environment.⁴⁴ In September 2007, non-signatory rebel forces attacked an AMIS base at Haskanita, killing ten peacekeepers.⁴⁵ Some Darfur Arab leaders also viewed the DPA as a betrayal by the government, with two prominent janjaweed leaders, Musa Hilal and Mohammed "Hemedti" Daglo, declaring short-lived mutinies and less organised Arab groups engaging in looting and banditry.⁴⁶

40 See Ben Kioko, 'The right of intervention under the African Union's Constitutive Act: From non-interference to non-intervention,' *International Review of the Red Cross* (2003) 85(852): 807-824.

41 AMIS was preceded by the AU Mission in Burundi (AMIB) in 2003.

42 Quoting unnamed AMIS official, in Ekengard, p. 18, citing Catherine Guicherd, 'The AU in Sudan: Lessons Learned for an African Standby Force' (New York, International Peace Academy, March 2007), p. 4.

43 For a detailed account and analysis, see Victor Tanner and Jerome Tubiana, 'Divided They Fall, The Fragmentation of Darfur's Rebel Groups' (Geneva, Small Arms Survey, 6, July 2007), <smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/working-papers/HSBA-WP-06-Darfur-rebels.pdf>.

44 Ekengard, 2007, p. 18.

45 AMIS, 'Investigation report of the attack on MGS Haskanita on 29/30 Sep 07 by armed faction to the Darfur conflict' (AMIS/FHQ/INTSY/G/002, 9 October 2007), <africa-confidential.com/uploads/documents/AU_Haskanita_report.pdf>.

46 Julie Flint, 'Beyond Janjaweed' (Geneva, Small Arms Survey, 2009).

Many of the EPON team's interlocutors felt that AMIS worked more effectively in its first configuration as a small ceasefire observer mission, with problems mounting as its troop strength increased and the expectations for robust action rose. Similarly, a number of former UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) staff who worked in Darfur in close collaboration with AMIS recalled that the AU Mission had more access and better relations than the heavy hybrid presence that followed.

Attention on Darfur only mounted, however, with influential Security Council members, such as the US, increasingly dissatisfied with the capacity of AMIS to protect civilians, and thinking turned towards transforming AMIS into a UN operation. In 2005, less than a year into the AMIS mandate and before a UN peacekeeping mission was on the ground, the Security Council referred the situation in Darfur to the ICC.⁴⁷ While many human rights advocates viewed an investigation by the ICC, an ostensibly impartial and apolitical body, as an important step, the referral from the UNSC immediately politicised the process in Khartoum's eyes. The US and the UK, in particular, began pressing for UN peacekeepers.⁴⁸ Even though the AU was ready to handover its mission in Darfur to the UN,⁴⁹ blue helmets were a non-starter for Omar al-Bashir's government, which had concerns about a UN mission serving as a Trojan horse for international intervention. The Sudanese government had questioned western intentions at least as early as the 2003 US-backed invasion of Iraq, another Muslim-majority country, over alleged violations of international law.

With an authorised strength of more than 25,000 troops and police, UNAMID was the largest peacekeeping operation at the time and the only one led jointly by the AU and the UN.

The US and like-minded states nevertheless pressed ahead and the UNSC passed a resolution in August 2006, expanding the mandate of UNMIS to cover Darfur and the implementation of the DPA.⁵⁰ In the resolution, the UNSC "invited" the consent of the Government of Sudan, but this consent was not forthcoming, and the UNSC was forced to backtrack. Further, the lengthy negotiations led to agreement on a three-phased process consisting of a "light support package" and a "heavy support package" to AMIS, and then, finally, to an AU-UN hybrid mission. The UNSC and the AUPSC mandated UNAMID in mid-2007.⁵¹ Though neither the principal ideas behind the mandate nor the al-Bashir regime's basic objections had changed, pressure from western powers and the AU, along with support from China, convinced the government

47 Security Council Resolution 1593 (S/RES/1593, 2005). The vote was 11 in favour with four abstentions by the US, China, Algeria, and Brazil.

48 Guéhenno, 2015, loc 3798, 3958.

49 Ibid, loc 3972.

50 See Security Council Resolution 1706 (S/RES/1706, 2006).

51 Security Council Resolution 1769 (S/RES/1769, 2007); AU Peace and Security Council communiqué PSC/PR/Comm(LXIX) (2007).

to offer its formal consent. With an authorised strength of more than 25,000 troops and police, UNAMID was the largest peacekeeping operation at the time and the only one led jointly by the AU and the UN.

UNAMID's initial mandate

UNAMID's initial mandate in Security Council Resolution 1769 included a range of mandated tasks, reflecting the breadth of the DPA's ambitions:

1. Monitoring ceasefire agreements and assisting with the implementation of the DPA;
2. Assisting in the political process and supporting the joint mediation efforts;
3. Contributing to the protection of civilians;
4. Contributing to the restoration of security conditions and the provision of humanitarian assistance and access;
5. Contributing to the promotion of human rights;
6. Assisting in the promotion of the rule of law; and
7. Monitoring and reporting on the situation on the border with Chad.

Over the course of the Mission, the mandate was adapted several times. While certain tasks were discontinued or transferred to the UN Country Team (UNCT), those centred around the protection of civilians, humanitarian access, and human rights remained in focus throughout, as did support to the political process.

UNAMID formally took over from AMIS on 31 December 2007. From day one, UNAMID suffered from the lack of a viable peace agreement and a lack of cooperation from the Sudanese government. These challenges were immediately evident and reflected in a drawn-out deployment process that lasted more than two years.⁵² Deploying peace operations is often a challenging and relatively slow process, but every step of UNAMID's deployment had the additional burden of being negotiated within a Tripartite Committee between the UN, AU and Government of Sudan. Even where agreement seemed to be reached, the government became an expert in the art of subtle obstruction.⁵³ Visas for staff members were delayed or never granted, and routine supplies spent weeks or months sitting at customs. The government also demanded a mission "of

52 See Reports of the Secretary-General on the deployment of UNAMID from 2007-2009, UN document numbers: S/2007/517, S/2007/596, S/2007/653, S/2008/98, S/2008/249, S/2008/267, S/2008/304, S/2008/400, S/2008/443, S/2008/485, S/2008/558, S/2008/659, S/2008/781, S/2998/83, S/2009/201, S/2009/297, S/2009/352.

53 Ian Johnstone aptly called this "death by a thousand cuts" in 'Managing Consent in Contemporary Peacekeeping Operations,' *International Peacekeeping* (2011) 18(2): 168-182, p. 177.

a predominantly African character”, including African peacekeepers, making force generation more challenging and preventing the deployment of specialised units from other countries.⁵⁴

From day one, UNAMID suffered from the lack of a viable peace agreement and a lack of cooperation from the Sudanese government.

Darfur also proved to be a very difficult operating environment in terms of security. One week after taking over authority from AMIS, UNAMID faced its first armed attack. For six consecutive years (2008-2013), UNAMID would have the highest number of fatalities caused by malicious acts among all UN peacekeeping missions. With a total of 278 fatalities from 2007-2020, it is – at the time of writing – the second-deadliest UN peacekeeping mission in the history of the UN (after the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which has been deployed for over 40 years).

Challenges in deploying the Mission overshadowed political issues, as former Head of the Department for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, notes: “more than three years after the concept of a hybrid mission had been first discussed, the mission would still be struggling to find the capacities that had been identified as a prerequisite to a successful deployment. During those three years, the deployment of a force became a goal in itself, and the technical issues of troops and capabilities overshadowed the more strategic question of what should be the foundations of peace in Darfur and the whole of Sudan.”⁵⁵ By mid-2008, before UNAMID had reached full operational capacity, the two rebel groups that had announced themselves five years earlier had splintered into about two dozen factions.⁵⁶

The mediation

In December 2006, Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed Jan Eliasson as special envoy to complement the AU mediator Salim Ahmed Salim, establishing a Joint Mediation Support Team (JMST) which continued to organise rounds of talks. Little political progress was made, however, and Eliasson and Salim both resigned in frustration in June 2008. A few weeks later,

54 A “predominantly African character” for UNAMID was part of the Addis Ababa Agreement that paved the way for the deployment of a hybrid mission and was referenced in the preamble of Security Council Resolution 1769 (S/RES/1769, 2007), preambular para. 7: “Recalling the Addis Ababa Agreement that the Hybrid operation should have a predominantly African character and the troops should, as far as possible, be sourced from African countries.”

55 Guéhenno, 2015, loc 4195. For a more in depth analysis of the development of a political strategy during UNAMID’s early years, see Adam Day, ‘Peacekeeping without a partner: A review of UNAMID’s political strategy in Darfur’, in Adam Day, Aditi Gorur, Victoria K. Holt and Charles T. Hunt (eds), *The Political Practice of Peacekeeping: How Strategies for Peace Operations are Developed and Implemented* (New York, UN University, 2020), pp. 44-63 (46-50).

56 See Human Rights Watch, ‘Failing Darfur’ (New York, Human Rights Watch, 2008), <hrw.org/legacy/features/darfur/fiveyearson/qanda.html>.

the UN Secretary-General and AU Chairperson appointed a single Joint Chief Mediator, Djibril Yipene Bassolé, to represent both organisations as head of the JMST.

The following month, in July 2008, political dynamics were further complicated when the ICC Prosecutor submitted an application for an arrest warrant for President al-Bashir. This seemed to confirm the government's worst fears while simultaneously unnerving numerous African leaders. One week after the ICC indictment application, the AUPSC created the AU High-Level Panel on Darfur (AUPD) chaired by former South African president Thabo Mbeki.⁵⁷ The AUPSC renamed the AUPD the AU High-level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) in October 2009, after the AUPD completed its Darfur report.⁵⁸ The AUPD may have brought the personal political weight of an eminent African leader; however, the panel's mandate overlapped substantially with that of the JMST. This left the AU supporting two parallel processes in addition to the third track, represented by UNAMID's mandate to support the political process.⁵⁹ Even the AU's 2013 handbook on managing peace processes recognised that the overlap of the AUPD/AUHIP, the JMST and UNAMID was a "glaring example" of competing mediation processes.⁶⁰

Until mid-2011, Joint Chief Mediator Bassolé led political efforts, and UNAMID was at best a supporting player in this regard.⁶¹ With the support of Qatar, a series of consultations began in Doha in 2009, which would conclude in 2011 with the signing of the DDPD.

Initially, negotiations within the Doha process were between the Government of Sudan and JEM. International efforts, including by the US, which deployed Special Envoy Scott Gration, sought to improve the prospect of a successful negotiation by consolidating the position of the smaller rebel factions.⁶² In February 2010, almost a dozen rebel groups merged into the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) under the leadership of Eltigani Seisi Mohamed Ateem, a member of the Fur ethnic group and former Darfur governor. Many of these groups, however, had limited military strength.

Seisi and the LJM subsequently joined the Doha process and provided the mediators with a consistent (and relatively amenable) negotiating partner. Improving on the DPA, there was a parallel track for civil society, with three events held over two years that brought hundreds of

57 AU Peace and Security Council communiqué PSC/MIN/Comm(CXLII) (21 July 2008), para. 11(ii).

58 AU Peace and Security Council communiqué PSC/AHG/COMM.1(CCVII) (29 October 2009), para. 11(d).

59 The final AUPD report in 2009 was subtly critical of Bassolé's work, highlighting the need for a more transparent strategy, and even suggesting that the AU and UN should set up an oversight mechanism for the Joint Chief Mediator. See Report of the African Union High-level Panel on Darfur (PSC/AHG/2(CCVII), 29 October 2009), para. 363, <sudantribune.com/spip.php?article32905>.

60 Konrad Huber, 'Conflict analysis in peace processes: Pitfalls and potential remedies', in *Managing Peace Processes, A handbook for AU practitioners: Volume 1, Process related questions* (AU and Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Addis Ababa and Geneva, 2013).

61 The AUPD would critique the JMST in 2009 for not drawing more upon UNAMID expertise. See Report of the African Union High-level Panel (PSC/AHG/2(CCVII), 29 October 2009), para. 192.

62 Jerome Tubiana, 'Darfur after Doha', in Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed and Gunnar M. Sørnbø (eds), *Sudan Divided: Continuing Conflict in a Contested State* (New York, Palgrave, 2013).

civil society representatives to Doha. As the negotiations dragged on, however, repeated and ultimately unsuccessful attempts were made to bring the main rebel groups to the table. This resulted in significant pressure to finalise a deal as the patience and interest of international stakeholders waned, the pending referendum on South Sudan overshadowed interest in Darfur, and Bassolé's term neared an end. On 14 July 2011, the Government of Sudan and LJM signed the DDPD, while JEM abstained and SLA-MM and SLA-AW never even came to the table. The final civil society event, the All Darfur Stakeholders Conference, issued a communiqué endorsing the DDPD, but "endorsement" was at best an exaggeration of real civil society views.⁶³

The DDPD did set out important points, however, including power-sharing provisions; the establishment of a Darfur Regional Authority to oversee the region until a referendum on Darfur's status within Sudan was held; and the creation of a compensation fund for conflict victims. Nonetheless, Bassolé recognised that an accord without the major rebel groups hardly constituted a solid agreement, thus calling it the Doha "Document" for Peace in Darfur, rather than a "peace agreement".⁶⁴ As with the DPA, pressure forced the mediators involved to push through an agreement that that was broad in scope but lacked acceptance from the most important players.

Darfur after Doha

After the departure of Bassolé in June 2011, the head of UNAMID, Joint Special Representative Ibrahim Gambari, became Joint Chief Mediator and, for the first time, UNAMID led the mediation process. In many respects, however, the real opportunities to shape the political process had already passed. Despite Bassolé's reservations, the DDPD quickly became not just a peace agreement but the peace agreement. UNAMID shifted its efforts to focus on implementing the DDPD,⁶⁵ and the government stressed that it saw the DDPD as essentially final.⁶⁶

The UNAMID JSR would serve as Joint Chief Mediator in processes that sometimes ran parallel to those of the AUHIP. By 2012, the AUHIP held a large remit, covering mediation between Sudan and South Sudan, including the dispute over Abyei, as well as conflicts within Sudan, such as in the Nuba Mountains and Darfur. This approach reflected the AUPD's original assessment of the Darfur conflict as "Sudan's crisis in Darfur" – one with structural implications for state-society relations – rather than a situation confined to the country's western region. Finally,

63 The 600 conference participants were shown a PowerPoint presentation explaining the DDPD after it was signed, but there was no vote or other process by which they could have "endorsed" the agreement. See Tubiana, 2013.

64 Tubiana, 2013.

65 See also the framework for AU and UN facilitation of the Darfur peace process: Letter of 19 March 2012 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2012/166, 2012).

66 Tubiana, 2013.

in 2015, the AU and UN jointly decided to remove any confusion over who may be in charge and gave the AUHIP the lead role of advancing the political process in Darfur.⁶⁷

During the years in which the DDPD was negotiated (roughly 2009-2011) conflict incidents and civilian fatalities were at their lowest since 2003, but this belied the simmering violence beneath the surface.

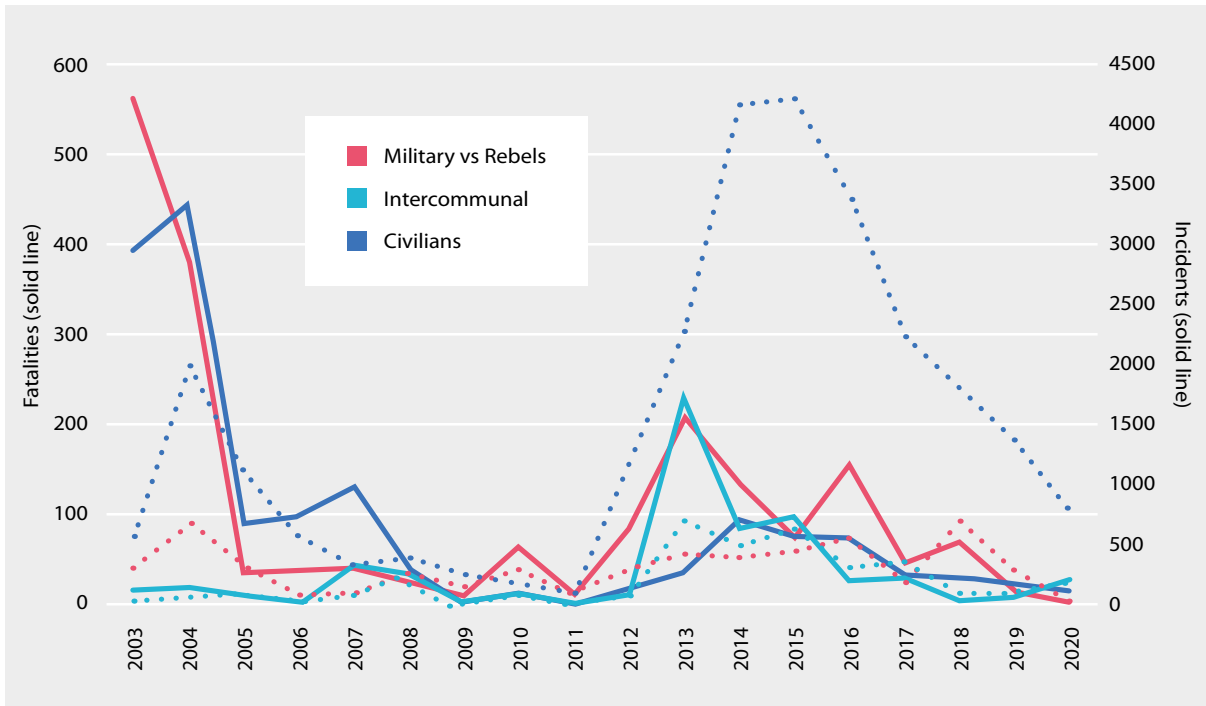
With the secession of South Sudan in 2011, members of the SPLA/M in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states – which were not part of the new country – organised as the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), once more taking up arms against Khartoum. Seeing an opportunity for Sudan-wide solidarity, the Darfur rebels (JEM, SLA-AW and SLA-MM) made common cause with SPLM-N, establishing an umbrella group called the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF). While the SRF was never a cohesive military force, it would at times serve as a common political platform for the movements, including for the negotiations with Sudan’s new transitional government in 2019-2020.

During the years in which the DDPD was negotiated (roughly 2009-2011) conflict incidents and civilian fatalities were at their lowest since 2003 (see [Figure 3](#)), but this belied the simmering violence beneath the surface. Intercommunal conflict steadily increased as newly empowered Arab tribes began a series of internecine conflicts over resources, including migration routes that had been disrupted by rebel control of certain areas.⁶⁸ As the DDPD did not include the main rebel groups, battles between the government and rebels increased as well, with more conflict incidents and higher fatalities from government-rebel conflict than at any other point during the conflict. At the same time, rapprochement between al-Bashir and the leaders of Chad and Libya cut off the rebels’ rear bases and material support.

67 See Report of the Secretary-General on the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2014/852, 2015), paras 36 and 81; Special Report of the Secretary-General on the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2015/163, 2015), para. 7.

68 Flint, 2009, p. 40.

Figure 3: Conflict incidents and fatalities in Darfur, 2003-2020



2014 UN Review of UNAMID and revised priorities

At the beginning of 2014, the first UN review of UNAMID highlighted the need for reprioritising the Missions’ mandate. The Secretary-General recognised that “Six years after the transition from [AMIS] to [UNAMID], a comprehensive political settlement to the Darfur crisis has yet to be reached. Fighting continues and protection and humanitarian assistance needs among the civilian population remain considerable.” He highlighted three limitations to effective mandate implementation:

- Lack of government cooperation;
- Shortfalls in troop- and police-contingent capabilities; and
- The need for improved coordination between the Mission and the UN Country Team.

The Secretary-General recommended revised strategic priorities, which the AUPSC and UNSC immediately endorsed:

- Mediation between the government and non-signatory armed movements on the basis of the DDPD;
- Protection of civilians, facilitation of the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and the safety and security of humanitarian personnel; and
- Provision of support, in conjunction with the UNCT, to the mediation of community conflict, including through measures to address its root causes.

The military solution

The years 2014–2017 witnessed a consolidation of the government’s military and political position, effectively curbing the rebels’ military threat and re-establishing government authority in many parts of Darfur. In 2014, President al-Bashir announced a national dialogue, offering amnesty to those rebels who joined this initiative. The Secretary-General, in his report to the UNSC, judged that “President Bashir’s national dialogue initiative remains the most important avenue to achieve lasting peace in the Sudan.”⁶⁹ Al-Bashir’s national dialogue reflected the AUHIP/AUPD’s longstanding recommendation that the Darfur conflict needed to be resolved in Sudan, rather than a location such as Doha, and that resolving the conflict should better reflect the voices of the Sudanese and Darfuri people.⁷⁰ The Secretary-General’s support for this initiative likely reflected a recognition that a wide range of tools at the disposal of the UNSC and an array of Darfur’s international stakeholders – from sanctions to mediators to peacekeepers – had been tried for years with little apparent progress. Also in 2014, the Prosecutor for the ICC, Fatou Bensouda, suspended her investigation into the situation in Darfur, in part blaming the UNSC for its failure to support the process that it initiated.⁷¹

At the end of 2014, an additional 450,000 people had fled their homes – the highest number in a single year since 2004.

The non-signatory rebels declined the offer of amnesty and the rebels’ support from friendly governments had fallen away. The government thus embarked on a robust military campaign, “Operation Decisive Summer”, which started in 2014 and resumed in 2015, with a further military campaign initiated at the beginning of 2016. Government forces targeted rebel positions and communities perceived to support them, leading to significant civilian casualties (though far fewer than during the early years of the conflict) and displacement. At the end of 2014, an additional 450,000 people had fled their homes – the highest number in a single year since 2004.⁷² UNAMID played little role in interposing between the adversaries (a role it lacked a mandate for, given the absence of a peace agreement), but the Mission did serve as a protective presence for civilians fleeing conflict areas, particularly in the Jebel Marra.⁷³

The Sudanese regular military, particularly the air force, played an important role in Operation Decisive Summer. However, they also benefitted from significant support from a newly formalised paramilitary group, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Drawn from many of the same

69 Special Report of the Secretary-General on the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2014/852), para. 81.

70 Report of the African Union Panel on Darfur (PSC/AHG/2(CCVII), October 2009), paras 2, 15.

71 David Smith, ‘ICC chief prosecutor shelves Darfur war crimes probe’ (London, The Guardian, 14 December 2014), <theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/14/icc-darfur-war-crimes-fatou-bensouda-sudan>.

72 Report of the Secretary-General on the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2015/141), para. 28.

73 See the assessment of the protection of civilians mandate in section 3.

fighters who made up the janjaweed and led by Hemedti, the RSF grew from a relatively small militia in 2013 to a force estimated in the tens of thousands by 2015.⁷⁴ When Sudan supported the Saudi-led war against the Houthis in Yemen, thousands of RSF soldiers travelled there as mercenaries. The RSF also took a leading role in conducting a disarmament campaign in Darfur in 2017-2019. While criticised by many observers as focusing more on “African” tribes than Arabs, and accompanied by serious human rights violations,⁷⁵ it is likely that the RSF disarmament campaign contributed to the reduction in conflict incidents since 2016 (see [Figure 3](#)).

At the same time that the government pursued a fierce military campaign against the rebels, it also brought together thousands of people in the national dialogue initiative.⁷⁶ However, as the current Justice Minister of Sudan wrote in 2016 (as a private citizen), the dialogue only served to “co-opt mild opponents” and consolidate power under the Presidency, ignoring proposals to strengthen human rights.⁷⁷ Also in 2016, the government initiated a referendum on the status of Darfur, as called for in the DPA and DDPD, utilising a similar approach.

UNAMID had endured a decade of obstruction from the government, an often challenging security situation, and conflict parties that remained as far apart as ever. With further progress seeming unlikely if the Mission stayed the AU and UN started planning for UNAMID’s exit.

Although the referendum vote went forward with more than 97% of voters choosing to retain the “status quo” of five Darfur states rather than the creation of a Darfur region, its legitimacy was tainted by the fact that the main rebel groups and opposition parties boycotted the process. However, while 2016 witnessed far fewer civilian casualties than the years in the early stages of the conflict, the referendum was held just after a 13-year peak in attacks against civilians, a result of the lawlessness that had enveloped Darfur (see [Figure 3](#)). The US objected to the timing of the referendum and Sudan’s main opposition party called it illegitimate, but international actors were otherwise generally silent.⁷⁸ In 2017, the US, perhaps recognising that it had lost any significant leverage over the Khartoum government (and that the government had cooperated in

74 Mohamed Elgami, ‘The Checkered Past of Sudan’s Hemedti’ (Washington, DC, Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, 29 May 2019), <timep.org/commentary/analysis/checkered-past-of-sudans-hemedti>.

75 Suliman Baldo, ‘Ominous Threats Descending on Darfur’ (Washington, DC, Enough Project, November 2017), <enoughproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/OminousThreatsDarfur_Nov2017_Enough1.pdf>.

76 This included 79 political parties and 28 armed movements, though as noted, these were “mild” opponents of the government.

77 Nasredeem Abdulbari, ‘The Sudan National Dialogue and constitutional reforms: Co-opting mild opponents?’ (Stockholm, ConstitutionNet, 29 November 2016), <constitutionnet.org/news/sudan-national-dialogue-and-constitutional-reforms-co-opting-mild-opponents>.

78 Radio Dabanga, ‘Darfur Referendum: “States option” wins by a landslide margin’ (Amsterdam, Radio Dabanga, 23 April 2016), <dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/darfur-referendum-states-option-wins-by-a-landslide>.

some of its major priorities, such as the peaceful secession of South Sudan), lifted some of its economic sanctions on Sudan.⁷⁹ The relatively peaceful vote and clear result of the Darfur referendum provided al-Bashir with a path to dissolve the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority and declare the Darfur conflict over.

UNAMID had endured a decade of obstruction from the government, an often challenging security situation, and conflict parties that remained as far apart as ever. With further progress seeming unlikely if the Mission stayed and an improved security situation emerging, the AU and UN started planning for UNAMID's exit. As discussed further in section four, Sudan's political trajectory was about to curve sharply, offering new challenges as well as opportunities.

79 However, the US kept Sudan on its list of "state sponsors of terrorism" and kept other sanctions in place, preventing Sudan from making a serious reintegration into the global economy.

3. Impact of UNAMID 2007-2017

UNAMID’s mandate evolved over the course of its tenure, beginning with a more expansive set of tasks that reflected the comprehensive language of the DPA, then refocusing in 2014 on three strategic priorities that remain valid today. This section assesses and explains UNAMID’s impact in implementing its mandate using the three core “baskets” of mandated tasks as a framework: (1) mediation between government and non-signatories, and support to an inclusive dialogue; (2) protection of civilians, promotion of human rights, and the facilitation of humanitarian assistance; and (3) managing intercommunal conflict and offering support to local institutions.

Assessing UNAMID’s impact requires reconciling two apparently opposed but ultimately compatible narratives. Firstly, that the Mission achieved little, as the root causes of the conflict had not been addressed and the decrease in fighting in Darfur had come from the government’s own “military solution”. Secondly, that expecting UNAMID to significantly impact the conflict in the absence of a viable peace agreement misconceives the indicators of success for the Mission, and that it in fact mitigated some of the most severe consequences of the conflict within the limitations it faced. Overall, this assessment finds that, faced with obstruction from the host government, almost no political leverage, and a volatile security situation, UNAMID had a modest impact on its objectives in Darfur during its first decade, with very limited impact in some areas. This was despite the fact that the Mission dutifully fulfilled mandated tasks in many areas.

Four external factors are important to understanding the Mission’s impact in Darfur. First, key stakeholders, including the AU and UN, lacked a consistent political approach to the Government of Sudan on Darfur until well past the point of a viable political deal. This resulted in a mission that lacked the political backing to play an effective political role or to overcome

government restrictions successfully. Second, during al-Bashir's reign, UNAMID faced significant persistent and strategic obstruction by the government, particularly in the areas of human rights and the protection of civilians, but extending across a range of operational aspects. This government hostility also resulted in the lack of a committed government partner for peacebuilding-oriented activities, such as managing intercommunal conflict and supporting local institutions. Third, while UNAMID was large in size and budget when compared to other peacekeeping operations, it never received many of the key military enablers that were part of its original conception, and the Mission faced shortfalls in military and police operational capacity throughout its tenure, remaining highly reliant on government goodwill to maintain its most basic operations. Finally, many interlocutors highlighted management issues throughout UNAMID's tenure, including leadership that favoured a conservative approach to expanding the Mission's limited political and operational space.

Impact along UNAMID's core mandates

Mediation between government and non-signatories, and supporting an inclusive process

The political work to resolve the Darfur conflict preceded UNAMID's deployment, continued during its tenure, and appears set to continue after the Mission leaves. The fact that the government and most of the original rebel groups are still holding peace talks 17 years after the Darfur conflict began is a testament to the political gridlock involved. In this respect, UNAMID has not successfully mediated the conflict, though it has been no more or less successful than its predecessors and co-mediators over the past decade. By the time UNAMID arrived, however, the most opportune moments for a successful resolution had already passed. These lost opportunities can be attributed to intransigence by the government and armed groups, both of which were influenced by the actions of other countries, as well as a sometimes crowded and uncoordinated mediation space. UNAMID had more success in supporting inclusiveness in the peace process. This included supporting the organisation of women's groups and assisting in their travel to Doha, as well as support for a variety of Darfuri dialogues. While these initiatives for inclusivity did not result in tangible outcomes due to the lack of a viable peace deal, they are potentially important steps along the continuing road towards peace in Darfur.

UNAMID as mediator

For much of its history, UNAMID pursued an active if ultimately unsuccessful mediation role. The Mission had the disadvantage of fundamentally operating within a political frame – at first the DPA and later the DDPD – that it was not involved in establishing. Unlike mediators in other protracted disputes, the Mission had little room for novel political approaches. For all but a few years of its 12-year deployment, UNAMID never had the opportunity to effectively lead the mediation process, which was either with a separate Joint Chief Mediator or with the

AUHIP. As one interviewee observed, “when you separate a political role from an operational role, you end up weakening both.”⁸⁰

UNAMID has not successfully mediated the conflict, though it has been no more or less successful than its predecessors and co-mediators over the past decade.

Darfur’s political talks involved so many actors – including the original AU and UN mediators (Eliasson and Salim), a standalone Joint Chief Mediator (Bassolé), the AUPD/AUHIP, UNAMID’s JSR, neighbouring countries, and a variety of bilateral envoys (most importantly but by no means exclusively the US) – that it is difficult to lay blame squarely on anyone’s shoulders. The ultimate failure of the peace process lies with the parties themselves. Among the causes are that the rebel leaders overestimated the rents they could demand, and may well have lost the best deals on offer; the government, meanwhile, never really waived from its view of Darfur as primarily a transactional conflict, rather than trying to address a set of real political and economic grievances.

UNAMID did little to move the process forward, but it also arrived quite late, when many of the key political and military developments had already taken place. AU and UN mediators arguably missed the most opportune moments for a sustainable peace accord in the early years of the conflict, well before UNAMID was fully deployed in 2008-2009. The most recent real political progress, the DDPD, was also completed before the UNAMID JSR took on an official political role as Joint Chief Mediator (UNAMID JSR Ibrahim Gambari began acting in this capacity ad interim in 2011 after Bassolé stepped down following the DDPD signing).

Implementing the peace agreements and promoting inclusion

UNAMID’s mandate included language to ensure an “inclusive” political process that involved civil society and women’s participation.⁸¹ The Mission’s contributions in this area were significant and, while the impact of these efforts is difficult to measure, it is clear that they would have played a vital enabling role had the underlying peace agreements been successful. It is also likely that they will have a beneficial effect generally on Darfuri relations going forward.

UNAMID first took the lead in supporting the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation (DDDC), a mechanism established by the DPA that sought to bring together different ethnic groups and interests in Darfur. That process was somewhat hampered by the fact that the DPA did not allow for amendments and thus it was unclear where the outcome of the DDC

⁸⁰ Interview with senior peacekeeping official.

⁸¹ Security Council Resolutions 1769 (S/RES/1769, 2007), paras 54(d), 55(c)(vi); S/RES/2363 (2017), paras 15(b)(v), 15(c)(iv).

discussions would lead.⁸² The beginning of the Doha process sparked a new round of community consultations that UNAMID heavily supported, including through holding preparatory workshops across Darfur for more than 4,000 participants, more than 30% of whom were women.⁸³ UNAMID also supported an All-Darfur Stakeholders Conference and two preparatory civil society conferences, which brought more than 600 Darfuris to Qatar.⁸⁴ While the early stages of this process went well, critics later accused the Doha-based mediators of using the civil society group to rubber-stamp an agreement into which they had little actual input.⁸⁵ The Doha Document itself established the Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultation (DIDC), a process similar to the DDDC. The DIDC reached 77 localities for consultations, involving an estimated 10,000 Darfur residents, IDPs and diaspora members.⁸⁶ UNAMID served as secretariat for the process, compiling outcome reports, providing transportation and supporting logistics.

A number of non-UNAMID interlocutors who worked on the mediation at various stages felt that the Mission's most significant impact on the political process was bringing many unheard voices into the process.

A number of non-UNAMID interlocutors who worked on the mediation at various stages felt that the Mission's most significant impact on the political process was bringing many of these otherwise unheard voices into the process. Interlocutors particularly stressed the work of the Mission in promoting women's empowerment in Darfur.⁸⁷ It is difficult to gauge the ultimate impact of these activities. The political process that resulted in the DDPD, the DDPD transitional institutions, and the DIDC is now essentially over. However, the change of regime in Sudan creates new political opportunities for organised Darfuri voices. It is very likely that the work UNAMID undertook to promote inclusive political participation will pay dividends long after it leaves.

82 Human Rights First, 'Sudan: Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation' (New York, Human Rights First, 16 August 2006), <reliefweb.int/report/sudan/sudan-darfur-darfur-dialogue-and-consultation>.

83 Report of the Secretary-General on the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2010/213, 2010), para. 9.

84 Tubiana, 2013.

85 Ibid.

86 UNAMID, Progress report of the Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultations (DIDC) locality consultations, 8 October 2017 (on file with author).

87 Interview with UN Women representative.

Protecting civilians, promoting human rights, and facilitating humanitarian assistance

Protection of civilians

The protection of civilians is UNAMID's most prominent mandate and the Mission has a troubled history of protection that leaves its performance and impact below what could have been achieved. At the same time, it is not the abject failure that some critics would make out.⁸⁸ The more robust action hoped for by many of UNAMID's early promoters was unrealistic in the face of the significant government opposition to the work of the Mission, and due to the lack of political support or leverage, the AUPSC, UNSC, and key AU and UN Member States never stepped in to address this effectively. Further factors that hampered UNAMID's performance in this area, such as the unwillingness of some troops to take on challenging protection tasks, are also systemic to peacekeeping and not unique to UNAMID.

While UNAMID was never the robust intervenor that many of its early advocates appeared to have hoped for, the perspectives of community members and Darfur experts suggest that its presence mitigated significant violence and human rights violations.

There are two simple but opposing narratives about UNAMID's impact on civilian protection. Firstly, UNAMID failed in its single-most important mandate, hampered by an obstructive government, by Mission leadership too willing to bend to the government's demands, and by troops unwilling to take action even when they were present. Alternatively, UNAMID could be viewed as implementing its protection mandate as well as any other peace operation – which all very rarely use proactive force to protect civilians, much less use force against host government proxies⁸⁹ – while also saving tens of thousands of lives and maintaining a lifeline for Darfur at a critical period, even if its operations were compromised. Both of these narratives have truth to them, and the final judgment lies somewhere in between. The continued importance of this imperfect protection is reflected in the concern many communities have expressed at the imminent withdrawal of UNAMID.

88 See, e.g., Eric Reeves, 'The Failure of UN/African Union Mission in Darfur [sic]: A Summary of Recent Assessments' (Sudan by Eric Reeves, 16 May 2018), <sudanreeves.org/2018/05/16/the-failure-of-the-un-african-union-mission-in-darfur-recent-assessments>; BBC News 'Darfur violence: UN troops "failed to stop attacks"' (London, BBC News, 9 April 2014), <bbc.com/news/world-africa-26962187>.

89 OIOS Evaluation of the implementation and results of protection of civilians mandates in UN peacekeeping operations (A/68/787, 2014) (UN OIOS POC evaluation).

Simple calculations of civilian casualties or attacks on civilians, even when adjusted for Mission presence, shed little light on UNAMID's effectiveness as a protector. Even at the level of specific locations where UNAMID had a base, these numbers reflect the overall conflict trends (see [Figure 3](#) above). These trends in turn best explain larger conflict dynamics, such as the rise in intercommunal violence after Arab pastoralists sought to increase their rents, increased rebel activity after the DDPD failed to include major groups, rebel-government battles during Operation Decisive Summer, and the government's reassertion of control (and consequent decrease in conflict) after 2016. No peacekeeping mission, however, should be expected to impact such large and violent conflict trends directly; UNAMID's protection action would at best be visible at a much more granular level, for which good data is unavailable.⁹⁰

Evidence for the tactical actions that UNAMID took or failed to take to protect civilians is primarily anecdotal, owing to a continued opacity in the internal and external reporting on military action taken by peacekeepers. There are documented cases where UNAMID soldiers stood their ground, including taking direct action to protect civilians that resulted in the deaths of peacekeepers. In 2014, for instance, Rwandan peacekeepers intervened in a dispute at a Kabkabiya market between a group of Fur and an Arab militia. The peacekeepers attempted to mediate when the militia turned hostile, and one peacekeeper was killed and three others wounded.⁹¹ Also in 2014, peacekeepers responded to an attack on Kalma camp, deterring attackers.⁹² Escalating intercommunal violence in 2014 caused large-scale displacement in North Darfur, where UNAMID provided protection to almost 60,000 IDPs who sought refuge within or in the vicinity of team sites in Saraf Umra, Khor Abeche, Korma, Labado, and Mellit.⁹³ During Operation Decisive Summer, the Mission provided protection to communities fleeing areas in Jebel Marra under attack by the Government of Sudan.⁹⁴

At the same time, there are deeply troubling reports of blatant inaction. The UN Panel of Experts supporting the Sudan Sanctions Committee, media and respected NGOs have documented instances where the Mission failed to act to protect civilians. This includes UNAMID peacekeepers standing by while rebels kidnapped dozens of IDPs heading to a peace conference that the rebels opposed in 2013.⁹⁵

90 A number of scholars have made important inroads into this area. However, until the DPO and TCCs conduct more fine-grained analyses of conflict incidents matched against patrol routes and times, there is no data set that would provide the basis for a persuasive analysis. Such a data set could, nevertheless, be very easily developed with the right political will.

91 Report of the Secretary-General on the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2014/515, 2014), para. 48.

92 Ibid, para. 47.

93 Reports of the Secretary-General on the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2014/279, 2014), para. 39; (S/2014/852, 2014), para. 48; Special Report of the Secretary-General on the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2015/163, 2015), para. 17.

94 Reports of the Secretary-General on the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2013/420, 2013), para. 14 (report issued before Operation Decisive Summer but during government-rebel clashes); (S/2015/141, 2015), para. 52; (S/2015/378, 2015), para. 46; (S/2016/268, 2016), para. 50.

95 Column Lynch, "They Just Stood Watching" (Washington, DC, Foreign Policy, 7 April 2014), <foreignpolicy.com/2014/04/07/they-just-stood-watching-2>.

As highlighted above, these issues underline a broader challenge in Chapter VII peace operations. A 2014 report from the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) found that generally peacekeepers, including those from UNAMID, rarely responded to attacks on civilians in a timely manner and that when they did force was almost never used.⁹⁶ Interviews with former UNAMID personnel confirmed one of the OIOS's major findings that command and control was a challenge in the operation, as in many peacekeeping missions.

UNAMID also faced a volatile operational environment that made robust action a difficult decision. As noted in section two, the Mission was the repeated target of attacks. Some of these, such as the attack by suspected SAF officers on the UNAMID base in Muhajeria in 2008, were clear attempts at retribution and intimidation.⁹⁷ Furthermore, while UNAMID was one of the largest peacekeeping missions in the world for a time, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) was never under the illusion that numerical strength translated into military capability. As Jean-Marie Guéhenno wrote in his notebook at the height of the Darfur violence in 2005, "Without the participation of armies from the [global n]orth, nothing will be possible."⁹⁸ While northern militaries may not have been required – and recent history finds far more examples of courage under fire among peacekeepers from the global south, as well as examples of northern militaries being unwilling to risk casualties in peace operations – receiving key assets like attack helicopters also took years and even then they only operated with government permission.

Community perceptions offer a mixed view that reflects the likelihood that UNAMID was not a robust protector of civilians, but also that its presence, monitoring and patrolling had a deterrent impact at times. In the focus group interviews conducted by EPON, for example, it was found that UNAMID only scored a modest 2.8 overall (and an even lower 2.6 from IDPs) when rated on its protective impact on a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being the least protection, and 5 the most). However, when asked whom communities turned to when concerned about their security, UNAMID was the third-most selected option (after the Sudan Police and just behind traditional leaders). Furthermore, when asked to rate on a 1-5 scale whether they will feel more or less secure after UNAMID leaves, with 1 being more secure and 5 least secure, the overall rating was 3.8 overall, with IDPs providing a rating of 4.1, which clearly reflects their security concerns in a post-UNAMID Darfur.

Displaced communities that the EPON study team spoke to in the Kalma IDP camp and in the Golo area echoed these sentiments as well. These interlocutors were unambiguous in their judgment that UNAMID has had a positive impact on preventing violence against civilians in Darfur. The research team recognises that some of these views may be coloured by communities'

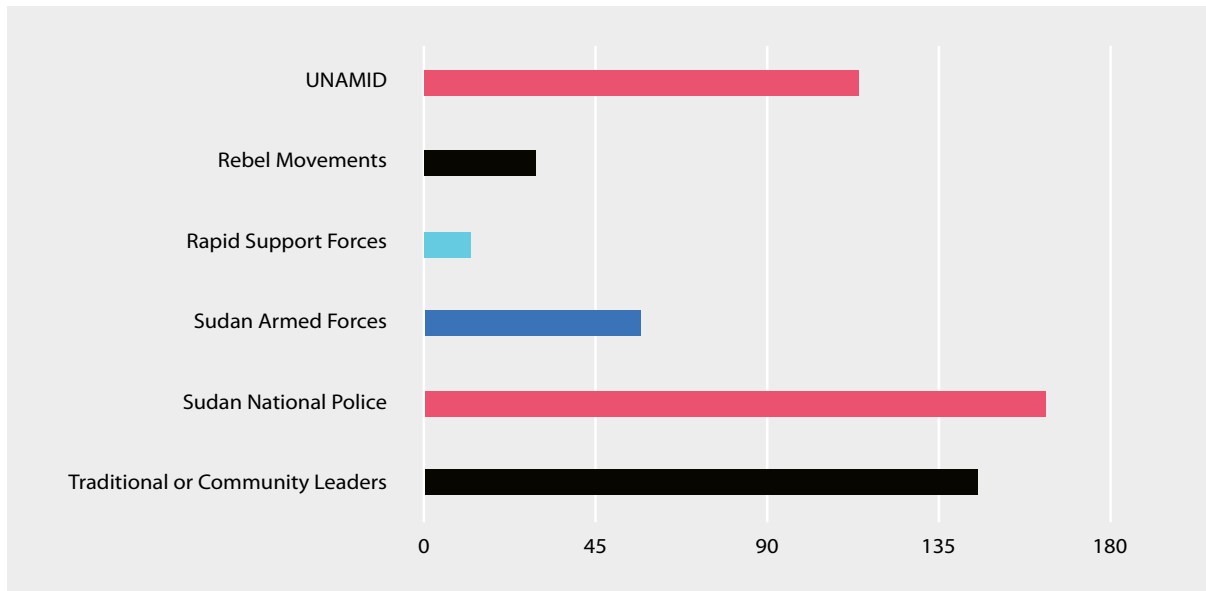
96 UN OIOS POC evaluation.

97 See the following article by Colum Lynch as well as the leaked internal documents linked in the article: Colum Lynch, "Now We Will Kill You" (Washington, DC, Foreign Policy, 8 April 2014), <foreignpolicy.com/2014/04/08/now-we-will-kill-you>. Attacks on UNAMID are also well documented in the reports of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan.

98 Guéhenno, 2015, loc 3843.

desire for UNAMID to remain and international attention to stay on Darfur in light of the Mission's withdrawal. Nonetheless, this relatively consistent and significantly positive response – verified by previous surveys of Darfuri opinion⁹⁹ – argues in favour of taking these community perspectives as clear evidence of UNAMID's impact.

Figure 4: Security actors of first resort

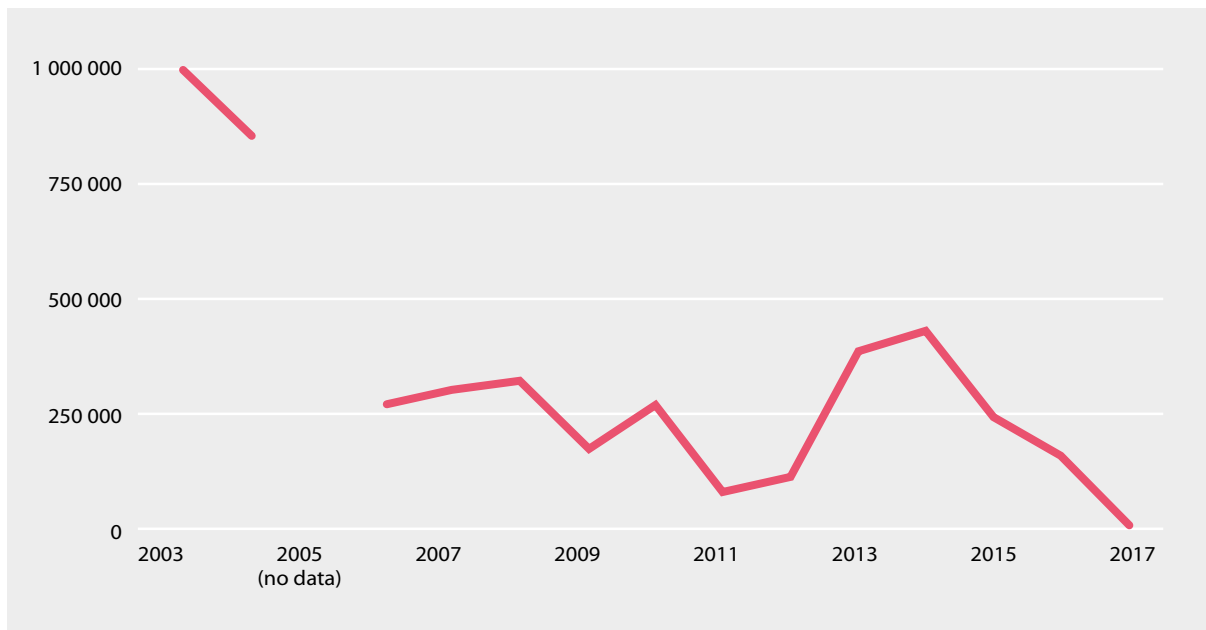


Some critiques of UNAMID argue that the continued presence of large IDP camps – with an estimated 2.7 million displaced in 2018¹⁰⁰ – is itself a testament to the Mission's failure to provide protection.¹⁰¹ By this logic, if there were protection and security for Darfuris, they would be able to return to their original villages safely. However, this argument misconstrues the return of IDPs as a securitised task rather than a much larger political, social and development project that requires government support.

99 See International Refugee Rights Initiative, "No one on earth cares if we survive except God and sometimes UNAMID": The challenges of peacekeeping in Darfur' (International Refugee Rights Initiative, June 2016); Report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to Resolution 1591 (2005) concerning Sudan (S/2009/562), para. 31.

100 UN News, 'Security Council stresses needs for "sustainable solutions" for millions displaced in Darfur' (New York, UN News, 31 January 2018), <<https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/01/1001711>>.

101 International Refugee Rights Initiative, 2016, p. 17.

Figure 5: New displacements in Darfur, 2003-2017¹⁰²

Indeed, displacement in Darfur was not only a by-product of fighting but also an intentional strategy designed to reward certain constituencies, namely the communities of fighters, mostly from nomadic groups, who took up arms on behalf of the government.¹⁰³ This was fundamentally a political deal that no security approach could address in full. In future, returning IDPs to their lands will require negotiated political compromise (many IDPs will simply not be able to go back), development funding, and the support of the government. UNAMID could have provided important support to this process had these elements been in place during its 12-year deployment, particularly the final element of government buy-in. However, they were absent for most of UNAMID's tenure, and the Mission could not establish them itself. (The Juba Agreement, discussed in the final sections of this report, provides a framework for returns but leaves many details undeveloped). While new displacements occurred throughout the conflict (see Figure 5), these followed the overall trends of conflict and were far lower during UNAMID's deployment than during the early years of the conflict.

It is also notable that the UNSC and the AUPSC initially deployed the Mission with a focus on the protection of IDP camps, a strategy very similar to the POC sites in South Sudan, with the very important exception that the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) guards civilians in government-held and rebel-held territory, whereas in Darfur the vast majority of civilians under threat are from communities viewed as being on one side of the conflict.¹⁰⁴ This is not to say that UNAMID was not impartial in fulfilling its mandate, but

102 Based on data from UN OCHA, 'Darfur Humanitarian Overview: 1 October 2017' (New York, OCHA, 2017), <reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Darfur_Humanitarian_Overview_A3_01_Oct_2017.pdf>.

103 De Waal, 2015, loc 1709.

104 UNAMID primarily provided physical protection to African communities and their civilian status is not in doubt. Some Arab and nomadic communities may have benefitted from UNAMID's presence, but the Mission was far more visible in

rather than the situation in Darfur made impartial protection almost necessarily open to perceptions of bias.

Promotion of human rights

The protection and promotion of human rights was a driving factor in UNAMID's deployment and an area where critics frequently argue the Mission fell short.¹⁰⁵ As with the protection of civilians, there are two opposing narratives for UNAMID's human rights work. On the one hand, it is difficult to argue that UNAMID made any real progress in improving the al-Bashir regime's respect for the rights of Darfuris. On the other hand, UNAMID was the only international organisation reporting on human rights issues in Darfur, one of only a handful of organisations that regularly produced credible human rights reporting, and it regularly raised human rights issues with the government, often at its own peril. The Mission faced a suspicious head of state who was already under indictment by the ICC and almost certainly viewed increased human rights scrutiny as a serious legal threat.¹⁰⁶

Respecting human rights is, by definition, a national responsibility, and UNAMID's regional (rather than national) mandate and tense relationship with the government limited the scope of the Mission's human rights impact during the al-Bashir regime. UNAMID articulated five related activities associated with its human rights mandate: monitoring and documenting violations against civilians; fighting impunity through raising awareness of human rights violations, and sexual- and gender-based violence; promoting technical cooperation on human rights with the Government of Sudan; and incorporating human rights in the Darfur peace process.¹⁰⁷ UNAMID's promotion of human rights during the al-Bashir era supported and enhanced its impact on the protection of civilians that, as noted above, was largely realised through impartial monitoring capacity. UNAMID also contributed to building a rights-respecting environment in Darfur and mainstreaming human rights in the Darfur peace process, but the absence of a government partner significantly limited the Mission's impact in these areas. Finally, the challenges that the Mission faced in publicly reporting on the most significant human rights violations damaged its credibility as a political and protection actor in ways that limited the Mission's impact across its mandated tasks.

and around the IDP camps.

105 See, for example, Rebecca Tinsley, 'The Failure of UNAMID' (London, *The Guardian*, 1 January 2009), <theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/jan/01/darfur>; Reeves, 2018; BBC News, 2014.

106 Western supporters of UNAMID, like the US, also regularly complained that the Mission failed to provide information on human rights violations that could trigger greater action at the political-strategic level. See, for instance, the comments of US Envoy Princeton Lyman in Colum Lynch, 'A Mission that was Set Up to Fail' (*Foreign Policy*, Washington, DC, 2014), <foreignpolicy.com/2014/04/08/a-mission-that-was-set-up-to-fail>. With Sudan already subject to sanctions and the host of two (at one point three) peacekeeping operations, however, it is questionable whether more detailed human rights information would have resulted in significantly greater pressure.

107 UNAMID, 'Human Rights', <[https://unamid.unmissions.org/human-rights#:~:text=UNAMID%20Human%20Rights%20Section%20monitors,viole%20\(SGBV\)%20and%20abuses.&text=Protection%20of%20Civilians%3A%20Continue%20to,reporting%20of%20human%20rights%20abuses](https://unamid.unmissions.org/human-rights#:~:text=UNAMID%20Human%20Rights%20Section%20monitors,viole%20(SGBV)%20and%20abuses.&text=Protection%20of%20Civilians%3A%20Continue%20to,reporting%20of%20human%20rights%20abuses)>.

Perhaps more than in any other area of UNAMID's mandate, the Mission faced government hostility on the issue of human rights, and the Mission's human rights component was targeted in particular for visa denials and the effective expulsion of its deputy director.¹⁰⁸ UNAMID staff over the course of the Mission's history, and external actors following the human rights situation in Darfur, all agreed that this impacted the Mission's political and operational space, inhibiting its ability to verify facts and speak out. UNAMID already faced government non-cooperation in many areas, and its leadership often took strategic decisions to raise human rights issues only quietly, if at all.¹⁰⁹ Engaging the government on human rights issues was made more difficult as the government frequently limited the Mission's access to the areas where the most serious violations occurred.

Engaging the government on human rights issues was made more difficult as the government frequently limited the Mission's access to the areas where the most serious violations occurred.

These challenges resulted in major gaps in the Mission's human rights reporting. After reports surfaced that government forces raped more than 200 women and girls in Thabit in 2014, for instance, the government denied the Mission access to conduct an independent investigation. UNAMID recognised the link between the denial of access and the allegations, but could only say that its investigations were "inconclusive", with brief mentions in the following six months that access had still not been granted.¹¹⁰

Whistle-blower Aicha Elbasri, a former UNAMID spokesperson, brought to light a series of examples in which the Mission failed to report human rights violations and sought to portray the government in a positive light.¹¹¹ A 2019 review by UN OIOS found that UNAMID's staff had the lowest degree of perceived confidence in their Mission's ability to monitor human rights violations effectively when compared with five other missions.¹¹² These gaps damaged the

108 BBC News, 'Sudan tells UN-AU mission "to shut human rights office"' (London, BBC News, 26 November 2014), <bbc.com/news/world-africa-30209472>; Daniel Forti, *Navigating Crisis and Opportunity: The Peacekeeping Transition in Darfur* (New York, International Peace Institute, December 2019), p. 6, <ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/1912-Transition-in-Darfur.pdf>. See also, for example, Reports of the Secretary-General on the UNAMID (S/2016/268, 2016), para. 38; (S/2016/510, 2016), paras 44-45.

109 Interviews with current and former UNAMID personnel; see also Lynch, "They Just Stood Watching".

110 Reports of the Secretary-General on the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2014/852, 2014), para. 57; (S/2015/141, 2015), para. 60; Special Report of the Secretary-General on the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2015/163, 2015), para. 40.

111 Testimony of Aicha Elbasri before the US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs (13 April 2016), <docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA16/20160413/104766/HHRG-114-FA16-Wstate-ElbasriA-20160413.pdf>.

112 These surveys included staff inside and outside the human rights component and were based on perceived effectiveness of human rights monitoring and reporting in terms of comprehensiveness, consistency, reliability and utility. OIOS, 'Evaluation of the effectiveness of human rights monitoring, reporting and follow-up in the United Nations

Mission's credibility in the eyes of the population¹¹³ and international human rights advocates. One non-UN Darfur human rights expert found that UNAMID's inability to confirm the most serious violations or challenge government denials led to an assessment that the Mission was "negligent to the point that they were complicit in cover-ups" of human rights violations.¹¹⁴

It should be clearly emphasised, however, that these assessments are based on the Mission as a whole – including Mission leadership, but also strategic support in New York, Addis Ababa and national capitals – and not UNAMID's human rights component alone. Indeed, where human rights components face challenges accessing remote and insecure parts of a country, such as in Afghanistan, but have strong political backing, they have found creative solutions to continue rigorous public human rights reporting in a sensitive context. UNAMID does not appear to have invested in such measures or to have been supported to make such investments. The contexts in Afghanistan and in Darfur are very different, however, and public "naming and shaming" and private dialogue are both important tools for the promotion of human rights that should not be placed in opposition or framed in a false dichotomy. The reporting that UNAMID did undertake clearly supported the Mission's more general efforts to protect civilians and, as noted above, one of the impactful areas of the Mission's protection efforts was its ability to serve as an impartial monitor, even if it could not monitor and report on all incidents.

UNAMID also undertook activities to increase the respect for human rights within local institutions in Darfur, developing training for police and rural court judges, and establishing protection working groups in IDP camps and other accessible areas. As reviewed in the section on institutional support below, these efforts may promote sustainable peace in a post-al-Bashir Darfur. However, the absence of a government partner limited their impact at the time. UNAMID played a role in mainstreaming human rights in some aspects of the Darfur peace process, such as in the DIDC, but significant impact was hampered by the Mission's limited mediation role and a lack of government commitment to support transitional institutions, including those that could address legal issues such as those related to land claims.

Human rights is always a controversial issue within repressive regimes, but the Darfur context included elements that made it particularly challenging to incorporate human rights into UNAMID's political strategy. With the Mission's strategic efforts focused on trying to remedy an ineffective peace process, on the one hand, and managing unwieldy protection operations, on the other, it never developed a clear and coherent dialogue around human rights and rarely fully realised the courage of the stated convictions of the UN and AU. These organisations and their member states, moreover, rarely provided consistent political support to the Mission or enabled it to take bold steps. The strategic choice to remain low-profile on human rights issues in Darfur

multidimensional peacekeeping operations,' para. 28, <ohchr.org/Documents/AboutUs/Evaluation/Evaluation_human_rights_monitoring_reportomg_follow-up_peacekeeping.pdf>.

113 See Tanja R. Müller and Zuhair Bashar, "UNAMID is just like clouds in summer, they never rain": Local perceptions of conflict and the effectiveness of UN Peacekeeping Missions,' *International Peacekeeping* (2017) 24(5): 770-775.

114 Interview with NGO Darfur expert.

may well have allowed the Mission to remain on the ground in the face of government threats of expulsion, but it was likely at the cost of both organisations' credibility.

Coordination with and support for humanitarian actors

The UNSC mandates many peace operations to create conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance, often providing the political and security umbrella under which humanitarians can operate more safely. UNAMID fulfilled these tasks congruent with the UNSC mandate, although the mandate was only partially relevant, given that it was the government – not the general insecurity created by the conflict, criminals or other armed groups – that presented by far the most significant obstacle to the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Lack of humanitarian access in Darfur was not primarily the result of insecurity, but rather of government restrictions on humanitarians.

Initially, Darfur appeared to present a perfect example of the utility of humanitarian facilitation mandates, with numerous attacks on aid workers in the early years of the Darfur conflict highlighting the security risks of such operations. As UNAMID deployed in 2007–2009, attacks on humanitarians dropped considerably,¹¹⁵ following the overall trend of decreasing violence in those years, as well as being impacted by the expulsion of numerous humanitarian organisations after the ICC indicted al-Bashir. Even as attacks on humanitarians dropped, however, access for humanitarian aid workers improved only marginally. The lack of access was not primarily the result of insecurity, but rather of government restrictions on humanitarians.¹¹⁶ UNAMID had little impact on these restrictions, just as it had little impact in enforcing its own freedom of movement. At the same time, UNAMID fulfilled many tasks to support humanitarian assistance in accordance with its mandate. Between 2012 and 2017, for example, the Mission performed an average of approximately 180 armed escorts for humanitarians per month, supporting humanitarian deliveries of food and other assistance as well as pre-positioning of supplies.¹¹⁷ Some humanitarians argued then and argue today that such escorts were unnecessary and were only needed as a result of overly restrictive UN security protocols, but UNAMID was a willing partner regardless.

115 Radio Dabanga, 'Decade of Darfur violence affects more than 250 aid workers: AWSD' (Amsterdam, Radio Dabanga, 1 August 2013), <dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/decade-of-darfur-violence-affects-more-than-250-aid-workers-awsd>.

116 See, for example, the Reports of the Secretary-General on the UNAMID (S/2011/814, 2011), paras 45–46; (S/2013/225, 2013), para. 30; (S/2014/26, 2014), para. 33; (S/2014/279, 2014), paras 16–17; (S/2015/378, 2015), paras 29–30; (S/2016/268, 2016), para. 42.

117 Based on UNAMID's self-reported humanitarian escort data in 20 reports of the Secretary-General from 2012–2017.

UNAMID faced a more significant challenge in effectively coordinating with humanitarian organisations. Friction between a peacekeeping mission and humanitarian organisations is common in many contexts where they operate side-by-side, but this tension was marked in Darfur from the earliest days. Recognising the controversy and government reticence surrounding UNAMID's deployment and uncertain of the implications of a hybrid AU-UN mission, humanitarians advocated and obtained agreement for a "two feet out" integration model.¹¹⁸ Unlike nearly all multi-dimensional peace operations over the past 20 years, UNAMID did not have a "triple-hatted" deputy head¹¹⁹ who was part of the Mission structure, but also responsible for coordinating UN agencies including UN humanitarian agencies.

The absence of a triple-hatted UNAMID deputy head may have helped to firewall UN humanitarian agencies from criticism of the Mission's political and military activities, but it also created a significant divide in coordination. Unlike in most missions, there was no dedicated, high-level entry-point for engagement. UNAMID's Darfur-specific mandate and Darfur-based headquarters also made coordination challenging, as all humanitarians (whether from NGOs or UN agencies) are headquartered in Khartoum, with most taking a country-wide perspective. While Darfur was a major concern for the humanitarians based in Khartoum during UNAMID's early days, after the independence of South Sudan, the humanitarian community's attention was split between Darfur, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan. Indeed, while real humanitarian needs continued to exist in Darfur, some senior humanitarians working there in 2018 viewed much of the assistance they delivered as more long term and developmental, rather than short term and humanitarian in nature.¹²⁰ This disconnect between UNAMID, which was exclusively based in and focused on Darfur, and a humanitarian community headquartered in Khartoum with country-wide concerns continued through the time of the EPON team's visit. Multiple interlocutors reported that communication between the Mission and humanitarians was inefficient, even during critical periods like the 2019 protests.

One of UNAMID's initiatives on humanitarian access, Operation Springbasket in 2011, is an example of well-intended cooperation that was met with severe government restrictions. For more than six months, the government had blocked humanitarian access to large areas of Jebel Marra, the base of SLA-AW forces, and many Fur communities perceived to support them, leaving numerous communities in significant need. Operation Springbasket promised to bring UNAMID's political and military muscle in support of humanitarian goals. The result, however, was a highly publicised and orchestrated tour in which the government brought UNAMID and humanitarians to villages that it had chosen, monitored all proceedings closely, and directed

118 UN OCHA, Policy Instruction: OCHA's structural relationships within an integrated presence (1 May 2009), <<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/OCHA's%20Structural%20Relationships%20Within%20An%20Integrated%20UN%20Presence.pdf>>.

119 The "triple hat" refers to serving simultaneously but distinctly as a deputy head of the peacekeeping mission, the UN Resident Coordinator responsible for general representation of UN agencies and coordinating development activities, and the UN Humanitarian Coordinator responsible for coordinating humanitarian activities.

120 Interview with senior UN humanitarian official. Donor's restrictions on funding projects in Sudan have also pushed them to label some development activities as "humanitarian" rather than "development".

assistance to its chosen beneficiaries.¹²¹ It gave the appearance of humanitarian access and humanitarian support to the people of Jebel Marra, when in fact they remained as cut off as ever.

Managing intercommunal conflict and supporting institutions

Despite the interventionist narrative that surrounded UNAMID's deployment, the UNSC and AUPSC provided it with mandates to support Sudanese institutions from the beginning, first under the DPA, and later under the DDPD. In response to the evolving situation, including the recognition that intercommunal conflict was becoming a more urgent security problem and that traditional approaches to institution-building would not be successful with an obstructive regime, these mandates became more focused on intercommunal conflict and local institutions. Both lines of effort are linked because they include such a strong element of community engagement, but they are also fundamentally entrenched in the complex politics of Darfur and the centre-periphery dynamics.

Managing local and intercommunal conflict

As discussed in section one, the Darfur conflict is very much an extension of local conflicts, UNAMID has been active in mediating these since its first deployment,¹²² and the UNSC and AUPSC explicitly endorsed the Secretary-General's priority of "supporting the mediation of intercommunal conflict" in 2014.¹²³ The Mission pursued numerous worthwhile activities regarding mediating local and intercommunal conflict, including supporting dialogues between ethnic groups and brokering local peace agreements; supporting local committees to resolve disputes themselves; supporting governors and local government; and conducting patrols along nomadic migration routes to provide a stabilising presence. In 2016, UNAMID helped develop a government-led strategy to reduce intercommunal violence. There is, moreover, some evidence that these efforts meaningfully impacted local conflicts, resulting in decreased fighting over longer periods than conflicts without mediation.¹²⁴ In this respect, it is clear that UNAMID took its mandate to address intercommunal seriously and its execution was congruent with UNSC intent.

Approaching local and intercommunal violence primarily as technical and capacity-building processes, however, belies the fundamentally political drivers behind them. Characterising conflict as "intercommunal" – as somehow the province of more historical and conciliatory

121 See Jonathan Loeb, 'Talking to the other side: Humanitarian engagement with armed non-state actors in Darfur, Sudan, 2003–2012' (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2013), p. 28, <odi.org/publications/7845-talking-other-side-humanitarian-engagement-armed-non-state-actors-darfur-sudan-2003-2012>.

122 See Allard Duursma, 'Making disorder more manageable: The short-term effectiveness of local mediation in Darfur', *Journal of Peace Research* (2020).

123 See Security Council Resolution 2173 (S/RES/2173, 2014), para. 1.

124 See Duursma, 2020. Note that Duursma's data only covers the period 2008–2009, before the most significant spikes in intercommunal conflict.

politics – belies the militarisation of many communities after years of fighting and the complex political ties that many of these communities have formed with Khartoum. This is evident in the fact that the most significant decrease in intercommunal violence from 2016-2018 was driven by Khartoum’s security forces rather than any mediation initiative.¹²⁵ During this period, Khartoum sought to bring a degree of order to the armed Arab militias that it had lost control of, including through the creation of the RSF.

To address local and intercommunal conflicts, UNAMID pursued a peacebuilding approach long before “peacebuilding” was part of its two-pronged approach in 2017, but the challenge remained the same. Peacebuilding requires a government partner and Khartoum under the al-Bashir government had narrow and specific interests in Darfur: maintaining centralised power. This limited the impact of efforts to address local and intercommunal conflict and has created obstacles to sustainability, with many local conflict resolution committees that UNAMID supported for years falling apart as the Mission withdrew from their areas.

Supporting institutions to implement the peace agreement and build the rule of law

UNAMID’s mandates from 2007-2016 included broad language to support institution-building and the implementation of peace agreements (the DPA and DDPD) that relied on institutional structures to address the conflict’s root causes. Despite the Mission’s support to these institutions, a lack of government funding and political will ultimately leave their promise unfulfilled. As the Secretary-General wrote in 2017:

Six years after the adoption of the Doha Document, the people of Darfur have yet to fully benefit from the political realities and the legislative space that agreement created, as the implementation of its provisions remains uneven and unsustainable. Despite achievements accomplished thus far on the setting up of the necessary institutional and legal framework, the lack of an all-inclusive political agreement and commitment, as well as operational and resource challenges, are having a serious impact on its outcome.¹²⁶

The UNSC gradually narrowed this mandate, removing language directed towards supporting government institutions in 2015 to a mandate in 2017 that focused capacity-building work on issues related to accountability, rural and customary courts, and addressing the root causes of the conflict.¹²⁷ UNAMID’s Rule of Law, Civil Affairs, and Police components engaged in significant work in these areas over the years. One former senior UNAMID official cited the Mission’s contributions to the creation and rehabilitation of infrastructure for law enforcement,

125 Secretary-General’s report: Budget performance of the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 (A/72/687, 22 Dec 2017), p. 26.

126 Secretary-General’s annex on the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (S/2017/747, 2017), para. 9.

127 See, respectively, Security Council Resolutions 1769 (S/RES/1769, 2007) OP 54(g), 55(b)(x), 55(c); 2228 (S/RES/2228, 2015), para. 3; 2363 (S/RES/2363, 2017), paras 15(a)(vii), (a)(viii), (c)(ii).

courts and local government institutions as one of its clearest and most tangible results.¹²⁸ The overall impact of these efforts was limited, however, due to the general lack of institutions in Darfur, and the fact that the existing institutions remained part of a centralised, authoritarian government.¹²⁹ Training provided by UNAMID had to be approved centrally in Khartoum, including the content of curricula, resulting in training material that was very “generic”.¹³⁰ In sum, the mandate was relevant to the context, and the Mission’s implementation was congruent given the existing situation, but such relevance and congruence were only necessary, not sufficient, conditions for creating meaningful and sustainable impact on the ground.

Police capacity-building efforts presented a more mixed picture, offering potential lessons for the future (see section four and five below). As seen above in [Figure 4](#), the study’s focus groups – including IDP groups – reported that the Sudan National Police were their most relied-upon actor when facing questions about security. Some among the National Police in Darfur are representative of IDP communities, such as those in El Geneina. At the same time, a number of IDP camps – particularly those allied with Abdul Wahid – are hostile to any government presence, including the National Police. This question of community-police relations has a significant negative impact on any assessment of the overall improvement Sudan National Police in Darfur after years of UNAMID support, but such relations depend more on a political resolution of the Darfur conflict than the technical capacity or even civilian oversight of the National Police. In the words of one UN expert, “it’s a trust issue that can’t be dealt with through just a few workshops, it’s linked to an incomplete peace process.”¹³¹

Support for other elements of the justice system faces the same challenges. As noted in section one, Khartoum neglected governance in Darfur for years. The formal courts had limited reach and, while most disputes were settled by traditional authorities, these authorities were also part of a fragmented system that the government sought to co-opt. The Native Administration and Rural Courts have, as far back as British rule at the turn of the 20th century, been formalised loosely as state organs, always using Sudanese law (later to include aspects of Sharia law) as the outer limits of their decision-making power.¹³² Al-Bashir and Turabi, however, used this relationship to co-opt the vast majority of traditional authorities in Darfur. As Tubiana, Tanner and Abu-Jalil write, “The [al-Bashir] regime has, over the past twenty-odd years, ceaselessly created new positions [for traditional authorities] and abolished others, reorganized territories and lines of reporting, bought off and intimidated individual leaders, and imposed illegitimate leaders on

128 Interview with former UNAMID official.

129 Quantitative data in this area is difficult to obtain. However, perception surveys carried out by EPON (which were too limited to present a scientific sample representative of Darfuri people’s opinions but are relevant for qualitative purposes) reveal low scores for the responsiveness of local courts, and average scores for UNAMID’s contributions to the rule of law in general. See the Appendix for detailed survey data.

130 Interview with UN expert.

131 Interview with UN expert.

132 See Jérôme Tubiana, Victor Tanner, and Musa Adam Abu-Jalil, ‘Traditional Authorities Peacemaking Role in Darfur’ (Washington, DC, US Institute of Peace, 2012), <files.ethz.ch/isn/155469/PW83.pdf>.

local people.”¹³³ The militarisation and political polarisation across Darfur also made local courts less ethnically inclusive.¹³⁴

UNAMID deserves credit for utilising its various mandates for supporting institutions as an enabler for its work around improving security and serving as an important foundation for the transition into peacebuilding. It is always challenging for peacekeeping missions to move from conflict management and peace implementation to peacebuilding. The situation in Darfur, where the Mission was surrounded by active conflict for most of its existence and faced an obstructive government that showed little commitment to peacebuilding, has been far more difficult than most. It is concerning that the Mission’s exit is planned at a moment when the possibilities for its contributions to peacebuilding appear stronger than ever.

Dilemmas and lessons from UNAMID’s first decade

Dilemmas of formal consent and informal obstruction

Many peace operations encounter challenges in working with the host government, but UNAMID faced a high degree of obstruction from the earliest stages of its planning until the fall of the al-Bashir regime. The challenges that UNAMID faced drove a great deal of reflection within the UN Secretariat, including the recommendations of the 2015 UN High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) for compacts between the host government and the UN, and sequenced mandates from the UNSC. UNAMID is the ultimate “hard case” for both of these proposed solutions and highlights that effectively addressing poor government cooperation requires a substantive political approach rather than a resort to plans and processes.

The notion of a compact entails the UN and government clarifying expectations and making commitments.¹³⁵ A version of this idea was implemented in the Central African Republic (CAR) between the UN Stabilization Mission in the CAR (MINUSCA), the CAR government, and donor countries.¹³⁶ UNAMID also utilised a version of this approach in forums to address issues facing the Mission jointly: first through the Joint Implementation Committee, which began under UNMIS and was carried over to UNAMID in its early days, and later in a Tripartite Mechanism between the UN, AU and Government of Sudan. These mechanisms differed from compacts in that they were not self-standing documents. Instead, they were designed to implement documents like UNAMID’s Status of Forces Agreement, to which both parties had agreed.

133 Ibid, p. 12.

134 Ibid.

135 Report of the HIPPO (A/70/95-S/2015/446, 2015), paras 145-146.

136 See Sofia Sebastián and Aditi Gorur, ‘Peacekeeping and Host State Consent: How missions navigate relationships with governments’ (Washington, DC, Henry L Stimson Center, 2018), p. 17, <[stimson.org/wp-content/files/file-attachments/UN-PeacekeepingAndHostStateConsent.pdf](https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/files/file-attachments/UN-PeacekeepingAndHostStateConsent.pdf)>.

UNAMID's experience highlights that, absent a shared vision and real commitment, procedural mechanisms designed to assuage the challenges of cooperation have a limited effect.

UNAMID's experience highlights that, absent a shared vision and real commitment, procedural mechanisms designed to assuage the challenges of cooperation have a limited effect. While the Tripartite Mechanism undoubtedly helped UNAMID win small victories, such as clearing visas and items through customs, the fact remains that with few exceptions these were actions that the government had already committed to taking in the Mission's Status of Forces Agreement. Simply put, the al-Bashir regime deliberately ignored its guarantees to allow the Mission freedom of movement, recruitment of international staff, and unhindered movement of supply lines. As Guéhenno writes, "The tripartite mechanism, far from easing difficulties in the vast Sudanese bureaucracy, was used as a bureaucratic tool to block progress."¹³⁷

There is no clear answer as to what UNAMID, the AUPSC and UNSC should have done with regard to these issues. Some observers even argued in favour of counterfactual alternatives, the most extreme of which was the withdrawal of the Mission. UNAMID's experience highlights, however, that without host government commitment and effective incentives to bring the reluctant government on board, a process-oriented approach to managing cooperation will have limited impact.

The HIPPO report proposed a second idea to help address government cooperation, "sequenced mandates", in which the UNSC tailors mission tasks to the phase of the conflict and relations with the government.¹³⁸ UNAMID set the tone for this in many respects, serving as what the HIPPO termed a "conflict management" mission: a predominantly military force deployed in the framework of an absent or minimal peace process, based on the theory that the peacekeepers will create the space for further political dialogue, which, in turn, will lead to increased stability, and the two lines of effort (military and political) will create a beneficial, iterative circle, further expanding and deepening sustainable peace.

UNAMID provides a cautionary tale of how such a theory of change, while seemingly sound at the outset, can founder if the political framework does not materialise and if, when responsibility for political direction becomes separated from operations, maintaining an expansive military presence becomes a liability rather than an asset for reaching a political solution. Despite what appeared to be significant political interest and investment from major powers in the early years of the conflict, UNAMID (and the two Councils that produced its annual mandates) never seemed to adapt to the fact that its underlying political foundation remained wanting.

137 Guéhenno, 2015, loc 4255-2465.

138 Report of the HIPPO, 2015, para. 184; UN, 'Action for Peacekeeping: Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations', para. 5, <peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/a4p-declaration-en.pdf>.

The lack of sustained political progress or an inclusive and sustainable agreement left the Mission in the security phase of its mandate, even though violence in Darfur had fallen from its peak and would decline sharply after successful government offensives in 2014–2016. Apart from continuing to try to convene a moribund peace process, the Mission's main political work consisted of implementing elements of the two main peace deals, the DPA and DDPD. As described above, however, these political documents created a set of technical activities that the Mission could support but which were not effectively implemented without real commitment from the parties.

The hybrid experiment: Lessons for future cooperation

UNAMID is the first and so far only hybrid peacekeeping operation of its kind and opinions vary over the success of this experiment. Overall, the study team found that the hybrid framework created the potential for political synergy that was only realised at certain points in the Mission's lifespan due to a lack of experience in such operations, a fragmentation of political strategies, and the success of the Sudanese government in playing the AU and UN off of one another. A hybrid framework can provide an important modality for strengthening the UN's political action, provided the working relationship is well-established and the political strategy is clear. These factors were developed over time for UNAMID, but were not in place at many critical points, particularly during the Mission's early years.

Any assessment of a hybrid operation should begin by recognising the different capacities of each organisation. The UN is far larger, far better funded, and can draw upon a deep bench of personnel with decades of peacekeeping management experience. The UN has a dedicated Department of Peace Operations (DPO) that has, over nearly 30 years, developed a comprehensive set of policies and procedures. By contrast, when UNAMID deployed in 2007, the AU had only been conducting peace operations for four years, relying on a handful of planners in Addis Ababa. At the same time, an organisation like the AU could more effectively deliver messages to the government on certain issues and could bring the weight of respected former African presidents like Thabo Mbeki. While the UN has a larger and geopolitically more powerful membership, its attention is diffused broadly, even on matters of international peace and security.

Some negative views of the hybrid framework emanated from its origins as a compromise with the Government of Sudan that was only accepted by the UN under duress. As Guéhenno writes, "the [Security] Council would hide its humiliation [after the failure to expand UNMIS into Darfur in resolution 1706] by accepting a bad compromise at the expense of the UN: the 'hybrid mission.'"¹³⁹ During the period of UNAMID's deployment, moreover, there was no united political approach to Darfur, with the AUPD offering subtle criticism of the Joint Chief Mediator, and UNAMID sitting on the political side-lines (see section two above). In addition, the AU and UN had never embarked on a hybrid mission before and needed to improvise working methods in the midst of chaotic events on the ground and significant international pressure.

139 Guéhenno, 2015, loc 4215.

Every interlocutor with whom the study team spoke agreed that, for routine operational purposes, UNAMID was effectively a UN mission as its structures, processes and procedures – military, police and civilian – were all based on other UN operations. Most interlocutors also agreed that having a single operational lead did not create problems and found that the AU elements of UNAMID entered primarily, perhaps exclusively, at the political-strategic level. Many AU officials and UNAMID staff argued that the political weight of the AU brought important leverage for the Mission's operations. UNAMID personnel cited, for instance, the added value of AU support when pressing the government to issue visas and clear logistical blockages, and when engaging national counterparts in a variety of activities.

On the other hand, some interviewees viewed the hybrid arrangement as creating another layer of bureaucracy in an already unwieldy system of UN peacekeeping. They also argued that the hybrid framework created another set of actors with whom the government could seek to negotiate: if New York did not give them an answer they liked, they could turn to Addis Ababa, and vice-versa. At the same time, governments operating from positions of relative weakness regularly play other actors against one another, regardless of whether or not these actors are engaged in a hybrid operation together. Overall, interlocutors stressed that both organisations brought comparative advantages to the situation, while some questioned whether a joint operation was the best way of utilising and maximising these comparative advantages.

The later years of the Mission saw the hybrid framework become more effective as the AU and the UN became more practised in their cooperation, with established relationships at the headquarters level, and as the two organisations developed a clearer division of responsibilities and a more established political strategy. These changes reflected the overall deepened and more mature AU-UN strategic partnership, which also found its expression in intensified Council-to-Council relations, desk-to-desk cooperation, and concrete operational cooperation in Somalia and elsewhere.¹⁴⁰ From 2014 onwards, for instance, the AU and UN conducted strategic reviews of UNAMID jointly. These joint reviews contributed to more coherent political strategies and afforded the government less opportunity to play one organisation off against the other, while retaining the benefit of senior AU officials to deliver messages that would have been difficult for the UN to issue. The hybrid framework thus generated opportunities for added political leverage while also creating the potential for added bureaucracy and, when the joined entities were not clear on their strategy and expectations, the potential to exploit divisions. These disadvantages were mitigated in time but hampered UNAMID in its early years.

Hybridity is one option on a spectrum that should be considered when deciding how to maximise the UN and AU's comparative advantages in a given context. The experience of UNAMID shows that a hybrid operation bears the risk of transactional costs, but it can work where there is a joint political and operational strategy.

140 For an analysis of this evolving AU-UN peacekeeping relationship, see, for example, Paul D. William and Arthur Boutellis, 'Partnership Peacekeeping: Challenges and opportunities in the United Nations-African Union Relationship', *African Affairs* (2014) 113(451).

Summary of key explanatory factors

In our assessment and explanation of mission impact we consider and draw on the explanatory factors suggested in the common EPON methodology. These are 1) political primacy; 2) realistic mandates and matching resources; 3) legitimacy and credibility; 4) people-centred approach; 5) coordination and coherence; and 6) women, peace and security (WPS).

Political primacy: UNAMID's political freedom of movement has been significantly restricted throughout its tenure by its limited role in the mediation process; the lack of real commitment from the parties involved in the process; the fractured strategic political support from the UN, AU and key regional and international states; and its difficult relationship with the government. In short, UNAMID has expended significant effort on political engagement in a context in which political progress is hampered by almost every factor generally considered necessary for success.

Realistic mandates and matching resources: While UNAMID was often considered a well-funded mission, its budget did not always translate into operational capacity. It never received some of the critical enablers that were part of its original conception. Government objections to troop-contributing countries (TCCs) and denials of visas for civilian staff, restrictions on movement, and customs delays severely undercut the Mission's capacity. Whether UNAMID's mandate was realistic is a difficult question to answer, but key mandated tasks around POC and human rights were at odds with government priorities and its preferred strategies for managing the Darfur conflict.

Legitimacy and credibility: UNAMID's legitimacy and credibility suffered from the outset due to a contentious mandating process and fractured political strategy; the government's disinterest in cooperation and active obstruction at many points; and the absence of a consistent, countervailing from the UN, AU and other stakeholders. Similarly, UNAMID faced challenges establishing its credibility in the eyes of the population. IDP communities have viewed its protection activities as insufficient, and its mandate often placed it on one side of a non-inclusive peace. UNAMID has generally not experienced the scandals of other missions, however, and many of its un-mandated impacts have been positive, such as boosting local economies and providing salaries and capacity-building for Darfuri staff.

People-centred approach: UNAMID's mandate is fundamentally people-centred and its work included an important focus on communities. At the same time, the Mission's experience shows how difficult it is to execute such mandates when protection, human rights, and inclusive politics run counter to government policy. The highly politicised nature of Darfur created challenges for UNAMID to engage with communities meaningfully when the government was generally opposed to such engagement and UNAMID was mandated to implement peace agreements that the leaders of many communities nominally opposed (such as the supporters of Abdul Wahid).

Coordination and coherence: The early years of the Mission saw a lack of strategic coherence between the UN, AU and other bilateral actors, including the US. UNAMID is not an integrated mission, and its relations with the wider UN system were at times strained due to its structure and regional rather than national mandate.

Women, peace and security (WPS): While UNAMID's mandate made little reference to WPS, the Mission worked creatively to support women's empowerment in Darfur, including supporting women's participation in the mediation process. UNAMID's mandate also always had a strong emphasis on the protection of women and girls from sexual violence, and the Mission expended significant resources in this regard. It developed initiatives, such as firewood patrols, to focus resources on places where women are most vulnerable.

4. Transition in a revolution: Challenges, approaches, lessons

Beginning in 2017, UNAMID began a process of mission “transition”, the gradual drawdown and handing over of tasks to other actors, including the government and UN agencies.¹⁴¹ The transition did not emerge from a context of conflict resolution or a trend towards genuine peace. Unlike some of the recent UN peacekeeping transitions in West Africa, planning for UNAMID’s exit also did not follow progress in the pursuit of a shared agenda between the AU and UN partners and the government. Instead, Sudan’s longstanding wish to see the Mission depart, pressures in the UNSC to cut peacekeeping costs, a degree of fatigue with the challenges faced by UNAMID, and an improved security situation culminated in a rare moment of agreement in 2017-2018 between the AUPSC, UNSC, UN Secretariat, and the Government of Sudan on UNAMID’s future. The Darfur conflict was not resolved, but keeping UNAMID on the ground did not seem to change that calculus significantly. In 2019, political upheaval in Sudan, however, changed the context for the transition. As a result, the scenario upon which the transition plans were premised was never realised. More recently, the outbreak of COVID-19 has presented further challenges for the Mission.

While the situation in 2017-2018 – a hostile government, defeated rebels, and dwindling western interests and budgets – presented a reasonable rationale for planning UNAMID’s exit, this rationale was changed entirely by the revolution and events on the ground. Violence in Darfur

141 See UN Policy on Transitions in the Context of Mission Drawdown or Withdrawal (4 February 2013), <[unicefnigeria.com/downloads/eresource/docs/UN%20Integrated%20Presences/Policy%20on%20UN%20Transitions%20in%20the%20context%20of%20mission%20drawdown%20or%20withdrawal_SG%20endorsed.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/downloads/eresource/docs/UN%20Integrated%20Presences/Policy%20on%20UN%20Transitions%20in%20the%20context%20of%20mission%20drawdown%20or%20withdrawal_SG%20endorsed.pdf)>.

is increasing at the time of writing and the UN's new political mission, UNITAMS, has been significantly delayed, yet strong voices in the UNSC and the Sudanese government continue to advocate for UNAMID's closure in 2020. The Juba Agreement endorsed in late August 2020 is a significant achievement, but it will take time to show results on the ground and will not automatically lead to a reduction in the current levels of violence in Darfur. Despite significant risks to Darfur's stability, one of the UN and AU's most significant tools for conflict prevention appears set to exit.

UNAMID's transition did not emerge from a context of conflict resolution or progress in the pursuit of a shared agenda between the AU and UN partners and the government.

The transition

Discussions on an exit strategy for UNAMID have been underway since 2014,¹⁴² and the government had long pressed the AU and UN to withdraw the Mission. The increased security in Darfur after 2016 and a nominally successful referendum seemed to make that possible, even if the conflict's root causes remained unaddressed in many respects. A 2017 review of the Mission proposed a two-pronged approach for UNAMID: a peacekeeping-oriented approach in Jebel Marra, and a peacebuilding-oriented approach in all other parts of Darfur.

The two-pronged approach began a significant reconfiguration of the Mission, followed by a transition plan approved in 2018.¹⁴³ Together they entailed a rapid drawdown of UNAMID personnel. From an authorised strength of more than 19,000 military and police in 2016, the UNSC cut its troop and police levels by 65% (to 4,050 troops and 2,500 police), and UNAMID closed 29 bases by early 2019.¹⁴⁴ The 2018 transition plan also called for a full withdrawal of UNAMID by June 2020, as long as there were no significant changes to the security situation and exit benchmarks were met. These benchmarks – outlined in the June 2018 special report to the UNSC by the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the AU Commission – were based on the DDPD and were ostensibly targets upon which the government and LJM rebels had already agreed. However, many of the benchmarks were so vaguely stated that they were (and remain) difficult to assess, such as “Reform of some military institutions,” “Mechanisms in place to ensure necessary conditions for return of internally displaced persons,” and “Promotion

142 See Security Council Resolution 2173 (S/RES/2173, 2014).

143 Security Council Resolution 2429 (S/RES/2429, 2018), para. 3.

144 Ibid, paras 2, 5; Special report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Secretary-General of the UN on the strategic review of the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2018/530, 2018), paras 39-41.

of human rights and fundamental freedoms.”¹⁴⁵ A year later, the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the AU Commission in their report to the UNSC proposed transforming the exit benchmarks into longer-term indicators which would remain relevant after UNAMID’s departure.¹⁴⁶ The 2018 transition plan also introduced new ways of integrating mission and country team efforts: UNAMID would implement parts of its mandate through State Liaison Functions (SLFs), seconding UNAMID staff to UN agencies and funding their activities (see the textbox for further information).

The Darfur conflict was not resolved, but keeping UNAMID on the ground did not seem to change that calculus significantly.

The Security Council subsequently “took note” of the timeline, however, without effectively endorsing the suggested 2020 exit date. In fact, some Security Council Members, just as experts, human rights groups and Sudanese civil society, questioned whether the time was right for such a speedy departure of the peacekeepers. They highlighted in particular the large numbers of IDPs, the fragility of the security situation with new risks emerging from the proliferation of militias, as well as the need for continued human rights monitoring and reporting.¹⁴⁷ The June 2018 report outlining the transition concept had clearly highlighted that the Mission reconfiguration and envisioned cuts would “no longer allow UNAMID to continue the monitoring, verification and reporting of protection of civilians’ issues outside the greater Jebel Marra area.”¹⁴⁸

145 Ibid, annex: Indicators of achievement for the proposed two-year time frame for the withdrawal of the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur.

146 See Special report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Secretary-General of the UN on the strategic assessment of the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2019/445, 2019), para. 43.

147 See, for example, Richard Gowan, ‘Darfur Highlights the Challenge of Shuttering UN Peacekeeping Missions’ (Tampa, World Politics Review, 23 July 2018) <worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/25181/darfur-highlights-the-challenge-of-shuttering-u-n-peacekeeping-missions>; Human Rights Watch, ‘UN: Drastic Cuts to Darfur mission misguided’ (New York, Human Rights Watch, 14 June 2017), <hrw.org/news/2017/06/14/un-drastic-cuts-darfur-mission-misguided>; Human Rights Watch, ‘UN planned cuts to Darfur Mission risk rights protection’ (New York, Human Rights Watch, 18 June 2018), <hrw.org/news/2018/06/18/sudan-uns-planned-cuts-darfur-mission-risk-rights-protection>; Sudan Democracy First Group, ‘United Nations Security Council accelerated proposal for UNAMID withdrawal: The safety of civilians in Darfur is not for political trade’ (Khartoum, Sudan Democracy First Group, 1 June 2018), <democracyfirstgroup.org/united-nations-security-councils-accelerated-proposal-for-unamid-withdrawal-the-safety-of-civilians-in-darfur-is-not-for-political-trade>; Sudan Democracy First Group, ‘Downsizing UNAMID: A potentially fatal mistake’ (Khartoum, Sudan Democracy First Group, 26 June 2017), <democracyfirstgroup.org/downsizing-unamid-a-potentially-fatal-mistake>.

148 Special report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Secretary-General of the UN on the strategic review of the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2018/530, 2018), para. 56.

The revolution

The 2018 transition plan occurred, however, less than six months before one of the most significant events in Sudan's post-independence history: the fall of President al-Bashir. Beginning in December 2018, a courageous, effective and broad-based protest movement took to the streets, beginning in the industrial heartland north of Khartoum and taking root quickly in the capital. Rising food and fuel prices had initially sparked the protests, which soon turned into calls for an end to al-Bashir's reign. Despite having survived wars, sanctions, and a number of other protest movements, on 11 April 2019, the Sudanese military ousted Sudan's longest-serving ruler. A Transitional Military Council (TMC) took power, but protests continued, now calling for a civilian government.

The 2018 transition plan occurred less than six months before one of the most significant events in Sudan's post-independence history: the fall of President al-Bashir.

Despite momentous change in the centre of the country, the UN Secretary-General and AU Chairperson in their May 2019 special report found “no strategic reversal” in the “positive trajectory” of UNAMID's withdrawal and recommended to continue the exit plan with a target of June 2020 for complete departure.¹⁴⁹ However, the TMC's takeover raised issues of legality and legitimacy for the Mission's transition and, in particular, whether UNAMID's withdrawal and handover of responsibilities and assets could and should continue while there was an unelected, military government. These concerns were particularly acute as former janjaweed leader and commander of the RSF Hemedti had a prominent role in the TMC, formally serving as TMC's number two officer, but believed to be its strongest figure. For some, continuing the handover of team sites in this situation came close to handing over UN assets to those very forces that had necessitated the deployment of the peacekeepers 12 years earlier.¹⁵⁰

Since 2017, there had been discussions and criticism that UNAMID team sites handed over to local authorities were being used by security forces, including the RSF.¹⁵¹ In May 2019, the UN and AU reported that the majority of the 23 team sites already handed over were being used by security forces in contravention of an agreement with the government on the civilian use of

149 Special report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Secretary-General of the UN on the strategic review of the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2019/445, 2019), para. 40.

150 See also Amnesty International, ‘Sudan: Fresh evidence of government-sponsored crimes in Darfur shows drawdown of peacekeepers premature and reckless’ (London, Amnesty International, 11 June 2019), <[amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/sudan-fresh-evidence-of-government-sponsored-crimes-in-darfur-shows-drawdown-of-peacekeepers-premature-and-reckless](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/sudan-fresh-evidence-of-government-sponsored-crimes-in-darfur-shows-drawdown-of-peacekeepers-premature-and-reckless)>.

151 See, for example, Radio Dabanga, ‘UNAMID concerned over allegations of improper team site handovers’ (Amsterdam, Radio Dabanga, 11 September 2017), <[dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/unamid-concerned-over-allegations-of-improper-team-site-handovers](https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/unamid-concerned-over-allegations-of-improper-team-site-handovers)>.

UNAMID team sites. The TMC also issued a decree in May 2019 that UNAMID team sites be handed over to the RSF.¹⁵² Eventually, these developments forced the AU and UN to halt the handover of team sites, as Under-Secretary-General (USG) Jean Pierre Lacroix reported to the Security Council in June 2019.¹⁵³

Public calls for halting UNAMID's transition and revisiting its strategy and timeline became louder and more frequent after security forces attempted to break up protester camps violently in Khartoum on 3 June 2019, killing more than 100 civilians and raping women, with reports alleging heavy RSF involvement.¹⁵⁴ This brought swift condemnation from the UN, AU and many of both organisations' Member States and put a halt to any negotiations between the TMC and the protest movement.¹⁵⁵ On 6 June, the AUPSC suspended Sudan until power was handed over to a civilian-led government.

Calls to revisit UNAMID's drawdown plan persisted even after the Security Council decided on a technical rollover and extended UNAMID's mandate for a little more than four months, pausing its drawdown until the end of October 2019.¹⁵⁶ Though some Security Council Members, including but not only the co-penholders for UNAMID (the UK and Germany), advocated for a cautious approach to the withdrawal, others, notably Russia and China as well as the US, were eager to progress and see UNAMID exit by mid-2020.¹⁵⁷ The AUPSC had early on stated "its conviction that UNAMID exit should not create a vacuum and expose the long suffering

152 See Special report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Secretary-General of the UN on the strategic assessment of the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2019/445, 2019), para. 51. The decree was also published by Foreign Policy on 7 June 2019. See Column Lynch, 'Sudan's Paramilitaries are Seizing Abandoned U.N. Outposts in Darfur' (Washington, DC, Foreign Policy, 7 June 2019), <foreignpolicy.com/2019/06/07/document-of-the-week-sudans-paramilitaries-are-seizing-abandoned-u-n-outposts-in-darfur>.

153 On 14 June 2019, USG Lacroix told the Council in a briefing on Darfur that "Given these developments, we have had no choice but to suspend the handover of UNAMID sites to the Sudanese authorities until the TMC decree is rescinded". See UN News, 'UN suspending handover of camps in Darfur, peacekeeping chief tells Security Council' (New York, UN News, 14 June 2019), <news.un.org/en/story/2019/06/1040501>. The decree was rescinded on 23 June 2019.

154 See, for example, Shewit Woldemichael, 'Is Sudan Ready for UNAMID's exit?' (Pretoria, Institute for Security Studies, 1 July 2019), <issafrica.org/iss-today/is-sudan-ready-for-unamids-exit?utm_source=BenchmarkEmail&utm_campaign=ISS_Today&utm_medium=email>; France24, 'Amnesty, HRW warn UN against Sudan pullout' (Paris, France24, 12 June 2019), <france24.com/en/20190612-amnesty-hrw-warn-un-against-sudan-pullout>; Aly Verjee, 'In Downsizing the UN-AU Mission in Darfur, First Do No Harm' (Washington, DC, US Institute of Peace, 4 June 2019), <usip.org/publications/2019/06/downsizing-un-au-mission-darfur-first-do-no-harm>.

155 See, for example, UN News, 'Sudan: UN chief deplores excessive force used against pro-democracy protesters, calls on military and civilian leaders to "stay the course" in negotiations' (New York, UN News, 3 June 2019), <news.un.org/en/story/2019/06/1039701>; AU, 'Statement of the Chairperson on the situation in Sudan' (Addis Ababa, AU Press Release, 3 June 2019), <au.int/en/pressreleases/20190603/statement-chairperson-situation-sudan>; US Department of State, 'Joint Statement on Developments in the Sudan' (Washington, DC, US Department of State, 4 June 2019), <state.gov/joint-statement-on-developments-in-sudan>.

156 See Security Council Resolution 2479 (S/RES/2479, 2019). For an analysis, see Daniel Forti, 'Security Council pauses UNAMID's drawdown while core transition questions remain' (New York, International Peace Institute, 3 July 2019), <theglobalobservatory.org/2019/07/security-council-pauses-unamid-drawdown-core-questions-remain>.

157 Interview with diplomat. See also Priyal Singh and Daniel Forti, 'Can the AU and UN maintain common ground in support of Sudan's transition?' (New York, International Peace Institute, 8 August 2019), <theglobalobservatory.org/2019/08/can-au-un-maintain-common-ground-support-sudan-transition>.

civilian populations to renewed risks; therefore, stresses that UNAMID should not, in any circumstances, hand over security responsibility to the RSF as decided by the TMC.”¹⁵⁸

The new dispensation

The TMC and leaders of the protest movement quickly reached agreement on transitional arrangements when, after the June 2019 killings in Khartoum, talks eventually resumed. The 17 August 2019 Constitutional Declaration formalises the agreements on a transitional government and power-sharing during a transitional period, concluding with general elections after 39 months (by late 2022).

On 26 August, the TMC was replaced by a Sovereign Council, serving as a collective head of state during the interim period and made up of civilian and military representatives, the former drawn from the leadership of the protest movement. A civilian Prime Minister, the respected economist and former UN official Abdallah Hamdok was inaugurated. Following the first consultations with the new government, the AU and UN proposed a roadmap in support of the Sudanese transition, including elements for a follow-on mission in Sudan.¹⁵⁹ In October 2019, and at the request of Prime Minister Hamdok, the AUPSC and UNSC extended the mandate of UNAMID, maintaining its current strength until October 2020. The new government’s request for an extension and its openness towards UNAMID in general was a sharp reversal from the position of the al-Bashir regime.

The new government’s request for an extension and its openness towards UNAMID in general was a sharp reversal from the position of the al-Bashir regime.

Early in 2020, Prime Minister Hamdok, in two separate letters to the Secretary-General, conveyed the government’s preference that a follow-on mission to UNAMID would be a “Chapter VI” special political mission covering the entire territory of Sudan.¹⁶⁰ In line with this request, the UN Secretary-General and Chairperson of the AU Commission tabled suggestions for a

158 See AU Peace and Security Council communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.(DCCCXLVI) (13 June 2019). For a more in-depth discussion of the dynamics between the two Councils, see Singh and Forti, 2019; Forti, 2019, pp. 19–20.

159 Special report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Secretary-General of the UN on the strategic review of the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2019/816, 2019).

160 Letter dated 31 January 2020 from the Prime Minister of Sudan addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2020/77, 2020). The second letter, which was sent a month later and after consultations among “Sovereign Council, Council of Ministers and the political class in Sudan,” requested support for fewer tasks, and the first letter was eventually withdrawn. See letter dated 27 February 2020 from the Prime Minister of Sudan addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2020/221, 2020).

follow-on mission in their March 2020 report to the UNSC.¹⁶¹ Human Rights Watch criticised these suggestions as falling short of protection needs in Darfur. Rebel groups, too, voiced their objection with the Sudan Liberation Movement-Transitional Council (SLM-TC), a party to the Juba process, demanding in a statement a continuation of UNAMID or a follow-on presence under Chapter VII.¹⁶² Sudanese activists stressed that UNAMID was still needed, highlighting recent security incidents, but also the population's lack of trust in the security forces.¹⁶³ Most notably, almost 100 representatives of Sudanese civil society in a petition to Prime Minister Hamdok called on him to demand an extension and strengthening of UNAMID, as well as a Chapter VII mandate with an emphasis on civilian protection for a follow-on mission.¹⁶⁴

Communities in and around Golo, for instance, were unanimous in their assessment that the security situation had improved considerably since UNAMID's arrival in Jebel Marra.

These calls echoed concerns voiced during the EPON team's community consultations in Jebel Marra at the beginning of 2020. Communities in and around Golo, for instance, were unanimous in their assessment that the security situation had improved considerably since UNAMID's arrival in Jebel Marra. They spoke out for a continuation of UNAMID and were vocal about their concerns with UNAMID's planned exit. In a statement echoed by many community members, one participant said, "when UNAMID leaves, we will also leave." The EPON team's wider focus group discussion identified a general feeling of insecurity in Darfur among most communities. When asked whether their overall situation will worsen or improve after UNAMID leaves, the average overall score for all the communities (including Arab nomads, IDPs, and host groups) was 1.7 (with 1 being "much worse" and 5 "much improved") (see the Appendix for further details).

Meanwhile, government officials, possibly spurred by a leaked mandate draft¹⁶⁵ for a successor mission with a "Chapter VII" mandate, stressed that they did not want a further extension of

161 Special report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Secretary-General of the UN on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and a follow-on presence (S/2020/2020, 2020), paras 47-75.

162 See Sudan Tribune, 'Armed groups call to maintain Darfur peacekeeping mission' (Paris, Sudan Tribune, 1 May 2020), <sudantribune.com/spip.php?article69279>.

163 See, for example, Adeb Yousif, 'Peacekeeping presence is desperately needed in Darfur' (Paris, Sudan Tribune, 9 May 2020), <sudantribune.com/spip.php?article69309>; Niemat Ahmadi, 'Pulling peacekeepers from Darfur will be a murderous mistake' (New York, Passblue, 27 May 2020), <<http://www.passblue.com/2020/05/27/pulling-peacekeepers-from-darfur-will-be-a-murderous-mistake/>>.

164 End Impunity Organization, 'Petition from Sudanese civil society organizations to the Prime Minister of Sudan, His Excellency Abdalla Hamdok' (Khartoum, End Impunity Organization, 4 May 2020), <end-impunity.org/press-release/petition-prime-minister-hamdok-sudanese-civil-society-organizations>. See also Zeinab Mohammed Salih, 'Halt plan to withdrawn peacekeepers, UN urged' (London, The Guardian, 28 May 2020), <theguardian.com/global-development/2020/may/28/halt-plan-to-withdraw-sudan-peacekeepers-un-urged-darfur>.

165 Edith M Lederer and Justin Lynch, 'Proposed UN resolution would support Sudan's peace efforts' (New York, Associated Press, 18 March 2020), <apnews.com/439923c48764b6d9470ac646fb69990c>.

UNAMID, nor troops as part of a follow-on mission.¹⁶⁶ At the same time, the government put forward a national strategy for the protection of civilians, serving as a statement of commitment. However, with many details left unspecified and political questions unaddressed, the strategy appears more aspirational than actionable.¹⁶⁷ On 4 June 2020, the UNSC passed two resolutions on Sudan, one mandating UNITAMS, an integrated special political mission with responsibility for the whole of Sudan,¹⁶⁸ and one extending UNAMID until the end of the year, maintaining current troop levels, and focusing UNAMID's mandate on the protection of civilians as the Mission's strategic priority.¹⁶⁹

The Security Council was careful to cabin the operational responsibilities of UNITAMS, but its mandated goals are still ambitious, including assisting the political transition to democracy and human rights promotion in a country with a very fragile new balance of power and where old-guard military actors retain significant influence; supporting the implementation of peace agreements, including the subsequently-completed Juba Agreement (described below); assisting in peacebuilding, the protection of civilians and the rule of law; and supporting the mobilisation of economic and development assistance for a country in the midst of a deep economic crisis.

Renewed negotiations

Significantly, the government and representatives from SLA-MM and JEM (along with one of the rebel leaders from SPLM-N, Malik Agar), under the SRF umbrella, initialled the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Transitional Government of Sudan, the SRF and the SLM-MM on 31 August 2020 (Juba Agreement).¹⁷⁰ Observers found that, in a change from past negotiation processes, the government utilised the process to reach a broad agreement in good faith, rather than seeking to sow divisions among the rebel groups.¹⁷¹ Unfortunately, in an echo of past agreements, the Juba Agreement so far lacks acceptance from the two most significant military actors in the country, the SLA led by Abdul Wahid, and the SPLM-N led by Abdul Aziz Al-Hilu.¹⁷²

166 See The North Africa Post, 'Sudan wants no more UNAMID in Darfur' (Rabat, North Africa Post, 28 May 2020), <northafricapost.com/41271-sudan-wants-no-more-unamid-in-darfur.html>; Sudan Tribune, 'Al-Burhan reiterates Sudan's rejection of foreign troops with new UN mission' (Paris, Sudan Tribune, 18 May 2020), <sudantribune.com/spip.php?article69352>.

167 Letter dated 21 May 2020 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the UN addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2020/429, 1 June 2020).

168 Security Council Resolution 2524 (S/RES/ 2524, 2020).

169 Security Council Resolution 2525 (S/RES/2525, 2020).

170 On file with authors.

171 Interview with mediation expert.

172 At the time of writing, Al-Hilu signed a cessation of hostilities and declaration of principles with the Government of Sudan.

The Juba Agreement sets out wide-ranging commitments around federalism, power-sharing, and democratic reforms.¹⁷³ Many of these aspects enshrine an important set of rights around language and culture, particularly in Darfur and the Two Areas (the Blue Nile and South Kordofan), but also in the country as a whole. The SRF signatories received three seats on an expanded Sovereign Council, five seats (25%) on the Council of Ministers, and 25% of the seats in the transitional legislature.¹⁷⁴ Sudan will become a federal republic, with some powers reserved for Khartoum, others for the provinces, and others held jointly, though many of the details of the federal arrangements remain vague or left to be worked out. The precise contours of a federal Darfur within this new dispensation have also been left for future decision-making, although the agreement contains guarantees that Darfur will at least become a “region”, suggesting (though not explicitly delineating) a higher degree of regional autonomy.

The Darfur protocol of the Juba Agreement also includes important provisions for near-term security arrangements. While reported early drafts of the agreement specified a role for UNAMID as a security guarantor on issues such as IDP returns, the final agreement establishes a “security force” made up of 12,000 troops drawn equally from the rebels and government security forces (SAF, RSF, General Intelligence Service, and Sudan National Police). This security force would be responsible for a wide range of tasks, from stopping organised crime and separating warring communal militias to supporting the return of IDPs and protecting civilians. The agreement specifies 90 days of intensive joint training for the rebels and government forces, after which the security force would become operational (around 1 January 2021).

Where and how the rebel side of the security force would be formed also remains unclear. Recent estimates from the UN Panel of Experts for the Sudan place the combined strength of the Darfur rebel groups (excluding SLA-AW), almost all of whom are in Libya and South Sudan, at less than 2,000.¹⁷⁵ Abdul Wahid’s forces in Jebel Marra, were they to join, could potentially add an additional 1,000-2,000 fighters.¹⁷⁶ The Juba Agreement, then, carries the risk of rebel recruitment, with the Panel of Experts warning in January 2020 that progress in the peace process with the Government of Sudan has enticed the movements to recruit more members so as to have stronger claims in future security arrangements.¹⁷⁷

The Juba Agreement also establishes a Higher Joint Military Committee on security arrangements on which the UN and the AU hold seats, as well as a Permanent Ceasefire Committee that the UN chairs (the specific UN entity is unspecified in these passages). The Agreement

173 There is no official or widely used English translation of the Juba Agreement at the time of writing and this report utilises translations of terms from Arabic to English, such as “security force”, developed by the EPON team. It is possible that alternative formulations for the original Arabic will be popularised over time.

174 Based on an initial reading of the Juba Agreement, this would bring the Sovereign Council from its current 11 members to 14 members in total. The language of the Juba Agreement can also be interpreted to permit rebel groups that did not initially endorse the Juba Agreement to obtain representation on the Sovereign Council and other transitional government bodies after signing.

175 See Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan (S/2020/36, 2020).

176 See Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan (S/2019/34, 2019), para. 48.

177 See Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan (S/2020/36, 2020), para. 86.

calls upon the Permanent Ceasefire Committee and a “UN third party”, which is not specified further, to act as “guarantors” with an extensive set of responsibilities, including monitoring and documenting the implementation of the Agreement; maintaining close contact with the parties to enhance full compliance with all its provisions and to facilitate their efforts to achieve this goal; providing technical assistance and support for post-conflict activities; supporting the establishment of the bodies called for in the agreement; evaluating the Agreement’s implementation process and alerting the parties to any development that may cause delay; and assisting in mobilising the political and material support to implement the Agreement. At the time of writing, modalities for international – including UN and AU – support for the Juba Agreement are yet to be specified.

The horizon

The Juba Agreement offers new hope for a broad-based peace in Darfur, but sustained stability remains far from certain. The root causes of conflict persist, and Darfur remains deeply polarised. The region is far more militarised than it was 20 years ago, and thousands of fighters from both rebel groups and the RSF fight as mercenaries in Libya, with the potential to return home if events there change.

The Juba Agreement offers new hope for a broad-based peace in Darfur, but sustained stability remains far from certain.

There are also significant reasons to expect that the uncertainty accompanying the new political dispensation and the Juba Agreement will increase rather than decrease conflict in Darfur, at least in the short term. Since the fall of al-Bashir, violence and fatalities in Sudan have increased, with Southern Kordofan and Darfur most affected. Comparing conflict data from the months before and after al-Bashir’s fall (November 2018–October 2019) finds a 17% increase in civilian fatalities in Darfur.¹⁷⁸ The patterns of violence have also changed since the periods of battles between rebels and government from 2014–2016: violent conflict is now more often around urban centres and the involvement of irregular militias and paramilitary groups is more frequent.¹⁷⁹ In echoes of the Masalit wars of the 1990s, which were a triggering factor in the 2003 Darfur conflict (see section 2 above), violence escalated in El Geneina in January 2020 between Masalit and Arab nomads, with reports of RSF involvement, and an estimated 65 fatalities

¹⁷⁸ Analysis of ACLED data.

¹⁷⁹ ACLED, ‘Riders on the Storm’ (Geneva, ACLED, 27 August 2020), <<https://acleddata.com/2020/08/27/riders-on-the-storm-rebels-soldiers-and-paramilitaries-in-sudans-margins/>>.

and 46,000 people newly displaced. Further attacks against Masalit communities in Masteri occurred on 25 July 2020, leaving 61 people dead and more than 10,000 affected.¹⁸⁰

This rise in militia violence is a result of the power vacuum created by al-Bashir's fall and the scramble of pastoralist groups to show their continued strength. The Juba Agreement does not appear to address these dynamics fully, as Arab pastoralists were not included in the negotiations, just as with the DPA and DDPD. (The Abbala leader and RSF commander Hemedti took an active role in the Juba negotiations, but he, like al-Bashir, cannot broadly represent Darfur's Arab pastoralists). How Arab groups react to the potentially far-reaching re-distribution of power suggested by the Juba Agreement remains to be seen. However, unprovoked attacks on civilians suggest that the Arab pastoralists expect compensation for any re-distribution of resources from Darfur's post-bellum status quo.

The circumstances that led the UNSC to determine that peacekeeping was needed in Jebel Marra in 2017 have not substantially changed.

Abdul Wahid's forces also remain in Jebel Marra, and the circumstances that led the UNSC to determine that peacekeeping was needed in Jebel Marra in 2017 have not substantially changed. Fighting in Jebel Marra also arises from factional disputes between Abdul Wahid-allied commanders¹⁸¹ who are jockeying for position around the Juba peace negotiations. How the Juba Agreement will affect these dynamics is uncertain. The DDPD, for instance, led to an increase in activity by non-signatory rebel groups, setting the stage for the government's Operation Decisive Summer and significant violence against civilians. Time will tell whether the Juba Agreement has similar results.

The increase in conflict involving communal militias and rebel groups can be explained by the persistent root causes and drivers of conflict outlined in section one. Basic arrangements regarding political and economic representation, as well as land and resources, remain contested. Despite failing to address the core of these issues, the al-Bashir government imposed order through military force and a degree of predictability in the figure of the President's centralised authority. The new government, through its public messaging and through steps like the Juba Agreement, promises significant changes in Darfur. These changes will begin to fulfil the

180 See and compare Flint and de Waal, 2008, loc 1024 (on the Masalit wars of the 1990s) with recent reports of violence: UNAMID, 'UNAMID deeply concerned by reports of intercommunal violence in West Darfur' (Zalingei, UNAMID, 3 January 2020), <unamid.unmissions.org/unamid-deeply-concerned-reports-intercommunal-violence-west-darfur>; UNHCR, 'Violence in Sudan's Darfur forces thousands to flee' (Geneva, UNHCR, 28 January 2020), <unhcr.org/news/briefing/2020/1/5e2ff3bd4/violence-sudans-darfur-forces-thousands-flee.html>; Zeinab Mohammed Salih, 'In Darfur, civilians pay the price for new wave of deadly violence' (Doha, Al Jazeera, 9 August 2020), <aljazeera.com/news/2020/08/darfur-civilians-pay-price-wave-deadly-violence-200808160226155.html>.

181 ACLED, 2020, p. 12 (note that factional fighting within SLA-AW is disputed by the movement itself).

longstanding demands of rebels and IDP communities but come with a degree of uncertainty and at some cost for other groups, most importantly Arab nomads.

The rebel-government partnership in the integrated security force for Darfur also raises questions about its sustainability and implications. While any breakdown in this relationship could be disastrous, Hemedti has reportedly reached out to various rebels and their community leaders, arguing for Darfuri solidarity against the riverine Sudanese, which has gained traction in some corners.¹⁸² However, as the UN Panel of Experts for the Sudan notes, “political mobilization along the line dividing Darfuris and northern elites could have destabilizing consequences on the transition in the Sudan, including Darfur.”¹⁸³

Darfur also remains in a precarious part of the world. Just as conflicts in Libya and Chad were major drivers of the 2003 conflict, instability in those countries could provide the spark to set Darfur alight again. The Chadian president, Idriss Déby, has maintained power for 30 years with French military support but his country remains in dire economic straits and many analysts foresee instability.¹⁸⁴ Libya also remains unstable, its war providing an outlet and source of income for both the RSF and rebels from JEM and SLA-MM but leaving the potential for conflict should events there deteriorate further.¹⁸⁵

The Juba Agreement, while an important step, has the potential to create near-term risks that the country’s leadership should proactively address.

Sudan’s leaders and its people are navigating a momentous and challenging time. They deserve all the support that the UN, AU and their Member States can muster, but they should also recall the lessons of the past. The Juba Agreement, while an important step, has the potential to create near-term risks that the country’s leadership should proactively address. As with the DPA and DDPD before it, the Juba Agreement will create winners and losers, and the current period during which that competition is decided will be unstable. With Abdul Wahid

182 See Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan (S/2020/36, 2020), paras 62-63.

183 Ibid, para. 63.

184 International Crisis Group, ‘As Chad’s problems mount, what role for civil society?’ (New York, International Crisis Group, 2020), <[crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/chad/chads-problems-mount-what-role-civil-society](https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/chad/chads-problems-mount-what-role-civil-society)>; International Crisis Group, ‘Éviter la reprise des violences communitaires à l’Est du Tchad’ (New York, International Crisis Group, 2019), <d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/284-eviter-la-reprise-des%20violences.pdf>; François-Xavier Frelaud, ‘Tchad: la stabilité à tout prix?’ (Paris, Jeune Afrique, 12 November 2019), <jeuneafrique.com/mag/829300/politique/tchad-la-stabilite-a-tout-prix>; Vaya Tampa, ‘With total control, President Déby is Chad’s greatest threat to stability’ (London, The Guardian, 14 August 2020), <theguardian.com/global-development/2020/aug/14/president-deby-chad-greatest-threat-to-stability>.

185 See Final report of the Panel of Experts on Libya established pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1973 (2011) (S/2019/914, 2019), paras 21-26. However, also see denial of RSF involvement (and hence denial of Hemedti’s violation of UN sanctions) in Radio Dabanga, ‘Sudan’s RSF denies involvement in Libya’ (Amsterdam, Radio Dabanga, 15 January 2020), <dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-s-rsf-militia-denies-involvement-in-libya>.

a non-signatory, he and his commanders may choose to show their political value through violence. Arab nomads, excluded from the Juba Agreement just as they were excluded from the DPA and DDPD, are already doing the same. The increased political uncertainty may also push Darfur's "African" groups to re-arm and re-mobilise as well.

Challenges, approaches and lessons

Exit without a political settlement

While many past peacekeeping missions were able to exit with a marker of political stability, UNAMID appears set to exit before an inclusive political settlement is realised. In this respect, it may set a pattern for more missions in the future, such as MONUSCO, where there have been discussions for drawing down the force to a "thin blue line" along the flashpoints in Eastern Congo. As Richard Gowan noted in 2018:

[Darfur], Central African Republic, Mali, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo... All five [peacekeeping missions] face recurrent violence. None has a clear exit strategy. But Security Council members, notably the U.S., insist that these missions cannot continue indefinitely. So how will they end? ... A Sudanese official told the Council this month that "life in Darfur has returned to normal." If so, it is a pretty depressing version of normality... deciding when and how to draw a line under missions like UNAMID and MONUSCO could be one of the biggest political and ethical challenges the Security Council faces in the coming years.¹⁸⁶

How to close a mission in the context of an unfinished peace will always be a country-specific consideration. UNAMID's two-pronged approach, with peacebuilding activities in some areas and peacekeeping activities in others, is one potential option (though it may have been premature in Darfur). However, the recent increase in violence across Darfur – including in areas where peacekeepers withdrew and team sites closed in 2017 and 2018 – highlights the risks of complete withdrawal from areas where security assistance may still be needed. As noted above, the EPON team's community consultations in Jebel Marra revealed the extent to which the population still depends on protection by peacekeepers. The domestic and international debate on UNAMID's exit date reflects some of the same concerns. There are many potential options for a responsible exit for peacekeeping from Darfur, but they will likely require an approach that better adapts to changing conditions on the ground and the corresponding needs of the population. Implementing the Juba Agreement may highlight this lesson more quickly than most policymakers realise.

186 Richard Gowan, 'Darfur Highlights the Challenge of Shuttering UN Peacekeeping Missions' (Brooklyn, World Politics Review, 23 July 2018), <<https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/25181/darfur-highlights-the-challenge-of-shuttering-u-n-peacekeeping-missions>>.

“End state” versus “end date”

UNAMID had a well-developed transition plan, but fixing an “end date” alongside an “end state” made it difficult to adapt to changing circumstances. When the AU and UN first proposed a two-pronged approach to the Government of Sudan in 2015, UNAMID’s drawdown was linked to benchmarks. After the security situation improved and budgetary pressures in the UN intensified, the benchmarked exit received a target date of 2020. While the language of the UNSC suggested that the target date would be adjusted if benchmark conditions were not met, the 2020 date became the default assumption even in the face of radical changes on the ground.

UNAMID had a well-developed transition plan, but fixing an “end date” alongside an “end state” made it difficult to adapt to changing circumstances.

The drawdown and exit planning for UNAMID from 2015–2018 was likely premised on assumptions that no longer hold: first, that the Mission would achieve little in the face of obstruction from the al-Bashir regime if it stayed; and second, that despite al-Bashir’s flaws, he was an authoritative ruler who had managed to create a degree of stability in Darfur. The new government, of course, is much more welcoming to the UN, but al-Bashir’s fall introduces instability into a longstanding security architecture. The importance of peacekeepers on the ground is clear at a time of such risk.

The hard date on UNAMID’s withdrawal worsened the already rigid politics of certain UNSC Members, exacerbating divisions in the Council when it came time to discuss extending the Mission or adjusting its work to the evolving situation.¹⁸⁷ It also created obstacles to the Mission’s ability to adapt. Numerous UNAMID staff expressed frustration that they were forced to focus on downsizing plans rather than the substantive work of peacekeeping and peacebuilding at such a critical period. Many UNAMID personnel the team spoke to – civilian, military and police – felt that the Mission was leaving despite a continued risk of conflict. Even well-planned transitions, it should be recalled, absorb huge amounts of Mission resources, a fact compounded by simultaneous staffing cuts, the secondment of posts to the UN Country Team, and new needs emerging from Sudan’s political transition. With UNAMID reduced to a fraction of its former operating area, many UNAMID staff felt cut off from the events in Sudan and even Darfur, trapped in a bubble around Zalingei. While the morale of downsizing missions is always low and it is generally easy to find unhappy personnel, the hard date on UNAMID’s withdrawal in the face of a dynamic situation degraded the Mission’s ability to engage in mandate implementation when one of the most important obstacles to its work – government cooperation – had finally witnessed a breakthrough.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with diplomat.

State Liaison Functions

The push to draw down the Mission in the face of uncertainty led to one of the most remarkable recent developments in peacekeeping, the State Liaison Functions (SLFs). (See the textbox for a more complete description of the SLFs). While they have only been in place for little more than a year and a full assessment would be premature at the time of writing, three general lessons can be drawn at this stage. First, the SLFs are one of the most important and innovative initiatives of UNAMID and arguably one of the most important innovations in peacekeeping since the advent of integrated peacekeeping missions in 1999 in Sierra Leone. Second, SLFs benefit from a clear planning process and shared expectations from both the Secretariat and agencies, a process that would be facilitated by endorsement from Member States. Third, there are some important mission functions that the SLFs do not fulfil well because of their programmatic and apolitical approach.

The State Liaison Functions are one of the most important and innovative initiatives of UNAMID.

The SLF concept draws upon longstanding guidance around mission-agency complementarity and joint planning that has been given new force through the deployment of the peacekeeping staff and assessed budget funding to UN agencies. While this may sound like a small perhaps logical step, Darfur is the first place where a UN peacekeeping budget has been used to support UN agencies in this way after at least a decade of similar proposals.¹⁸⁸ Many peacekeeping contexts have at least a nominal shared strategy between the Mission and UNCT, but the SLF concept takes this planning process a step further and invests both partners in actual operations. It forces serious conversations about needs on the ground and respective capacities.

UNAMID's SLF staff are incorporated into UN agency programmes focused on four priority areas shared by UNAMID and the UNCT: rule of law; resilience, livelihoods and durable solutions for displaced and host communities; immediate service delivery for IDPs; and human rights.¹⁸⁹ The Mission's Protection of Civilians staff, for example, have been embedded in offices of the High Commissioner for Refugees, while many of its Rule of Law, Civil Affairs, and Police personnel are working in the UN Development Programme's (UNDP's) rule of law programmes. The SLF staff were initially based in areas that UNAMID had withdrawn from, with plans to introduce the SLF in Jebel Marra at the time of writing.¹⁹⁰

188 Early discussions on the UNMISS in 2010-2011, for instance, proposed the use of the Mission budget to support UN agency state-building programmes in the new country.

189 See "Concept note: UNAMID transitional presence and coordination with UN Country Team in four Darfur States (North, South, West and East Darfur)" (11 May 2019), pp. 1-2 (on file with author).

190 Interviews with UNAMID staff.

As may be expected for a new and innovative programme, the SLFs have faced challenges. The annual budget cycles of a mission are not aligned to the multi-year programmes used by UN agencies, for instance.¹⁹¹ For some large and well-funded UN agencies, moreover, the contribution of a handful of UNAMID staff did not appear to warrant the burden of significant planning and paperwork. Conversely, some UNAMID SLF staff felt that their secondment had been a rushed and poorly organised process, with some not receiving basic security items, such as radios, until after spending months with the agency office. These challenges are partly rooted in the fact that UNAMID and the UNCT recognise the Mission's apparent exit date and may be less willing to invest significant time and energy in a complex process that is ultimately time limited. If SLFs became a more established modality, more streamlined planning processes and more organised secondments could easily be envisioned. The support of Member States for the SLF modality in Darfur and future missions would create the kind of predictability that would support such planning.

A more substantive challenge to the SLFs results from the tensions that arise between political and humanitarian work and dilemmas around the prioritisation of Mission objectives and UN agency objectives. This dissonance was highlighted in the aftermath of the December 2019-January 2020 violence in El Geneina.¹⁹² Some SLF staff expressed the view that, after the outbreak of conflict in which an estimated 65 people were killed and which reportedly involved government elements, their skills in mediation and fact-finding went unused by UN agency supervisors who forbade them from engaging. On the one hand, this response is completely warranted. UN agencies, particularly humanitarian agencies, focus on the delivery of services and avoid political engagements. On the other hand, such politically sensitive contexts are precisely the kind of situations for which peacekeeping staff are trained and, in the aftermath of an event like the violence in El Geneina, may be important for maintaining stability. As one UN agency official acknowledged, conflict resolution is ideally carried out by national actors, but in Darfur there are currently no individuals or institutions that enjoy the confidence and trust of all parties.¹⁹³

191 For further details, see Forti, 2019.

192 Report of the Secretary-General of the UN on the strategic review of the UNAMID (S/2020/202), para. 11.

193 Interview with UN agency official.

State Liaison Functions

The State Liaison Functions (SLFs) are the implementation tool for the peacebuilding prong of the “two-pronged approach” proposed by the Secretary-General and Chairperson of the AU Commission in 2017, elaborated upon in 2018, and approved by the Security Council in Resolutions 2363 and 2429. Under the two-pronged approach, UNAMID closed its bases in most of Darfur, concentrating its peacekeeping personnel around the Jebel Marra, where the last rebel presence remained. Recognising that other areas of Darfur needed peacebuilding assistance, and that the UN Country team would take time to scale-up in these areas, UNAMID and the UNCT developed the SLF concept. This called for UNAMID to provide support (through staffing and project budgets) for functional areas based on the UNAMID mandate and UNCT priorities: 1) Human rights; 2) Rule of law (including police, justice and corrections); 3) Resilience and livelihoods, including durable solutions for IDPs; and 4) Immediate service delivery for IDPs. SLF staff retain an administrative reporting line to UNAMID but are managed substantively by the UN agencies to which they are assigned, and strategic coordination is carried out through a Joint Coordination Cell in Khartoum between the UNCT and UNAMID.

Figure 6: UNAMID and UNCT priorities in relation to SLFs

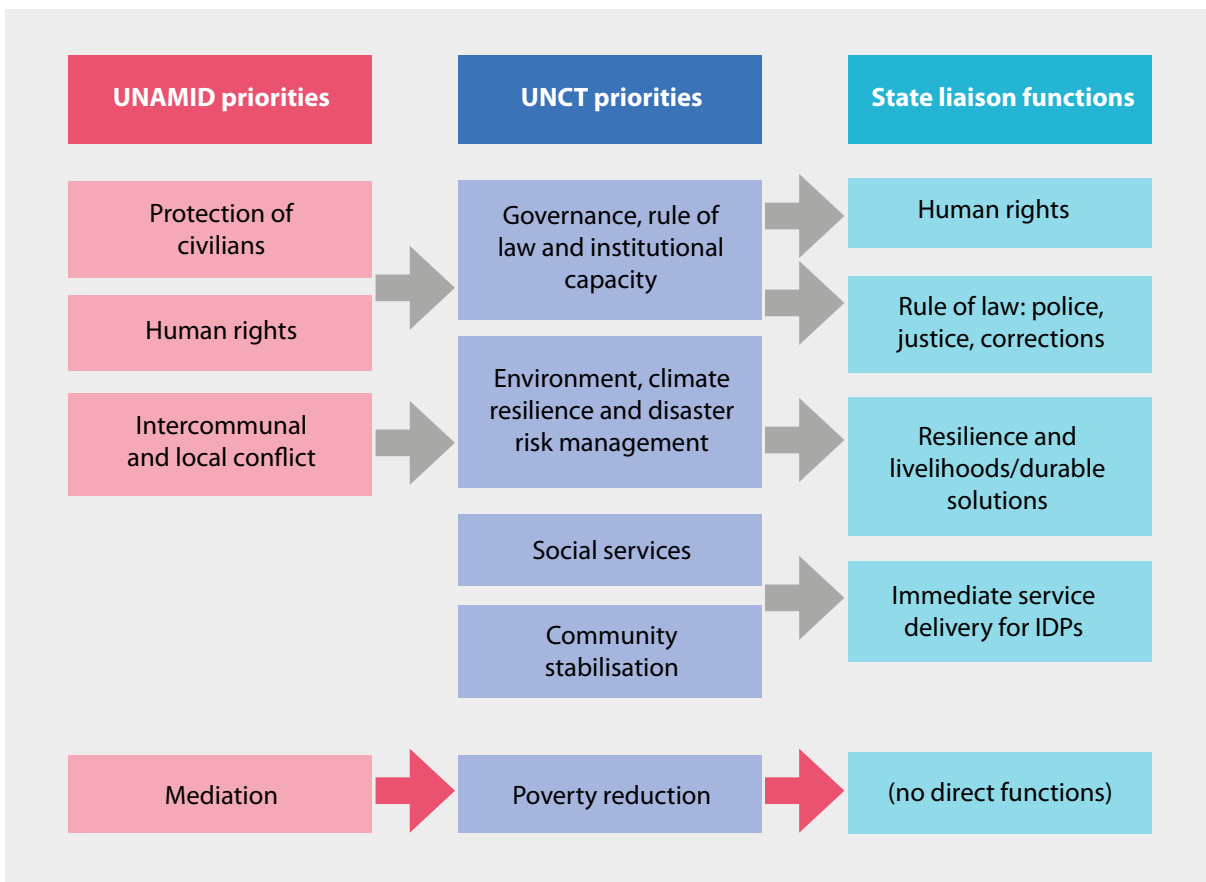


Figure 7: Map of SLFs in Sudan

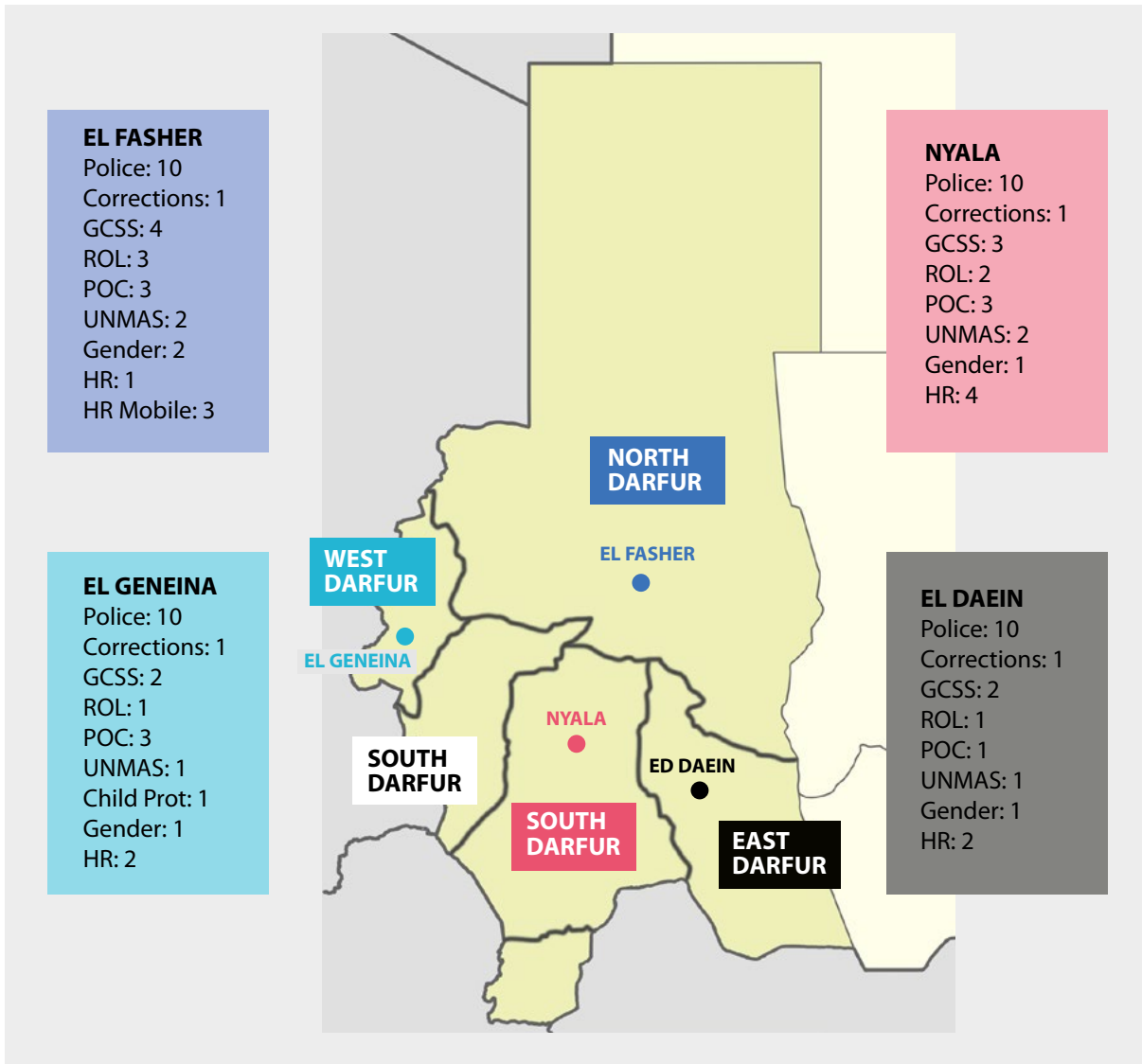


Table 4: UNAMID's transition 2017-2020

2017	Events
18 May 2017 STRATEGIC REVIEW	UN Secretary-General (UNSG) and Chairperson of the AU Commission suggest a two-pronged approach to mandate implementation, the closure of 11 team sites, and a reduction of the military component by 44% and the police component by 30%.
29 June 2017 RESOLUTION 2363	With S/RES/2363 of 29 June 2017, the UNSC decides to reduce UNAMID's uniformed personnel to 11,395 military and 2,888 police officers until 29 December 2017; and, in a second phase, to 8,735 soldiers and 2,500 police by 30 June 2018.

2018		Events
1 June 2018 STRATEGIC REVIEW		In S/2018/530, the UNSG and Chairperson of the AU Commission propose a concept for a two-year transition culminating in the closure of the Mission in June 2020.
June 2018 RESOLUTION 2429		With S/RES/2429, the Security Council extends UNAMID's mandate until 30 June 2019, and reduces its strength to 4,050 military personnel by June 2019, while the police strength remains at 2500 personnel.
2019		Events
11 April 2019		President Omar al-Bashir is deposed. Transitional Military Council (TMC) takes power.
13 May 2019		TMC issues decree that closed UNAMID team sites are to be handed over to the RSF.
14 May 2019		Geneina Sector HQ is looted on the eve of its handover to local authorities.
2019 STRATEGIC REVIEW		In S/2019/445, the UNSG and Chairperson of the AU Commission conclude that the political dynamics do not warrant a change in UNAMID's exit date, recommending different drawdown options for a June 2020 exit. They note that the majority of team sites handed over to GoS have been occupied by security forces.
2-3 June 2019		Security Forces forcefully break up a protest camp in Khartoum, with an estimated 100 persons killed and many more injured.
23 June 2019		TMC issues decrees on the civilian use of UNAMID team sites, rescinding the 13 May decree.
27 June 2019 RESOLUTION		With S/RES/2479, the Security Council extends UNAMID's mandate by four months without changes. Further reductions and drawdown are put on hold.
17 August 2019		Constitutional declaration on a transitional government and power-sharing during interim period. The declaration prioritises a solution for Sudan's remaining conflicts within six months.
26 August 2019		Sovereign Council and Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok sworn in.
22 October 2019		Letter by Prime Minister Hamdok requesting a one-year extension of UNAMID.

2019		Events
31 October 2019 RESOLUTION	With S/RES/2495, UNSC extends UNAMID until 31 October 2020; no changes to troop or police ceilings until 31 March; team sites, except Sector HQ South Darfur, remain active. Expresses intention to decide on UNAMID drawdown by 31 March and authorise a follow-on mission at the same time.	
27 December 2019	Former UNAMID Sector HQ Nyala (handed over on 19 November) is looted.	
2020		Events
January	Violence in El Geneina leaves an estimated 65 people dead and displaces an estimated 46 000.	
28 January	S/2020/77 – First Letter by Prime Minister Hamdok on follow-on presence.	
27 February	S/2020/221 – Second Letter by Prime Minister Hamdok on follow-on presence.	
12 March 2020 SPECIAL REPORT	Special Report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and UN Secretary-General on UNAMID and a follow-on presence.	
30 March 2020 RESOLUTION	S/RES/2517: technical rollover of UNAMID's mandate until 31 May 2020.	
June 2020 RESOLUTION	<p>S/RES/2524 establishes the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) upon the adoption of the resolution and for an initial period of 12 months.</p> <p>S/RES/2525 extends the mandate of UNAMID, as in S/RES/2495 (2019), until 31 December 2020, with current troop and police ceilings maintained during this period. UNSC expresses its intention to decide by 31 December 2020 on courses of action for the responsible drawdown and exit of UNAMID.</p> <p>UNSC decides that UNAMID's strategic priority to implement will be POC, as set out in S/RES/2495 para. 3(iii), including by supporting the GoS's capacity to protect civilians, and preserving the requisite capacity, particularly in Jebel Marra.</p>	

5. Conclusions

The story of Sudan is often told through a history of its civil wars rather than its democratic revolutions. President Omar al-Bashir is the third autocrat that the Sudanese people have brought down,¹⁹⁴ and this event creates hope that Sudan’s history can become one of the progressive realisation of rights and freedoms rather than one of repeated cycles of violence and repression. Nevertheless, the country faces dire economic circumstances, the COVID-19 pandemic, a humanitarian crisis, a complex balance of interests in Khartoum, and different interests from international actors. The relations of the centre to its peripheries also remain unresolved.

Many of the lessons learned from UNAMID between 2007 and 2020 will be valuable to future peacekeeping contexts. Some of these emerge from perennial challenges in the politics and operations of peacekeeping. Others are particularly relevant to Sudan’s new political dispensation and for the future of UNAMID and UNITAMS. We offer conclusions based on our research and engagement with a broad range of stakeholders in those two categories: the lessons learnt from the past and considerations for a future presence in Darfur.

194 Abboud Ibrahim stepped down following popular protests in 1964 and Jaafar Nimeiry was deposed in 1985.

Lessons from UNAMID

The primacy of coherent politics

The political process in Darfur suffered from a lack of agreement on a coherent political strategy among the most influential stakeholders seeking a resolution for the Darfur conflict, including the UN, AU, US and other international actors, as well as from the competing political demands of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the secession of South Sudan. Numerous actors echoed the importance of a unified approach to Sudan's conflicts, yet a clear political strategy to address these conflicts holistically never materialised. The fractured mediation landscape in Darfur created opportunities for the government to forum shop and play one organisation off against another. Relevant actors found consensus on one response – deploying the peacekeeping mission that became UNAMID – but they never provided sufficient or consistent political support for the Mission, particularly given the headwinds that it faced. The absence of a leading mediation role for most of UNAMID's tenure further resulted in a political-operational split that hurt both sides. Mediators had little sense of responsibility for the extensive, expensive and often dangerous operations that the Mission was charged with undertaking, while Mission leadership had little leverage to change the strategic context within which they operated.

The political process in Darfur suffered from a lack of agreement on a coherent political strategy among the most influential stakeholders seeking a resolution for the Darfur conflict

Host state consent and cooperation

The challenges that UNAMID faced in deploying without strong government commitment severely impacted the Mission even before it was on the ground. Having accepted the Mission only under political pressure, obstruction by the al-Bashir government increased as the political attention and focus of the AUPSC and UNSC waned. The UNSC and its future missions will need to recognise that the proposed core priorities of peace operations – whether mediation, the protection of civilians and human rights, or peacebuilding mandates around institutional support and police and justice reform – require real commitment from the government. Such commitment, and the leverage to obtain and maintain it, is highly dependent on the coherent political strategy described above, and on continuous political backing. Process-oriented solutions, such as compacts and sequenced mandates, are likely to have limited impact where the government's interests significantly diverge from mission objectives.

A people-centred approach

The UNSC deployed UNAMID with a people-centred mandate focused on the protection of civilians, the promotion of human rights, and the facilitation of inclusive political dialogue. The Mission's experience shows how difficult it is to execute these mandates and to maintain the trust of the population when protection, human rights, and inclusive politics run counter to government policy. While many missions face this difficult balance to some extent, UNAMID highlights the danger of a Mission with a clear human rights and protection mandate sacrificing its credibility in the interest of remaining on the ground. Nevertheless, voices from the communities testify the degree to which UNAMID did and does still make a difference to their protection.

The Mission's experience shows how difficult it is to execute these mandates and to maintain the trust of the population when protection, human rights, and inclusive politics run counter to government policy.

The hybrid partnership

UNAMID's hybrid design, while originally a compromise, created opportunities for greater political leverage that were not realised until late in the Mission's tenure. The hybrid partnership was always a political rather than an operational one and should be recognised as such. However, the inconsistent political approaches of the AU and UN to Darfur in the Mission's early years, along with the lack of experience in both the AU and UN in this type of collaboration, prevented the benefits of the hybrid approach from being realised initially. The hybrid partnership became more effective towards the end of the Mission, as joint ways of working became more established, and the international community's approach to Darfur became more consistent. While UNITAMS will be a UN mission rather than an AU-UN hybrid, the political partnership between AU and UN remains highly relevant.

Mission UNCT integration

Overall, UNAMID is a lesson in the strategic disconnect that can result between a peace-keeping mission and humanitarian and development communities when a mission is headquartered and focused in only one region and cut off from broader political issues and questions. While the arguments against "two feet in" integration (a "triple hat" Deputy Joint Special Representative (DJSR)) were strong for much of the Mission's tenure, the situation called for

creative arrangements to increase Mission-humanitarian coordination that never developed, particularly as Darfur's became a chronic humanitarian emergency.

At the same time, the use of the SLFs developed for UNAMID's transition is a remarkable achievement in strategic, system-wide budgeting by the UN. The approach is in line with the Secretary-General's emphasis on "delivering as one" and on developing common priorities that bridge the peace, development and humanitarian divides. While the SLF concept is a pilot strategy and it can be improved upon, it stands as an important proof-of-concept for what can be accomplished through the cooperation of UN entities and forward-thinking approaches from Member States.

Adapting transitions to change

UNAMID's transition process developed from early plans in 2015 to first steps in 2017 and a clear strategy – including a specific end date – in 2018. However, this was followed by political upheaval in the country that changed the situation on the ground as well as the basic planning assumptions. The resulting responses from some UNSC Members for the transition to continue as planned appeared uninformed at best and intentionally reckless at worst. The UNAMID experience highlights the degree to which flexibility in transitions is critical. While good transition planning is important and possible, the UNSC and Secretariat should be wary of attaching fixed dates to situations that remain fluid and unpredictable.

The fall of the al-Bashir regime has created medium-to-long-term opportunities for sustainable peace, but also short-term risks of instability and violence.

Looking ahead – Considerations for a future presence in Darfur

The fall of the al-Bashir regime has created medium-to-long-term opportunities for sustainable peace, but also short-term risks of instability and violence. While al-Bashir frequently turned to violence to resolve disputes, he was also adept at managing Sudan's security actors and maintaining a general monopoly on the use of force in most of the country. His fall creates a potential vacuum in this regard.

The Juba Agreement provides an important political framework for supporting peace and security in Darfur and other areas of Sudan. It can and should provide a bridge between UNAMID's 13-year presence in Darfur and the scaled-down approach requested by the Government of

Sudan and adopted by the Council in UNITAMS. The Juba Agreement provisions on the UN's role in monitoring and supporting the political and security situation provide ample opportunities to link core areas of peacekeeping expertise – ceasefire monitoring, military advice, police training, and support to local conflict resolution – with a political structure that feeds into issues affecting the whole of Sudan, and which UNITAMS will be best placed to address.

Accompanying the government and rebel movements in the process of implementing the Juba Agreement will be particularly important, however, as a situation where joint forces incorporate former enemies can lead to violence, as occurred in the Sudan-South Sudan context.¹⁹⁵ If the Agreement were to break down and elements of the joint security forces clashed, it could reignite the conflict. Instability in Chad and Libya could also aggravate the conflict dynamics in Darfur.

The Juba Agreement's ambition, however, appears at the moment to exceed the investment of the UN, AU and other actors in supporting its implementation. The Government of Sudan also appears reluctant, at the time of writing, to request a further extension of UNAMID or a similar, short-term security advice and assistance mechanism under UN or AU auspices. While extending UNAMID or mandating a similar presence will not address all of the challenges in Sudan, it can assist the government to focus its attention on pressing economic issues while advancing other core issues in the Juba Agreement. The following section outlines lessons from UNAMID's successes and challenges that are relevant to the Sudanese government, the UN and the AU as they consider their future support for Sudan.

Advice to the joint security force

A key role for the UN in Darfur could be providing advice and capacity-building to the joint security force. This is a highly-skilled role that will require senior officers capable of extended deployments to understand the context and develop relationships. Civilian military experts should be considered for these reasons, but it is unlikely that the UN will find enough civilians with a military background who are able to deploy within a short time. Serious consideration should therefore be given to seconded military experts, with strategic and political direction from Mission headquarters. Fundamentally, developing the joint security force should be recognised as a political enterprise rather than a technical exercise.

195 See, for instance, Human Rights Watch, 'Sudan: Prevent recurrence of violence against civilians in Southern town' (New York, Human Rights Watch, 21 May 2009), <hrw.org/news/2009/05/21/sudan-prevent-recurrence-violence-southern-town>; Sudan Tribune, 'Eight killed in fresh violence in Abyei, administration faults Sudanese army' (Paris, Sudan Tribune, 2 May 2011), <sudantribune.com/Eight-killed-in-fresh-violence-in,38769>.

Monitoring

Monitoring of the Juba Agreement's implementation by the UN is both a requirement of the Agreement and will play an important role in fostering sustainable peace. The first months and years of the Juba Agreement will be critical for building trust among the government, signatory rebels, non-signatory rebels, and the population. The UN can serve as an impartial actor should disagreements arise between the rebel and government elements of the joint security force. Identifying and mediating such disputes early on will be vitally important to avoid a relapse into conflict. UNITAM's mandate provides for monitoring the Agreement, and there are important recent precedents for such a ceasefire monitoring mission. In addition to the AMIS observer mission, a previous mission in Sudan, the Civilian Protection Monitoring Team (CPMT), served as a light, mobile, unarmed monitor of the Nuba mountains accord (2002).¹⁹⁶ UNMIS also covered the essential elements of ceasefire monitoring and providing advice and military-to-military mediation between the SAF and SPLA through the Ceasefire Joint Monitoring Committee, which was chaired by the UNMIS Force Commander. While UNMIS eventually took on a much more operational role in South Sudan, its ceasefire mediation role presents a possible option for Darfur.

Human rights capacity

Human rights capacity will be crucial for protection in Darfur. It is unclear at the time of writing whether UNITAMS will have an integrated human rights component, but UNAMID should continue its human rights monitoring as long as possible, and its successor should work closely to support the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in monitoring and reporting. The fact that the strongest military actor in Darfur, the RSF, has a history of human rights abuses creates serious concerns. While UNAMID rarely intervened directly to protect civilians, it nevertheless saved thousands of lives through its ability to monitor and report on the situation in Darfur independently. A continued monitoring presence for conflict early warning and human rights reporting remains essential. Given the size of the area to cover, a mobile presence is likely needed, which could be facilitated by a UN mission. Such a monitoring presence could operate alone or in cooperation with state authorities, including any prosecutor or Special Prosecutor, national human rights body, or other relevant national or state organs.

¹⁹⁶ Led by a general and consisting of civilians and uniformed officers, the CPMT was a multilateral initiative outside of UN or AU auspices, but it could easily be replicated under any colour "hat". See 'Sudan: The Civilian Protection Monitoring Team' (Washington, DC, US Department of State), <2001-2009.state.gov/documents/organization/23247.pdf>.

Residual protection issues

While stability has improved in Darfur since the worst years of the conflict, protection concerns remain. The government has submitted a protection of civilians strategy to the UNSC that reflects internationally accepted standards and practices.¹⁹⁷ It is a solid foundation for the new government and an important step to which many countries should look. The strategy is vague on details, however, and raises concerns that the good intentions of its drafters may not be executed on the ground. The UN should not lose sight of the need to empower and support the government, especially where trust with communities needs to be built. This particularly applies, for instance, to Jebel Marra, where continued tensions between government forces and the SLA-AW create challenges for humanitarian access. While the government appears to prefer a Chapter VI mission at the time of writing, there are strong arguments, in light of recent developments, in favour of retaining a limited UN or AU military and formed police capacity in Darfur for an interim period.

State-society liaison and support to the police

Many communities in Darfur, particularly in IDP camps, remain distrustful of authorities, yet a sustainable peace in Darfur requires a reinvigorated political dialogue between the government and various Darfur communities. In the near-term, supporting trust-building through a liaison function is a potentially important role for the UN. While this need not be management or physical protection of the IDP camps, the presence of a mission (at least on a mobile basis) can facilitate relations with authorities. Continuing UNAMID's work around community policing and police reform will be important in this respect. Of even greater importance in the medium to long term is serious security sector reform in Sudan, a process that UNAMID has never been well-positioned to support, but which should be a major focus for the UN moving forward. All of these processes, however, require government commitment.

Local conflict resolution

With many protection concerns originating in intercommunal dynamics, an independent and impartial conflict resolution capacity remains important. As the January 2020 violence in El Geneina indicates, there is currently no single government actor that fills such an independent and impartial role. Building trust in such an actor (whether at the state or national level) is crucial, and the government should be part of these activities. However, a UN presence will have an important role to play. Trust in security institutions in Darfur will also depend on the success of a security sector reform process that begins in Khartoum and extends to all corners of the country.

¹⁹⁷ Letter dated 21 May 2020 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the UN addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2020/429, 1 June 2020).

Weighing the risks and benefits of leaving Darfur

Successfully navigating the obstacles to peace in Darfur will require innovative thinking and bold decision-making. It will also require weighing the risks of UNAMID's drawdown and the benefits of support from the UN and AU. Despite a history of unfinished mandates, peace operations remain one of the UN and AU's most important tools for conflict prevention. A follow-on mission with significant field presence in Darfur will be vital to securing the region in future. Almost half of all countries emerging from civil war relapse into conflict within a decade. Peacekeeping is proven to affect that ratio positively.¹⁹⁸ The danger that a deteriorating security situation will discredit Sudan's transitional government is a much higher risk compared to the risk that continued international assistance in security and protection issues could discredit national sovereignty. This is an opportunity to hope for peace but to use every tool available to realise it.

198 See, for example, Virginia Page Fortna, 'Does peacekeeping keep peace? International intervention and the duration of peace after civil war', *International Studies Quarterly* (2004) 48(2): 269-292; Lisa Hultman, Jacob Kathman and Meghan Shannon, 'Beyond keeping peace: United Nations effectiveness in the midst of fighting', *American Political Science Review* (2014) 108(4): 737-753; Håvard Hegre, Lisa Hultman and Håvard Møkleiv Nygård, 'Evaluating the conflict-reducing effect of UN Peacekeeping Operations', *The Journal of Politics* (2018) 81(1): 215-232.

6. About EPON

Peace operations are among the most important international mechanisms for contemporary conflict management. However, their effectiveness remains the subject of confusion and debate in both the policy and academic communities. Various international organizations conducting peace operations, including the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and the European Union (EU), have come under increasing pressure to justify their effectiveness and impact. Although various initiatives are underway to improve the ability to assess the performance of peace operations, there remains a distinct lack of independent, research-based information about the effectiveness of such operations.

To address this gap, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), together with over 40 partners from across the globe, have established an international network to jointly undertake research into the effectiveness of peace operations. This network has developed a shared methodology to enable the members to undertake research on this topic. This will ensure coherence across cases and facilitate comparative research. The network will produce a series of reports that will be shared with stakeholders including the UN, AU, and EU, interested national government representatives, researchers, and the general public. Over time, this project will produce a substantial amount of mission-specific assessments, which can be used to identify the key factors that influence the effectiveness of peace operations. This data will be made available via a dedicated web-based dataset that will be a publicly available repository of knowledge on this topic.

In 2018, four pilot case studies were undertaken – in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Mali (MINUSMA), Somalia (AMISOM) and South Sudan (UNMISS). The results of these research studies were shared at international seminars in Addis Ababa (African Union), Geneva, New York (United Nations), Washington D.C., Oslo, and Stockholm.

The network partners have reviewed the pilot experiences and refined their research methodology, and the missions identified for the next series of studies are: the UN mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the joint AU-UN hybrid mission in Darfur (UNAMID), the UN peacekeeping force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, and the EU and OSCE missions in Ukraine.

The network is coordinated by NUPI. Many of the partners fund their own participation. NUPI has also received funding from the Norwegian Research Council and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to support the Network and its research, including via the UN Peace Operations project (UNPOP) and the Training for Peace (TfP) programme.

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7. Appendix: EPON Darfur focus group data

The EPON UNAMID study is supported by research data drawn from 50 focus group interviews involving 500 people. The interviews were conducted in Central, North and South Darfur in March 2020. The research was carried out by Dr Musa Ismail, Director of the Peace Centre at the University of Zalingei. The focus groups were not intended to be comprehensive nor to satisfy a statistically rigorous representation of Darfuri viewpoints. They do, however, serve as a useful source of qualitative data from a broad spectrum of Darfuris.

These focus groups took place in 16 locations in Darfur in total, and each group included ten respondents. The focus groups attempted to target particular groups in a disaggregated manner, as well as to address mixed groups where that dynamic reflected the community, as in some urban locations. The particular group categories specified are:

- a. Gender (male/female);
- b. Displaced or host community;
- c. Ethnic identity (Fur, Zaghawa, Tama, Arab); and
- d. Age (youth, adult, elder).

While efforts were made to gather a balanced set of views, the final results are significantly skewed towards the views of males (only 14 of the 50 focus groups were all-women and only an additional three were mixed-gender); adults (only three groups out of 50 were youth focus

groups); and non-Arab groups (only nine of the 50 focus groups were made up of Arabs, while the rest were drawn from Fur, Zaghawa, Tama, and other displaced non-Arab groups). More IDP communities were included than host communities (21 to 28 focus groups, respectively), and one mixed group was interviewed. The composition and location of each focus group is given in Table 5 below.

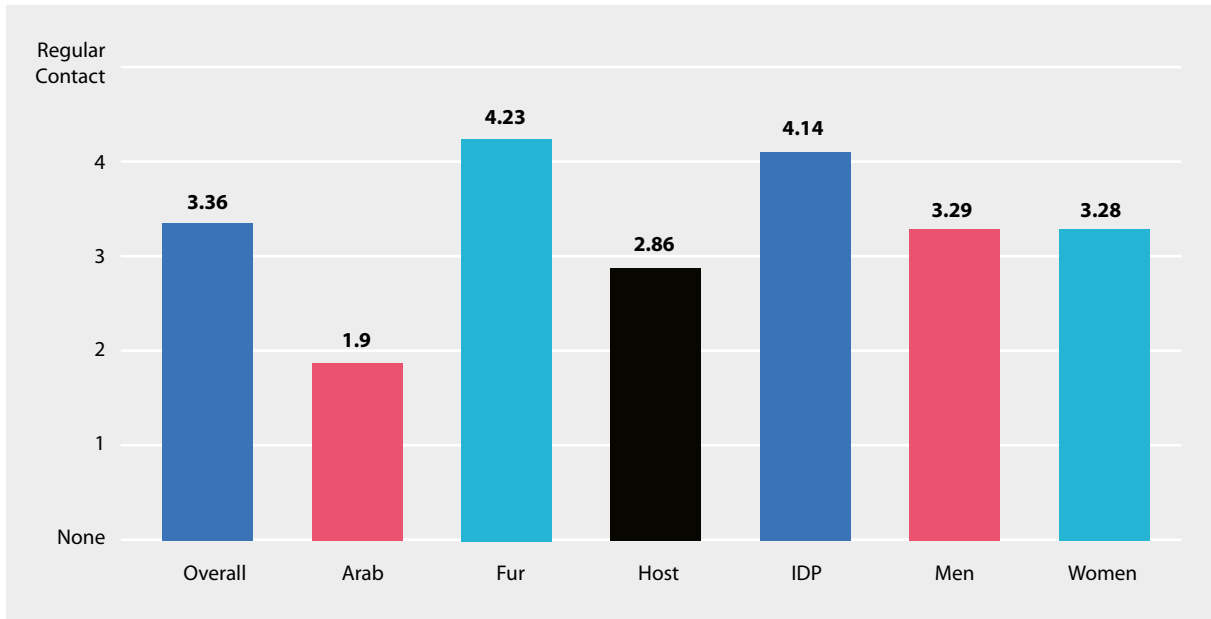
All focus groups were asked a standardised set of 25 questions, with focus groups made up of displaced communities asked an additional two questions specific to their situation. The questions covered the following:

1. Baseline assessment of the community's contact and familiarity with UNAMID, and an overall assessment of the community's perceptions on the extent to which Darfur has benefitted from UNAMID.
2. Security, including general security concerns, concerns about security after UNAMID leaves, actors viewed as major threats, and actors who are turned to for security.
3. Protection, including whether, how and when UNAMID provided protection, and the ways in which UNAMID's protection was most and least impactful.
4. Rule of law, including actors turned to for dispute resolution, and perceptions of UNAMID's contributions to the rule of law.
5. Intercommunal conflict, including how much UNAMID was perceived to support the resolution of intercommunal conflict.
6. Peace agreements, including perceptions about the community's involvement in peace agreements, and UNAMID's perceived support for implementing peace agreements and building relations between the government and communities.
7. Repatriation (only asked to displaced communities), including concerns for safety upon return, and perceived obstacles to return.
8. Conclusion, including final views on the situation after UNAMID leaves and any other thoughts.

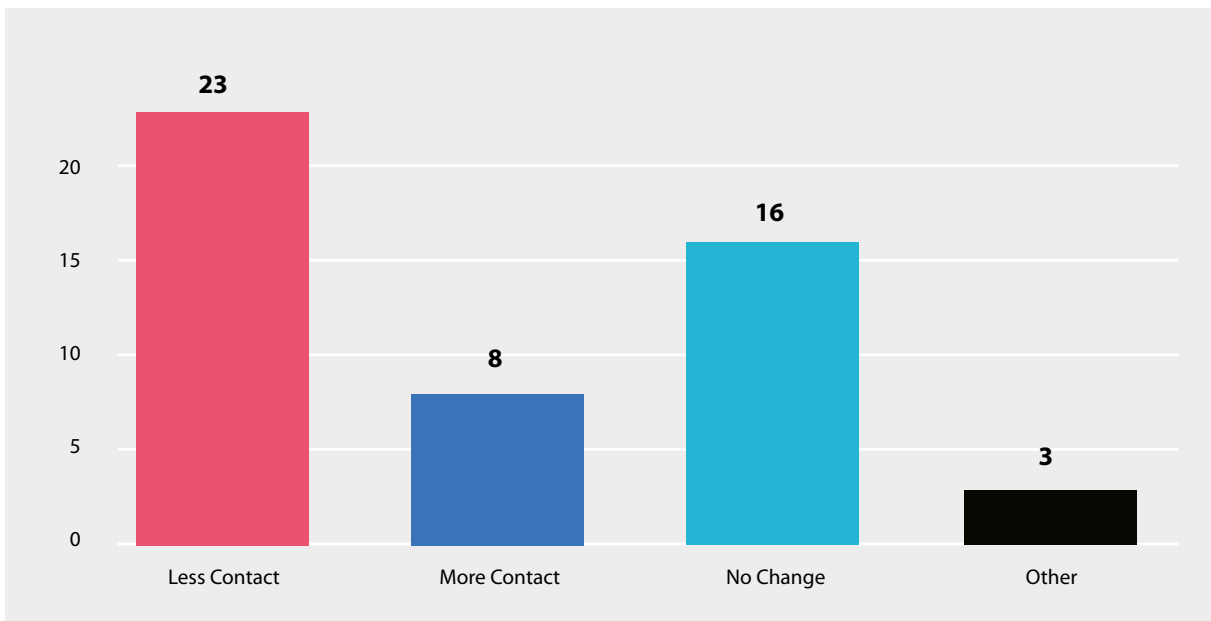
In the interest of simplifying the data analysis, most of the questions provided either multiple choice options or options graded on a scale from 1 to 5 (with 1 generally representing the least or worst effect, and 5 representing the most or best effect). The final question was open-ended and offered an opportunity for the respondents to provide their final thoughts on UNAMID.

The figures below illustrate the data collected from each of the questions posed to the focus group participants.

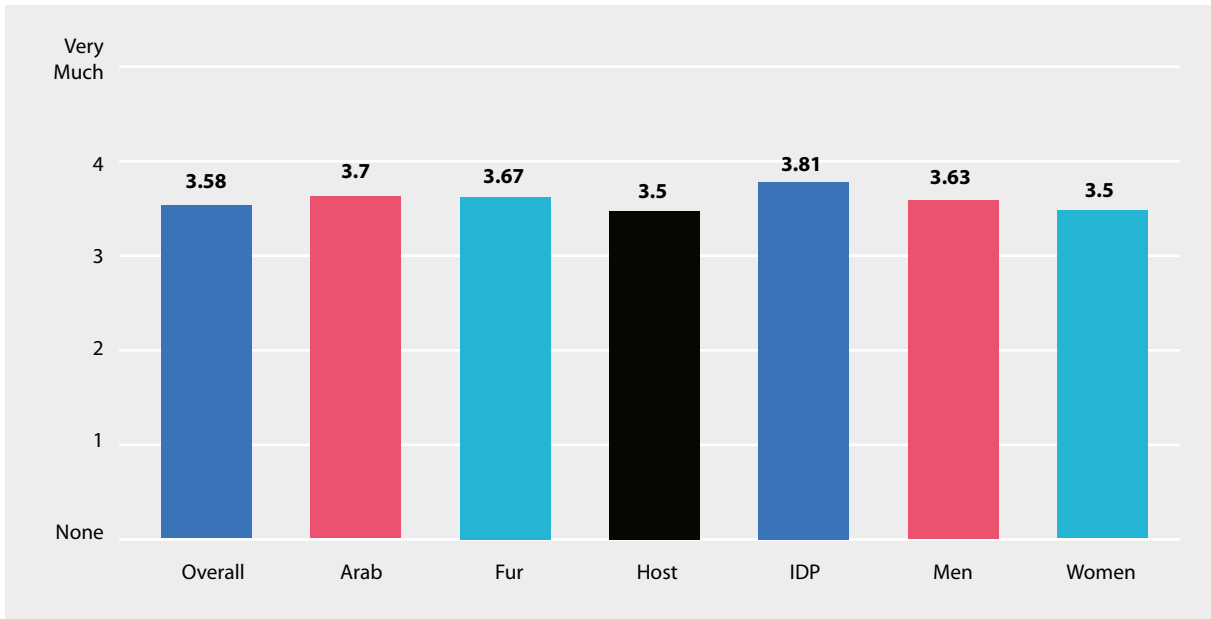
Q1: How much contact do you have with UNAMID?



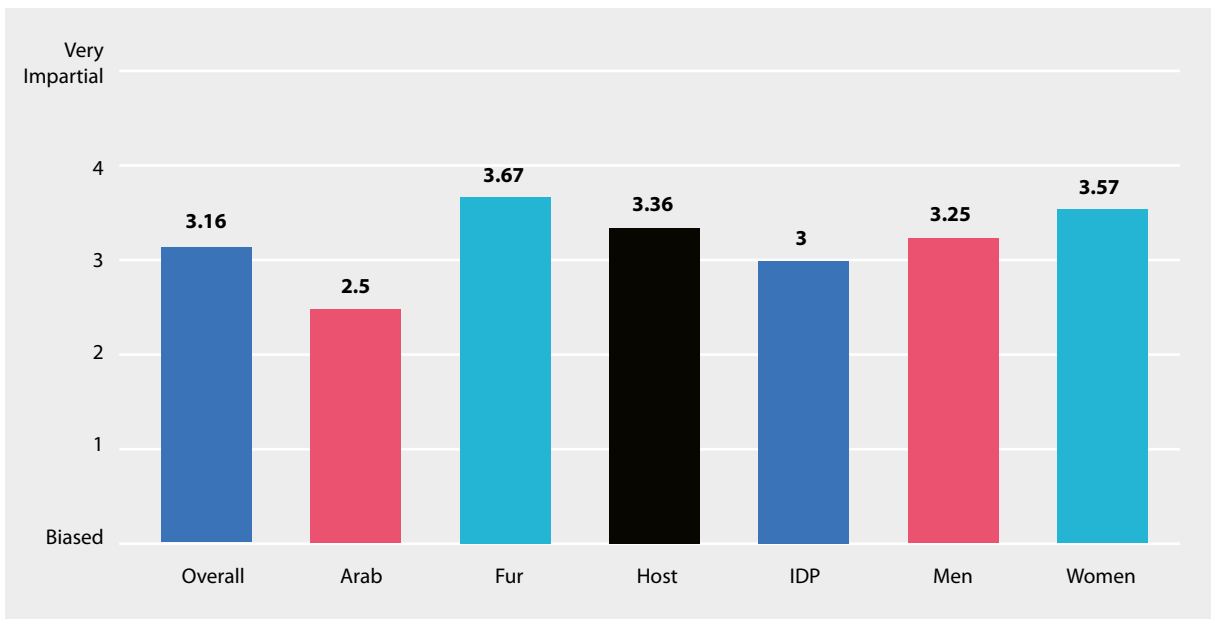
Q2: Has your contact with UNAMID changed over time?



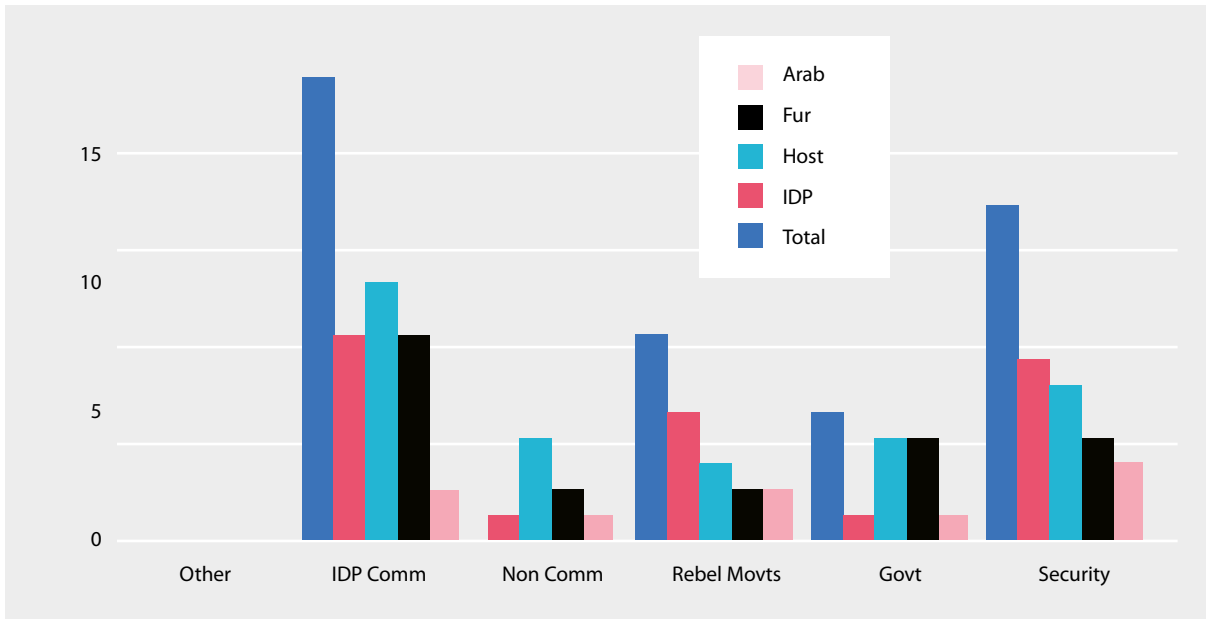
Q3: How much has Darfur benefitted from UNAMID?



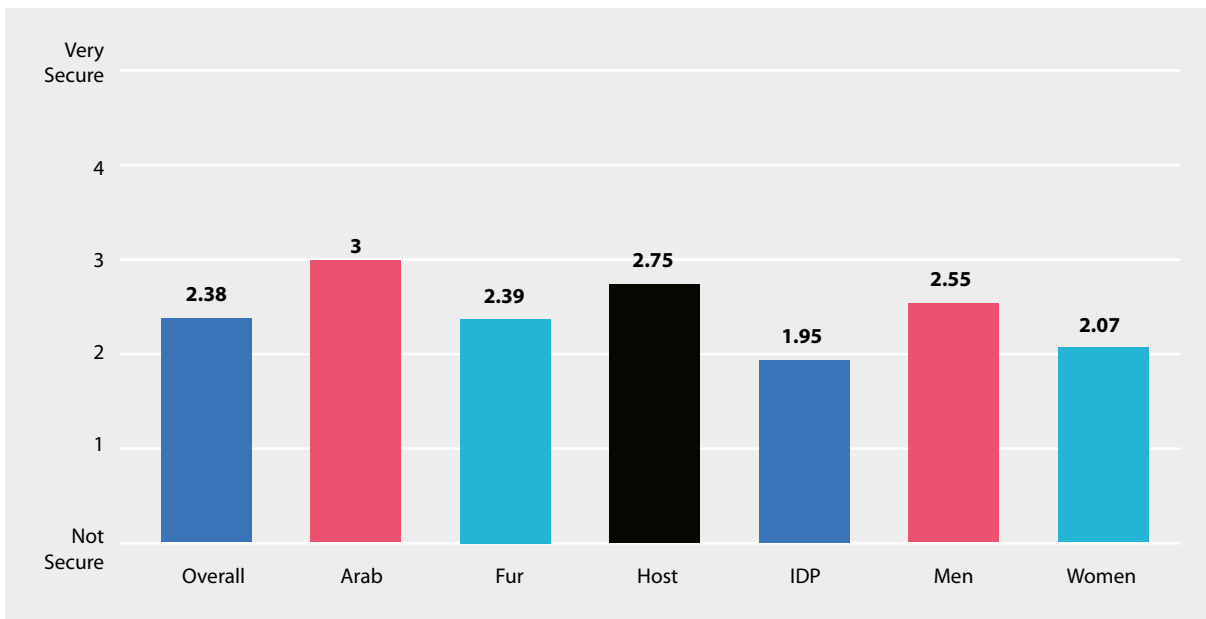
Q4: Over the course of the Darfur conflict, how impartial do you think UNAMID has been?



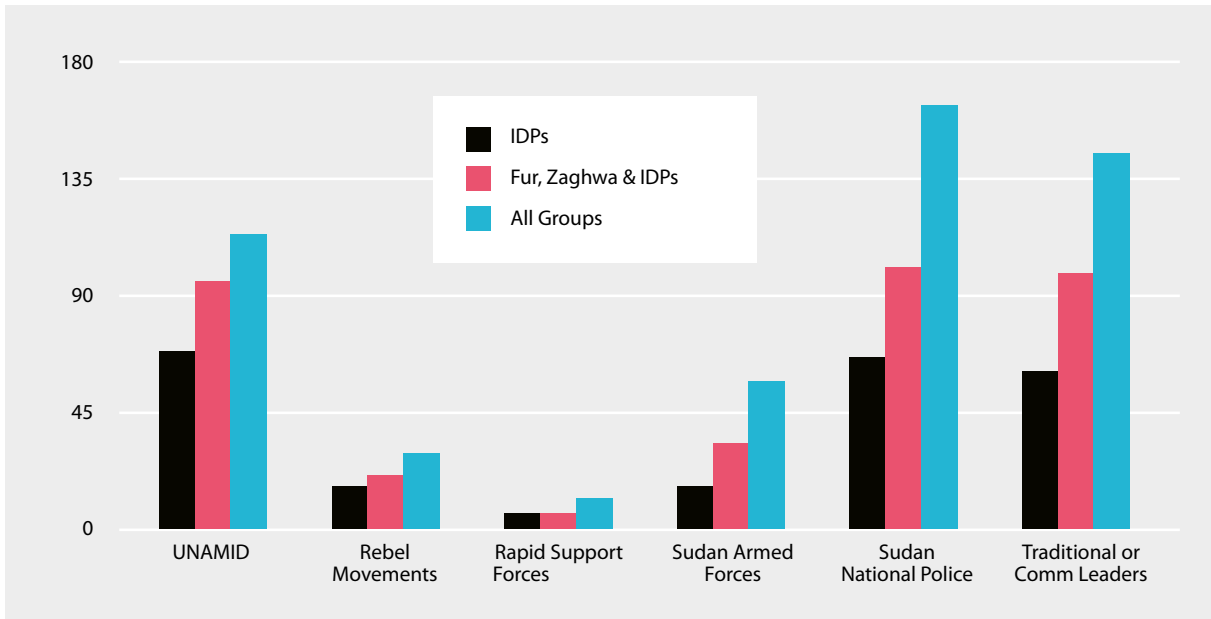
Q5: Whom do you feel that UNAMID has been biased towards?



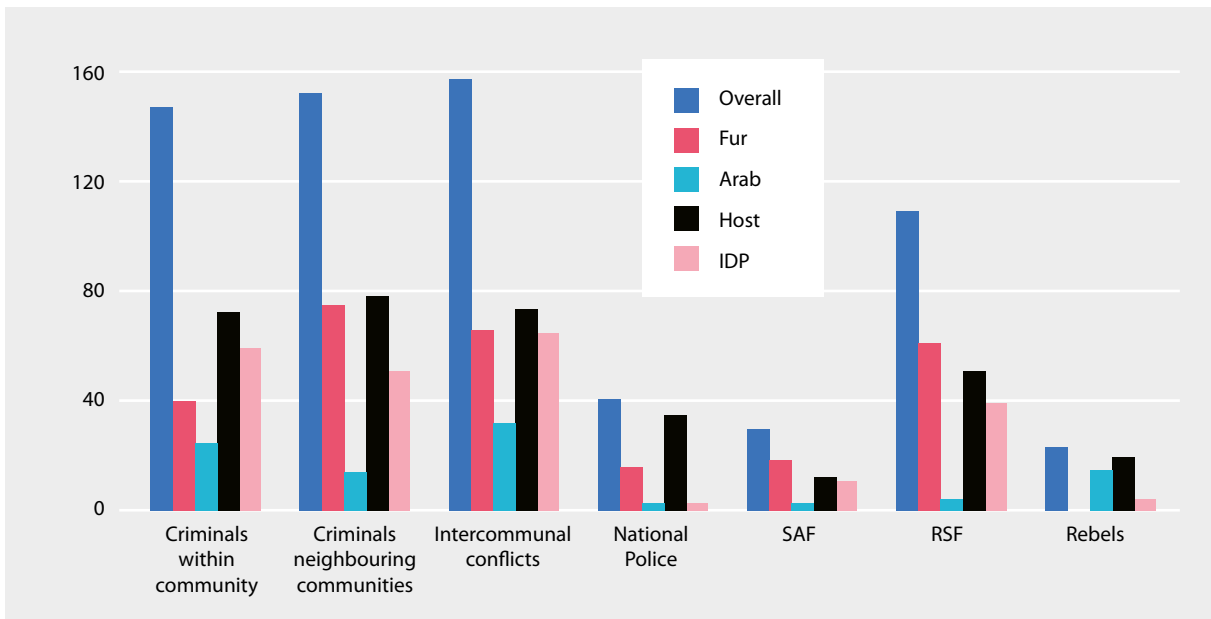
Q6: How secure do you feel?



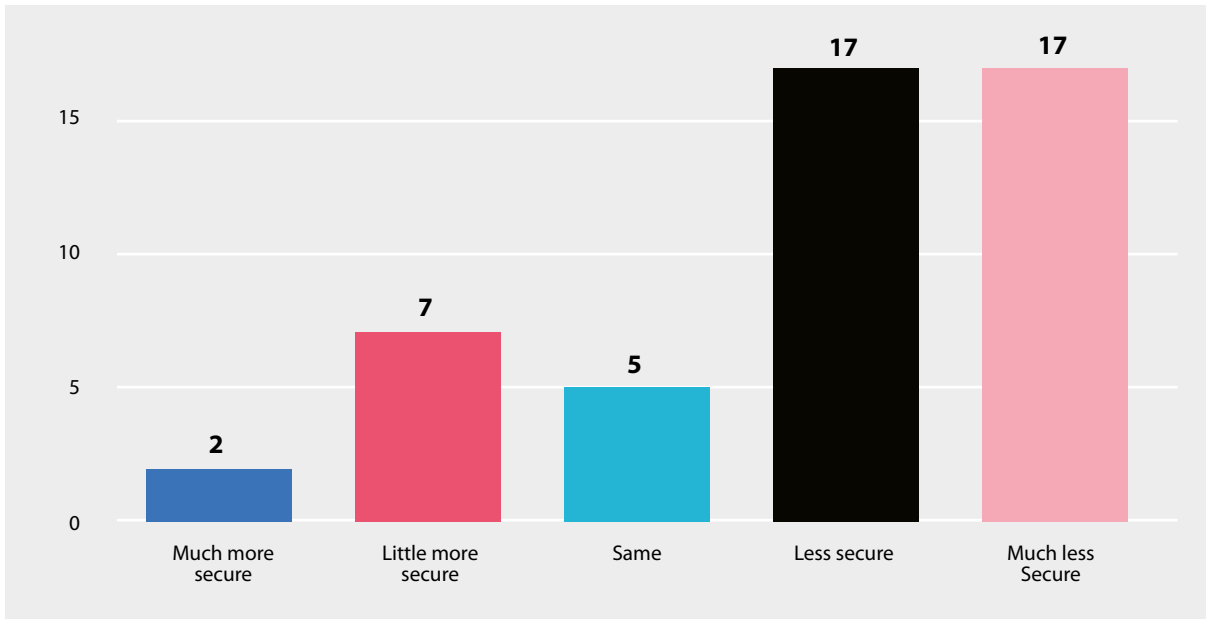
Q7: If you have concerns about your security who do you turn to?



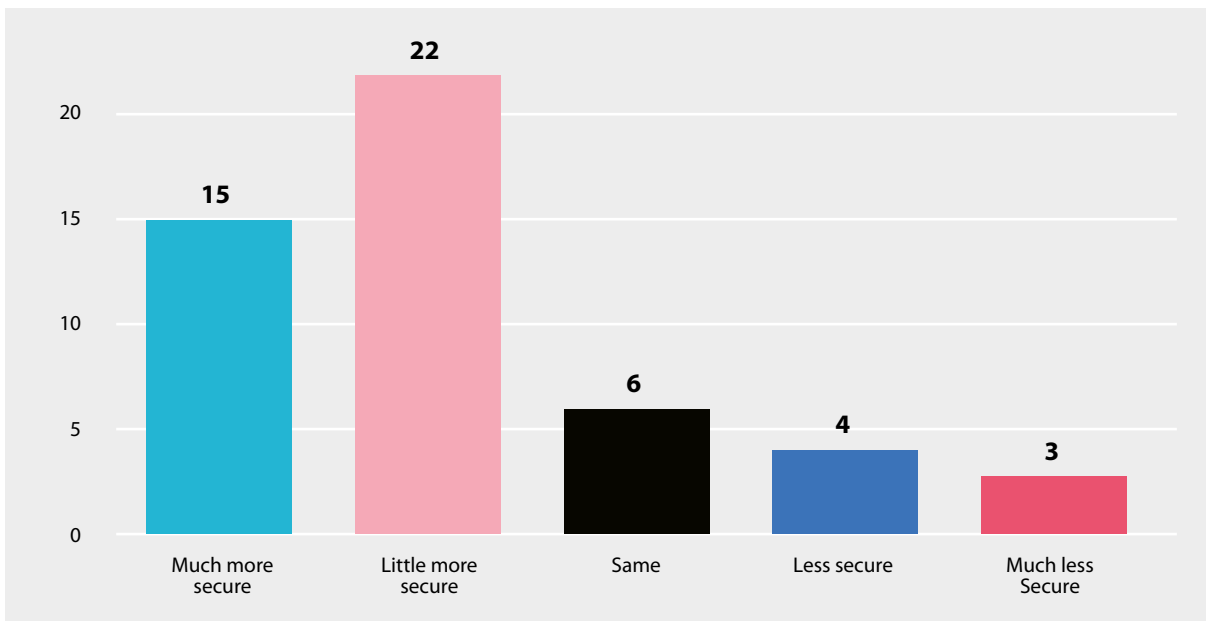
Q8: Who do you feel is the greatest security threat to you and your community?



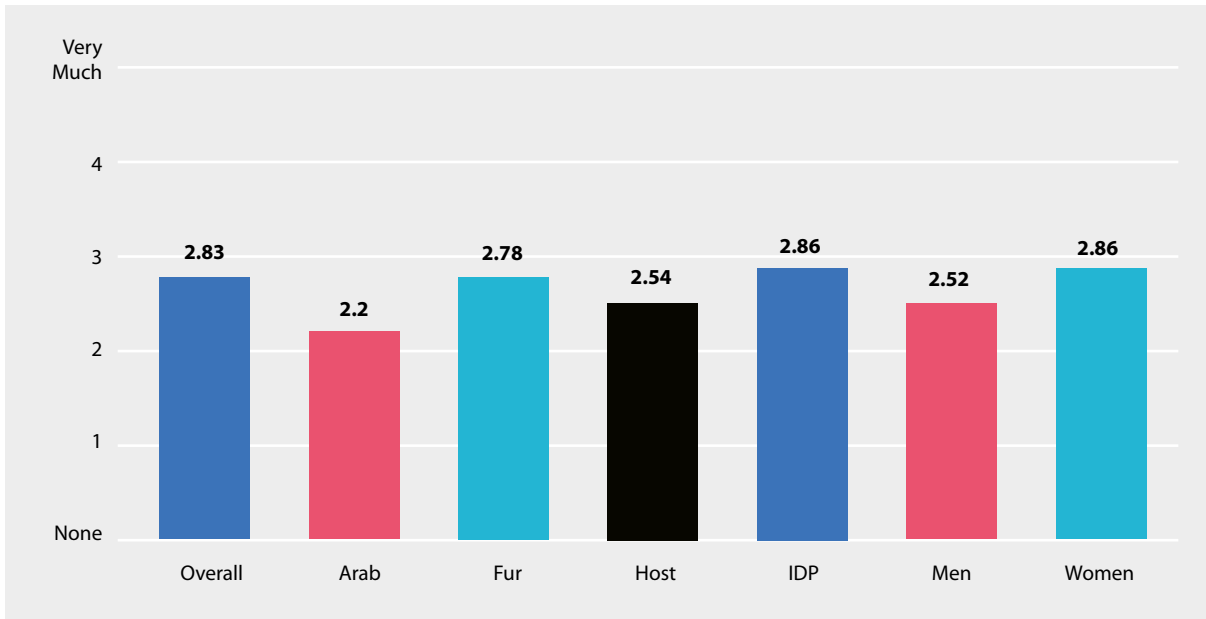
Q9: When UNAMID leaves, how do you feel that your security will change?



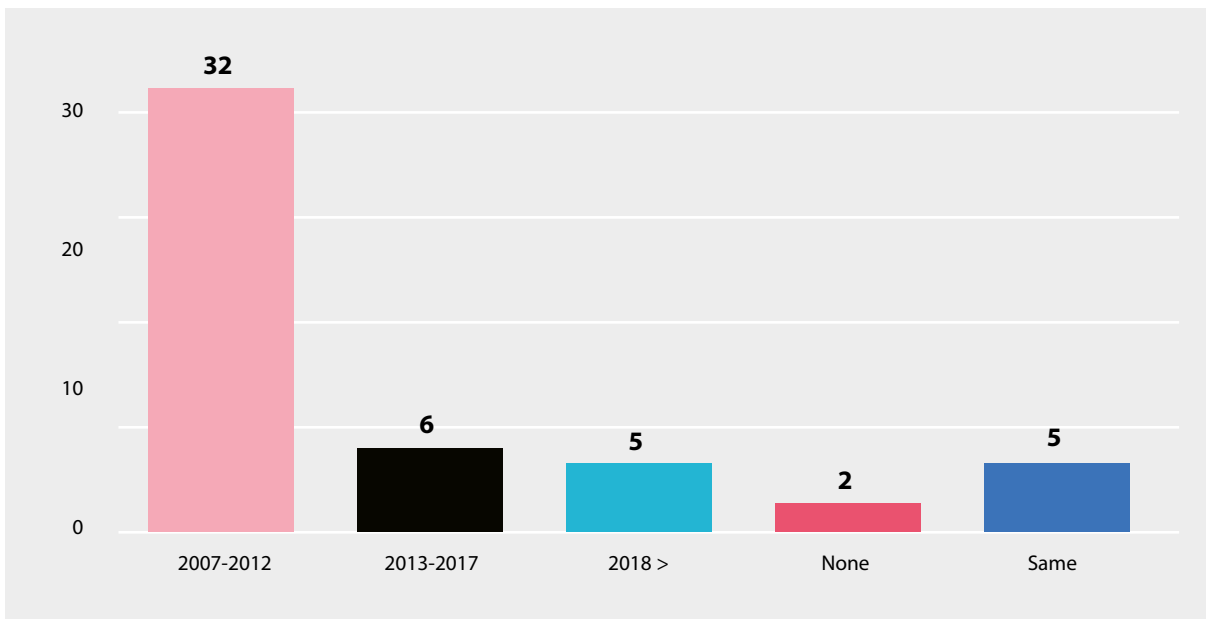
Q10: How do you feel that the change in government (fall of Bashir regime) affects your security?



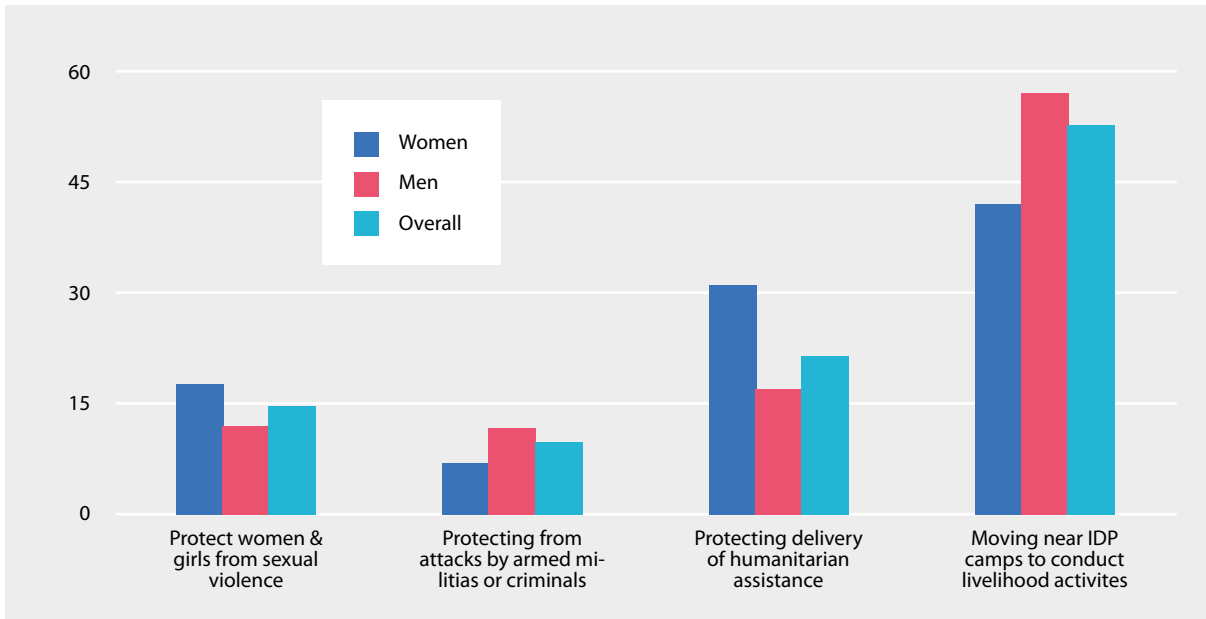
Q11: How much do you feel UNAMID provides protection?



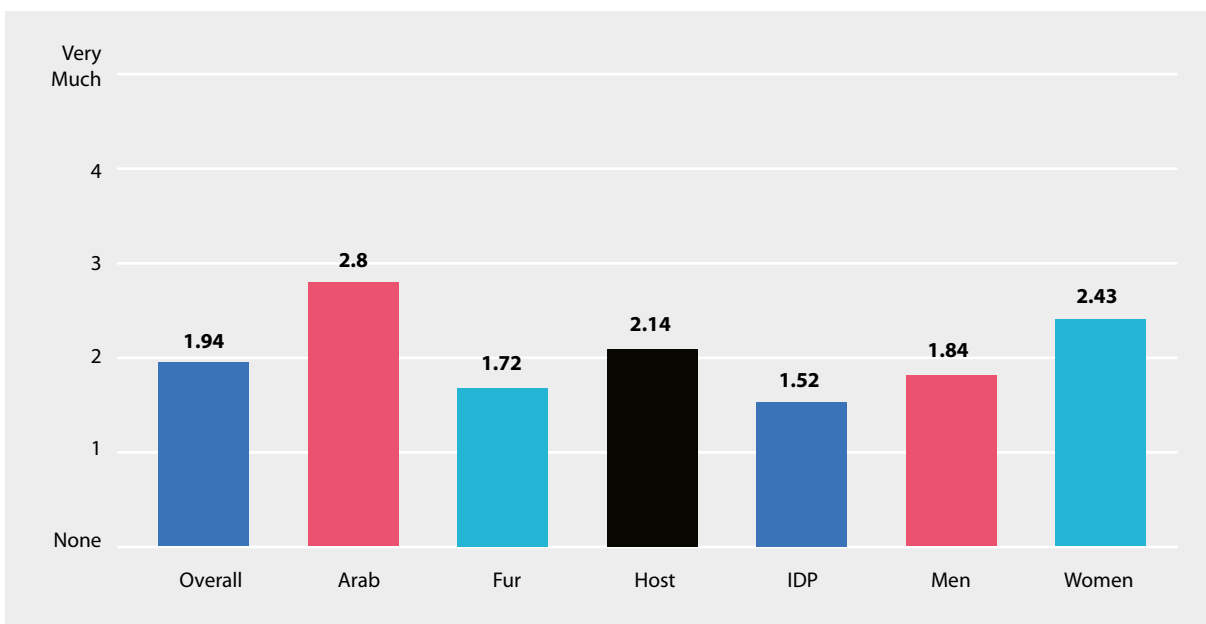
Q12: Did UNAMID protect more in the earlier or later years of the conflict?



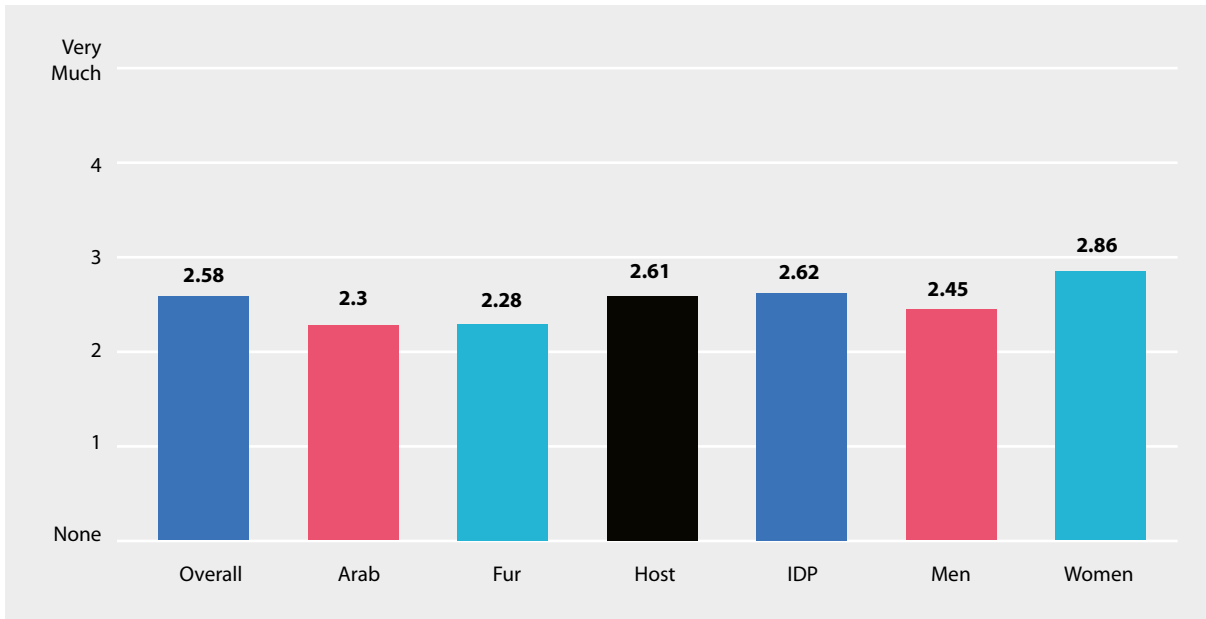
Q14: In what areas has UNAMID's protection been most impactful?



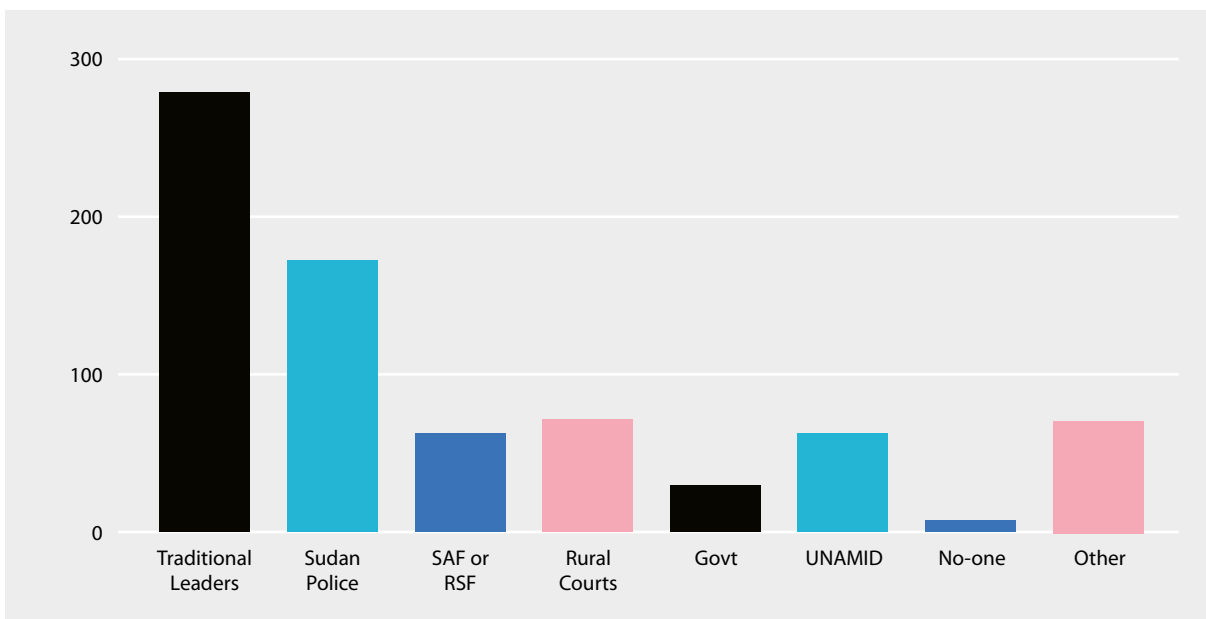
Q17: How much have justice and local courts become more responsive to your needs over the past ten years?



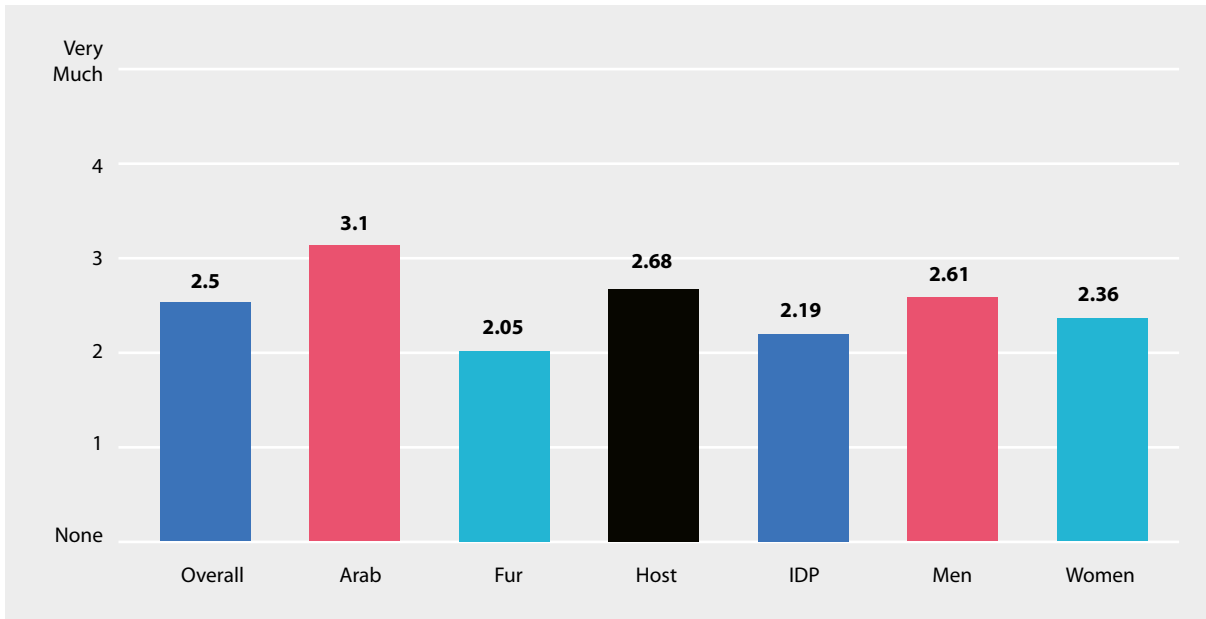
Q18: How much do you think UNAMID has contributed to improving justice and local courts?



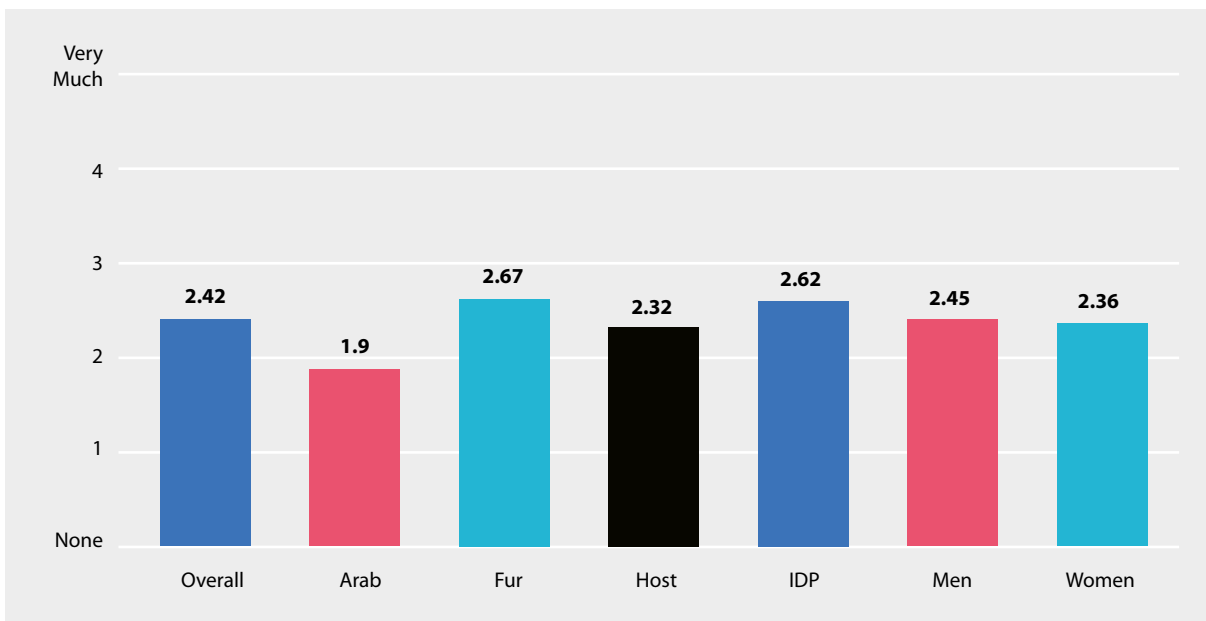
Q19: Whom do you seek to resolve serious disputes between communities, such as farmers and nomads?



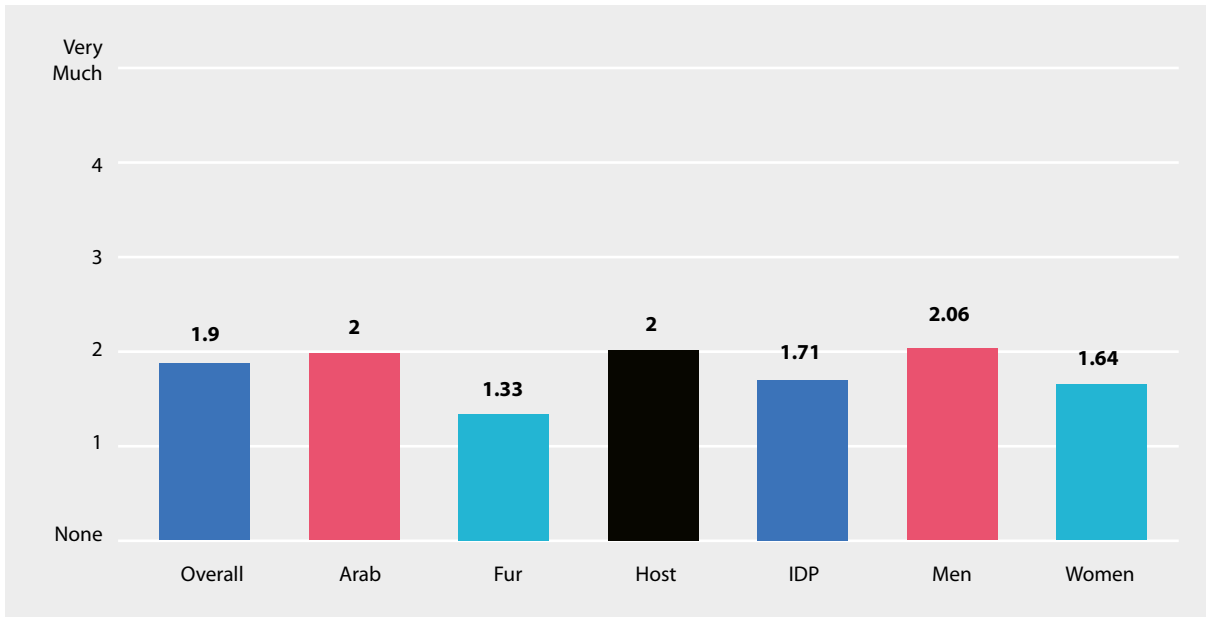
Q20: How much have inter communal conflict resolution mechanisms become responsive to your needs over the past ten years?



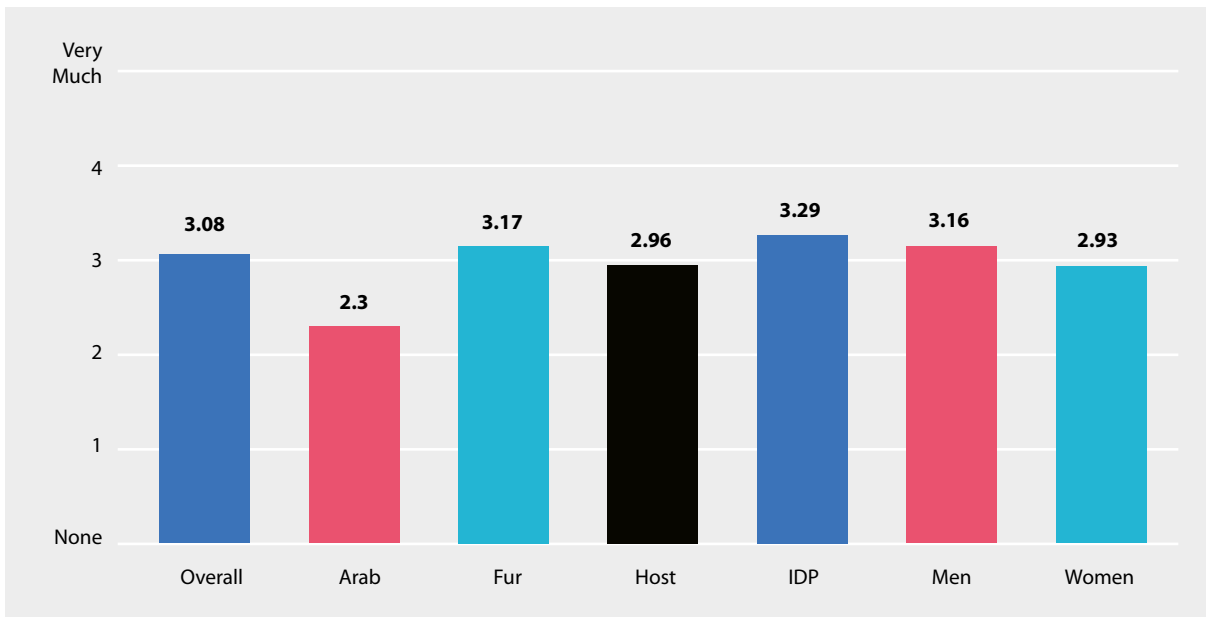
Q21: How much do you think UNAMID has contributed to improving inter communal conflict resolution?



Q22: How much do you feel that your community's voice has been heard in peace negotiations between the government and armed movements since 2003 through today?



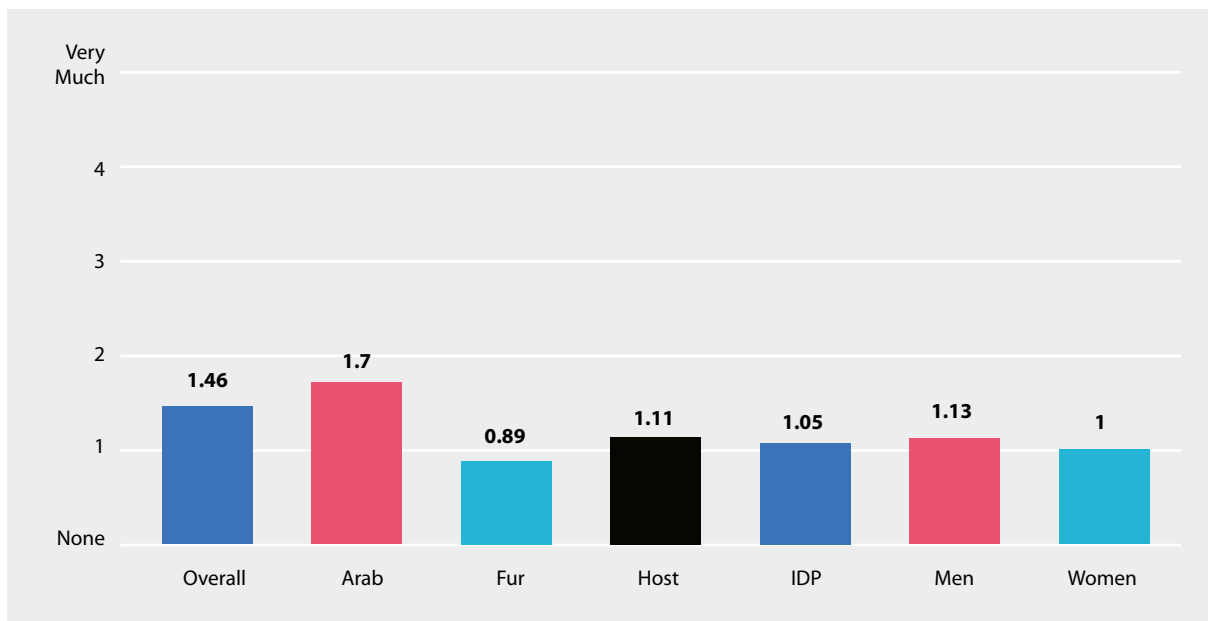
Q23: How much do you think UNAMID contributed to implementing peace agreements like the DPA, DDPD and initiatives like the Darfur Internal Dialogue?



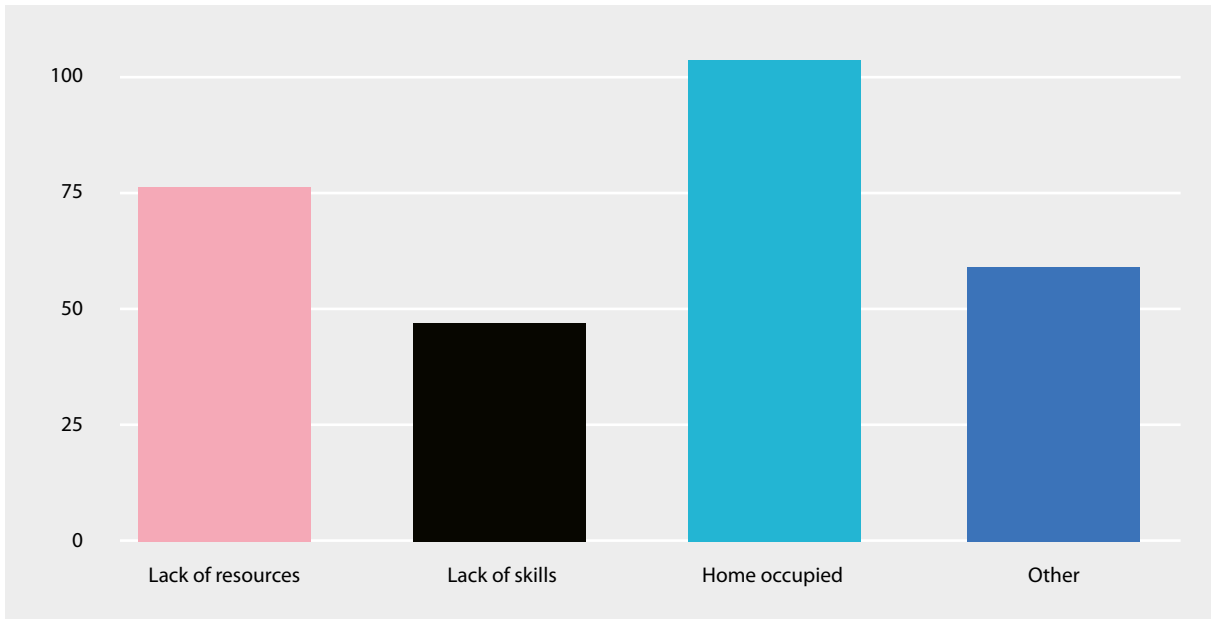
Q24: How much has UNAMID helped to build relations between government and communities?



Q25: How safe do you feel returning to your home areas?



Q26: What do you feel is the greatest impediment to returning?



Q27: Overall, do you feel that your situation will worsen or improve after UNAMID leaves?

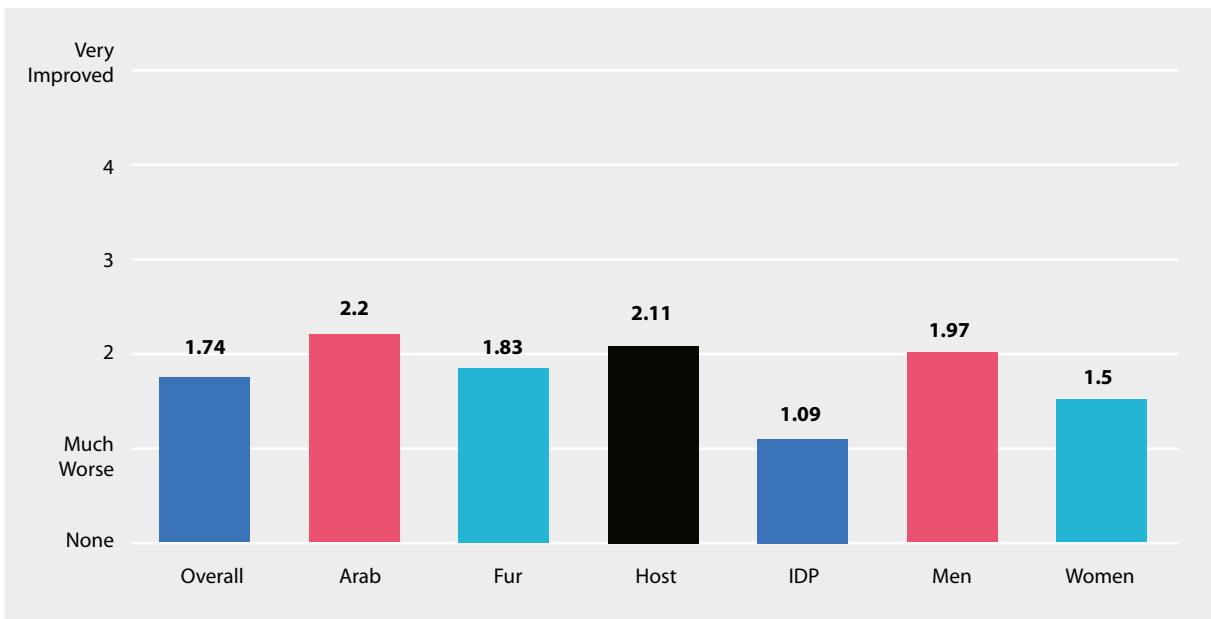


Table 5: Disaggregated focus groups

State	Locality	Gender	Ethnic group	Host/IDP	No of focus groups
Central	Mukjar	Men	Fur	Host	2
Central	Mukjar	Women	Fur	Host	1
Central	Mukjar	Youth	Fur	Host	1
Central	Mukjar	Men	Fur	IDP	2
Central	Mukjar	Women	Fur	IDP	1
Central	Mukjar	Men	Tama	Host	1
Central	Mukjar	Men	Arab	Host	2
Central	Nertiti	Men	Fur	Host	1
Central	Nertiti	Women	Fur	Host	1
Central	Nertiti	Youth	Fur	Host	1
Central	Nertiti	Men	Zaghawa	Host	1
Central	Nertiti	Women	Zaghawa	Host	1
Central	Nertiti	Men	Arab	Host	1
Central	Nertiti	Women	Arab	Host	1
Central	Nertiti	Men	Fur	IDP	1
Central	Nertiti	Women	Fur	IDP	1
Central	Nertiti	Youth	Fur	IDP	1
Central	Zalingei town	Men	Arab	Host	2
Central	Zalingei town	Women	Arab	Host	1
Central	Zalingei town	Men	Mixed	Host	1
Central	Zalingei town	Women	Mixed	Host	1

State	Locality	Gender	Ethnic group	Host/IDP	No of focus groups
Central	Zalingei	Men	Fur	IDP	2
Central	Zalingei	Women	Fur	IDP	2
Central	Hasahisa	Women	Fur	IDP	1
North	El Fasher town	Men	Mixed	Host	3
North	El Fasher town	Women	Mixed	Host	1
North	Zamzam west camp	Mixed	Mixed	IDP	2
North	Aboshok camps	Men	Mixed	IDP	1
North	Aboshok camps	Women	Mixed	IDP	2
North	Aboshok camps	Men	Mixed	IDP	1
North	Aboshok camps	Mixed	Mixed	IDP	1
South	Nyala	Men	Mixed	Host	2
South	Domaya village	Men	Arab	Host	1
South	Kass Tower village	Men	Fur	Host	1
South	Daker halal village	Men	Fur	Host	1
South	El Salam camp	Men	Mixed	IDP	1
South	Bolbol village	Men	Arab	Mixed	1
South	Otash camp	Men	Mixed	IDP	1
South	Kalma camp	Men	Mixed	IDP	1
South	Dreig camp	Men	Mixed	IDP	1

The United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) began its deployment to Sudan in 2007 in the midst of widespread violence. UNAMID was the largest peacekeeping operation in the world at the time. Its drawdown and transition began a decade later, and today less than one-quarter of that force remains, concentrated in a small area in central Darfur.

The intervening years witnessed a moribund peace process and a scorched-earth government military campaign against Darfuri rebels that killed thousands of civilians. A popular uprising against the ruling system erupted in December 2018, and in April 2019, Omar al-Bashir, who had ruled Sudan since 1989, was deposed. The new transitional government and military-civilian Sovereign Council are now seeking to rescue a struggling economy and make peace with the people on Sudan's peripheries. While the recently endorsed Juba Agreement brings new hopes for peace in Darfur, the way forward remains far from certain. With nearly two million IDPs, a deep humanitarian crisis, and rising levels of violence, Darfur in 2020 is far from being a stable place as UNAMID—the African Union and United Nations' most important tool for security and stability—appears set to depart.

This report assesses UNAMID's impact over a ten-year period (2007-2017) and across its three strategic priorities: mediating between the government and non-signatory armed movements; protecting civilians, monitoring human rights, and facilitating humanitarian assistance; and supporting the mediation of community conflict.

The report also makes observations and draws lessons from UNAMID's transition (2017-2020), a process still underway and for which it is too early to assess the definitive impact. Reflecting upon UNAMID's unique features, the report includes lessons from the hybrid nature of the operation, as well as from the challenges posed by fragile host-nation cooperation. It draws on existing analyses and data as well as more than 140 interviews and focus group consultations with 700 community members in Darfur.