

THE FIRST NATO MISSION TO AFRICA: DARFUR

Glen Segell

Director, London Security Policy Study

Abstract

NATO answered a call for assistance from the African Union (AU) in their AMIS mission in the Darfur region of Sudan in April 2005, providing airlift and training in conjunction with the European Union until the end of the mission in December 2007. This was the first time that NATO entertained a task on the African continent. NATO undertook the mission on humanitarian grounds without invoking any treaty and without any member state's security being under any direct threat. This was a milestone in NATO's history, and it provides a case to understanding regional alliances, regionalism and the development of trans-regionalism.

Introduction

NATO is a regional security alliance in the North Atlantic area of 26 states from North America and Europe with treaty agreement to assist each other on the basis of one for all and all for one. Recently, the treaty interpretation has broadened from the Cold War Soviet threat to include civil defence assistance and extra-regional deployment of forces to take the battle to the territory of the adversary, for example Afghanistan. No NATO treaty obligates extra-regional assistance to other regional alliances in peace-support operations if there is no direct threat to a NATO member state. Yet, this is exactly what took place. In April 2005, NATO agreed to provide airlift, logistics, training and related support to the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) deployed to the Darfur region of Sudan on humanitarian grounds. In the deployment of NATO forces, there was no mention of which article of which treaty was being invoked. Hence, NATO and the AU did not formally relate to one another other than on the functional level.

This article surveys NATO as a trans-regional actor in Africa, from April 2005 to December 2007 – the first being the date from which NATO provided assistance and the latter the date when the AMIS force was disbanded. Trans-regional activities identified by Jürgen Rüländ fall into two groups: bilateral inter-regionalism and trans-regionalism.¹ The former is defined as group-to-group exchanges of information and cooperation (projects) in specific policy, based on a low level of institutionalisation, with no common overarching institutions, both sides exclusively relying on their own institutional infrastructure. This typifies NATO-AMIS interactions where NATO (North America/Europe region) assisted the AU (Africa region) where the policy of the contributing NATO states, predominately the US and the UK, as well as Norway, the Netherlands and Germany is important.

The latter (trans-regionalism) is found where the agenda grows in complexity requiring trans-regional fora, comprising states from more than one region with its own organisational infrastructure (secretariat for research, policy planning, preparation and coordination of meetings and implementation of decisions). Such processes of institutional evolution vest trans-regional fora with some form of independent actorness and distinguish them from bilateral inter-regionalism. This typifies the post-Cold War trans-regionalism interest in such institutions as the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), the Asia-Pacific Cooperation (APEC) and the ASEAN-EU dialogue and is often linked to debates on globalisation.

This article offers the NATO-AMIS mission, as bilateral inter-regionalism, showing it evolving to subsequent NATO-AU bilateral inter-regionalism: NATO assistance to the AU Mission in Somalia and to the African Standby Force brigades. The growing complexity of interactions suggests the need for NATO-AU relations to evolve to the stage of trans-regionalism with a unique secretariat for research, policy planning, preparation and coordination of meetings and implementation of decisions.

By considering this unique case of NATO's first mission in Africa, this article will make three contributions. This will be to contribute to understanding the role of regional alliances (the AU and NATO), about regional alliances supporting other regional alliances, (NATO supporting the AU), and specifically about NATO as a trans-regional actor. The case study is so new that as of yet, no definitive book has

¹ Jürgen Rüländ, Inter- and Transregionalism: Remarks on the State of the Art of a New Research Agenda, *National Europe Centre Paper* No. 35, <http://www.anu.edu.au/NEC/Archive/ruland2.pdf> accessed 15 October 2008.

been published on the topic of NATO-AU relations nor on that of NATO's role in Darfur. There is barely coverage of this in shorter publications where the sparse yet notable mentions are by Richard,² Van Ardenne, Salih, Grono and Mendez,³ Feinstein,⁴ Hauser and Kernic,⁵ Raftopoulos and Alexander,⁶ and Reeves and Brassard.⁷

The formulation of policy

Darfur is no different from other parts of Africa, or indeed the world, that have faced tribal conflict for centuries over the territorial imperatives of the ownership, settlement or usage of land and water. The British colonial rule over the region centuries ago was unable to ameliorate this particular conflict. In recent times, conflict erupted in Darfur in February 2003 when rebels from ethnic African tribes took up arms, complaining of discrimination and oppression by Sudan's Arab-dominated government. The government was accused of unleashing Arab tribal militia, known as the Janjaweed, against civilians in a campaign of murder, rape and arson. In 2008, the president of Sudan was faced with an indictment from the International Criminal Court (ICC) for genocide and crimes against humanity. During the period of NATO assistance to the AU, between 2005 and 2007, the conflict could be described as of low-intensity in military terms between local armed groups, militias, the armed forces of Sudan and Chad and bandit groups sponsored by both sides. Accurate figures are hard to come by but there is no doubt that by 2005, when the AU requested NATO assistance, there was not much left in Darfur that had not felt the conflict. The international attention in 2005 focussed predominately on internally displaced people (IDP), refugees in neighbouring Chad,

² Martin Richard, *The EU-NATO Relationship: A Legal and Political Perspective* (London: Ashgate, 2007) p. 272.

³ Agnes van Ardenne, Mohamed Salih, Nick Grono and Juan Mendez, *Explaining Darfur: Four Lectures on the Ongoing Genocide* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), p. 42.

⁴ Lee Feinstein, *Darfur and Beyond: What Is Needed to Prevent Mass Atrocities* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2007), p. 33.

⁵ Gunther Hauser and Franz Kernic *European Security in Transition*, (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), p. 27.

⁶ Brian Raftopoulos and Karin Alexander (eds.), *Peace in the Balance: The Crisis in Sudan* (London: African Minds, 2008), p. 84.

⁷ Eric Reeves and Michael Brassard, *A Long Day's Dying: Critical Moments in the Darfur Genocide* (London: Key Publishing House, 2007), p. 292.

and on atrocities inflicted on civilians on a scale and magnitude that required outside intervention.

The unique milestone that initiated NATO involvement commenced formally on 26 April 2005. It was well known at the time that NATO member states had been expressing deep concern since 2003 over the conflict in Darfur and at atrocities against civilians. They were uncertain on how to ameliorate the situation but were engaged in ongoing diplomatic efforts, especially at the United Nations (UN). Numerous debates and limited sanctions were levelled at the Sudanese government yet consensus on a Security Council Resolution for a mandate on the use of armed intervention was not forthcoming. A permanent member of the Council, China, had shown reluctance to see such a resolution and would probably have vetoed it if one had been tabled. However, a regional alliance, the AU had reached agreement amongst its members to send a peacekeeping force – AMIS – based on its constitutive articles that permitted it to do so. However, the AU lacked the capabilities to deploy this force and AMIS lacked the necessary experience to undertake the mission.⁸

It was therefore no surprise that on 26 April 2005 the AU requested assistance, by letter, from the Chairperson of the Commission of the AU, Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, to the NATO Secretary General. The request was for NATO logistics assistance to expand the AMIS force aimed at ending violence and improving the humanitarian situation. At the same time, the European Union (EU) received a similar request. In clarification of the letter of request, Mr. Konaré, visited NATO Headquarters on 17 May 2005 – the first ever visit of an AU official to NATO HQ.

It is important to stress that this was the first time in NATO's history that another regional political-security alliance had requested such humanitarian assistance where there were no common member states with NATO. At first glance, it therefore appeared that no NATO member state had any obligation to commit forces to NATO and NATO had no treaty obligation to provide any assistance. Sudan was not within the regional remit of NATO's operations and no NATO member state faced any direct security or defence threat from what was taking place in Darfur. However, it was also apparent at the time that it would be hard pressed for

⁸ Glen Segell, *The United Nations African Union Mission in Darfur – UNAMID, Strategic Insights*, Volume VII, Issue 1, February 2008, <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2008/Feb/segellFeb08.pdf> accessed 13 July 2008.

NATO to resist providing some form of assistance to the AU, given the magnitude of atrocities and the inability or lack of willingness of anyone else to take action.

It could be assumed that intricately involved would be the leadership of NATO. A study analysing the speeches of NATO Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, shows that he was a cautious public advocate for extensive and sustained NATO operations in Darfur.⁹ This was despite his openly favoured position that the world could not turn a blind eye to atrocities against civilians. Despite being cautious, he was instrumental as an arbiter in the ongoing debate amongst European states that NATO should not be the sole forum and that the EU should assume a more prominent role.

When the formal request of the AU was made known to NATO member states they expressed their opinion, which was well known for many years. This was the notion that quite the best way to deliver security to Darfur was to get those with primary responsibility for it to do it – the government of Sudan. The pressing issue was that it was known that the government of Sudan was not going to do this and indeed was the cause of the problem. The dilemma posed was which international actors should assume responsibility for protecting civilians being killed as a direct result of the policy of the government of Sudan. After the Iraq debacle, no state was voicing such phrases as “regime change”. Taking this into consideration, on 27 April 2005, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) tasked the Alliance’s military authorities to provide, as a matter of urgency, advice on possible NATO support to the AU and, if possible, whether this could also be in co-ordination with the EU. This advice was prepared in full consultation, transparency and complementarity with the AU, the EU and the UN.

On 24 May 2005, the NAC, after receiving advice from NATO military authorities, agreed on initial military options for possible NATO support. These options included support to the AU in the areas of strategic airlift deployment, training, for example in command and control and operational planning and improvement of ability of the AU mission in Darfur, to use intelligence.¹⁰ NATO support did not imply the provision of combat troops. In announcing this, the

⁹ Ryan C. Hendrickson, Public Diplomacy at NATO: An Assessment of Jaap de Hoop Scheffer’s Leadership of the Alliance, *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, Winter 2005-2006, Volume 8 Issue 2, p. 2-28.

¹⁰ NATO Documents, *NATO Secretary General Pledges Darfur Support*, 26 May 2005, <http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2005/05-may/e0526a.htm> accessed 7 July 2008.

Secretary General of NATO said that NATO “will consult in the coming days with the AU and others on how to transform these initial offers into concrete proposals responding to a specific request”.¹¹ The Secretary General stressed that the AU remained “in the driving seat to solve this difficult conflict and that the Alliance’s role is to contribute to strengthening the AU’s capability to meet this challenge”.¹²

An elaboration of Mr de Hoop Scheffer’s thinking and NATO’s policy and strategy towards Africa highlighted that NATO member states no longer believed that they were constrained by their treaty obligations that had been formulated during the Cold War. NATO member states had voiced their intent to undertake some sort of action in the forum of the UN and EU in support of the AU as all were concerned about the plight of civilians in Darfur. NATO member states, especially the US, saw NATO as a means to implement what they stood for as sovereign states caring for humanity at large. Mr de Hoop Scheffer explained that Darfur showed the need for close cooperation between international organisations as an element of what he called “modern security”, and that Darfur showed that the international community was ready to support the AU. So it came to be that NATO commenced a non-combatant military operation in close consultation and in coordination with the EU, the UN and the AU.

The lessons of Iraq were well learnt and it was clear that any military operation would have to take into account the government of Sudan. The situation in Darfur was a direct consequence of the Sudanese government policy. NATO was not intending to embark on a change of regime in Sudan. Yet NATO would airlift foreign forces onto the sovereign territory of Sudan to protect and engage in efforts against the policy of the government of Sudan and its implementation by the Sudanese armed forces. So NATO made clear that it would only implement its policy once the government of Sudan had given the green light to the AU. This was a difficult issue since there was no direct relationship between NATO and the government in Khartoum, and there was also no intention of establishing one. Furthermore, the largest potential contributor, the US, had a dichotomy of interests

¹¹ Press conference by NATO Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer after the Plenary Meeting of the EAPC Security Forum, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2005/s050525j.htm> accessed 7 July 2008.

¹² Press conference by NATO Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer after the Plenary Meeting of the EAPC Security Forum, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2005/s050525j.htm> accessed 7 July 2008.

as firstly, it wished to maintain Khartoum as an ally in the war on terror, and secondly, it believed that genocide was being perpetrated in Darfur.¹³

These factors were not considerations for the AU. The founding act of the AU concluded in 2000 establishes “the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect to grave circumstances namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity”.¹⁴ Although the AU favours Africa solutions to Africa, it is also pragmatic, and this was one such situation where it recognised that it needed help from other international and regional organisations.

When NATO made the announcement to provide non-combatant military support to the AMIS mission, six former foreign ministers from different countries wrote a joint newspaper article in a show of moral support for the ethics of NATO’s intended action. They also called for NATO to use its Rapid Response Force. This was not beyond the will of NATO member states but it would require authority from the UN Security Council for a Chapter VII resolution especially to include a no-flight zone over Darfur. It was clear, however, that China would oppose this. So NATO pursued the basic option of logistic airlift support and training.¹⁵

Whilst the diplomatic process pressed on, the North Atlantic Council turned to General James Jones, who held the most senior military position of NATO forces in Europe (SACEUR), and asked him to take the lead and put a liaison team on the ground to support the mission. General Jones looked to his command centre in Heidelberg Germany and asked Allied Land Component Command Headquarters (ALCC HQ HD) to take the lead in providing a liaison team on the ground. He chose Brigadier General Andre Defawe, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations to be his Senior Military Liaison Officer (SMLO). The other Heidelberg members of the liaison team were Sergeant Major Pascal Wijkman (Senior NCOIC), Lieutenant

¹³ Brian Raftopoulos and Karin Alexander (eds.), *Peace in the Balance: The Crisis in Sudan* (London: African Minds, 2008), p. 84.

¹⁴ African Union, Constitutive Act of the Union, Article (h) 4, 11 July 2000, http://www.au2002.gov.za/docs/key_oau/au_act.htm accessed 7 October 2008.

¹⁵ Statement by former Madeleine Albright (USA), Robin Cook (UK), Lamberto Dini (Italy), Lloyd Axworthy (Canada), Ana Palacio (Spain), Erik Derycke (Belgium), and Surin Pitsuwan (Thailand), *International Herald Tribune*, 25 May 2005, <http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/05/25/opinion/edalbright.php> accessed 7 July 2008.

Colonel Carsten Petersen (Operations Cell Director) and Lieutenant Colonel Ed Mead (Military Assistant to the SMLO).¹⁶

Operationally, the NATO mission was undertaken by Joint Command Lisbon, Portugal – under the overall command of Allied Command Operations – where the local responsibility for the NATO SMLO team operated out of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The SMLO team was NATO's single military point of contact in Addis Ababa with the AU. In addition, it was the NATO military point of contact with the representatives of the countries contributing troops to the AMIS operation, the representatives of the donor nations pledging support to the AU, the UN, the EU and various embassies.

While the military machinery was being put into place, predominately US Air Force transport aircraft, the diplomatic process continued. The NATO Secretary General participated in a meeting in Addis Ababa on 26 May 2005, chaired by UN Secretary General Annan and AU Commission President Konaré, where he pledged international support for the AU's mission in Darfur.

Following that meeting, and based on further clarification and confirmation of the AU's requirements, as well as consultations with the AU, the EU and the UN, NATO's NAC agreed on 8 June on the detailed modalities and extent of Alliance support. The decision to support the AU with strategic deployment and staff capacity building was formally announced on 9 June, at the meeting of NATO Ministers of Defence in Brussels.¹⁷

Implementing the strategy and policy

Despite the agreement in principle to provide support to the AU, it was not as straightforward in implementing it. A few days before the 9 June NATO announcement, an open split broke out between EU and NATO member states, who wanted to offer assistance on which organisation should coordinate measures in

¹⁶ Africa Development Information Service, *NATO Organisation Record*, http://www.afdevinfo.com/htmlreports/org/org_56574.html accessed 24 August 2008.

¹⁷ Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Defence Ministers Session, Brussels, 9 June 2005, Final Communiqué, paragraph 9 NATO Press Release (2005)076.

support of AMIS.¹⁸ The US and Canada preferred NATO (through SHAPE, the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe), given that the US and Canada were not EU members, while France preferred the EU.¹⁹ The UK was amenable to both the EU and NATO whilst the UK was already providing direct financial assistance to AMIS (£32 million in 2004 which increased to £52 million in 2006), and the FCO (Foreign & Commonwealth Office) chief police expert who advised the AU police commissioner on civil policing aspects of the AMIS mission.²⁰ Germany, the Netherlands and Norway remained undecided. An important factor for the European members of NATO who preferred the EU above NATO was that, unlike NATO, the EU Rapid Reaction Force had a defined purpose that included humanitarian, rescue and peacekeeping operations. The EU had been helping the AU since 2004 when NATO had not appeared particularly interested in Africa. The EU also had recent experience on the African continent – Operation Artemis (June-September 2003) to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in sending 1 700 troops to secure the town of Bunia, allowing the return of 60 000 refugees.²¹

The pressure on the ground in Darfur was the deciding factor which shortened the spat leading both the EU and NATO to provide support to the AU-led military cell in Addis Ababa with the choice of organisations (EU or NATO) being left to individual member states of both regional organisations.²² Given that the main airlift aircraft would be from the US, who is not an EU member, it was clear that NATO would be the main airlift-supporting organisation to AMIS. France used solely the EU while the UK used both the EU and NATO.²³ Other countries, like Norway and the Netherlands, provided vehicles and equipment as part of their commitment to both the EU and NATO.

¹⁸ D. Dombey, *NATO-EU Spat hits Airlift to Darfur*, *Financial Times*, 8 June 2005, p. 4.

¹⁹ Editorial, *NATO's Darfur Mission on as Partners deny Split*, *The East Standard* (Kenya), 11 June 2005.

²⁰ DFID Press Release, 18 July 2006, <http://dfid.gov.uk/news/files/pressrelease/amis-brussels.asp> accessed 9 July 2008.

²¹ Lee Feinstein, *Darfur and Beyond: What Is Needed to Prevent Mass Atrocities* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2007), p. 33.

²² Editorial, *NATO Agrees on Darfur and sets aside strains with the EU*, AFP, 9 June 2005.

²³ ISIS Europe European Security Review, *Support for the African Union in Darfur: A Test for EU-NATO Strategic Partnership* (London: ISIS, June 2005), Review no. 26.

There was open relief in NATO over the quick resolve to the spat and throughout the mission there was complete transparency between the EU and NATO. Despite this, there remained the niggling apprehension that the Berlin Plus framework had not been invoked – this being the agreement reached on 16 December 2002, where the EU and NATO had reached agreement on cooperation on international security. The Berlin Plus agreement was seen as essential agreement to European regional security, given that the membership of both organisations overlapped to a great extent where the EU Rapid Reaction Force and the NATO Rapid Reaction Force would draw from the same limited pool of deployable European forces and equipment. Such apprehension on availability of forces was exemplified by the commitment, if not over-commitment, to other ongoing conflicts that included Afghanistan, Iraq and peace-support operations in the Balkans.

The Berlin Plus agreement was also significant for NATO assistance to the AU, given the perceived need for a common NATO-EU planning centre or chain of command. However establishing a common centre or command could have distracted and delayed assisting the AU by months or even years. NATO consequently planned through SHAPE, while the EU used the Strategic Airlift Coordination Centre (SALCC) in Eindhoven, Netherlands. Any apprehension was short-lived since on the ground, the military effected tactical co-operation to ensure mission success and within a few weeks, Darfur was being presented as a perfect example of NATO-EU cooperation in assisting the AU.²⁴ The longer-term ramifications are still to be evaluated on this especially on whether both the EU and NATO could have done more at the time and how they could do it better in the future and in other circumstances.

Turning back to the case it is clear that cooperation on the ground between the AU, EU and NATO meant that the NATO liaison team from ALCC HQ arrived in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in mid-June 2005 and immediately began to set up the NATO/AMIS liaison headquarters. The mandate from the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) was to liaise with the AU and Darfur Integrated Task Force (DITF), which was co-located with the AU Headquarters in Addis Abba, Ethiopia and coordinated support in three specific areas:

- strategic airlift (deployment of AMIS forces into Darfur);

²⁴ Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, A Changing Alliance in a Changing World, speech at Bratislava, 30 June 2005, European Security Review, ISIS Europe, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2005/s050630a.htm> accessed 10 July 2008.

- support of the UN-led map exercise (MAPEX); and
- execution of staff capacity-building training for the DITF staff and the force headquarters.²⁵

In a rapid display of capability, NATO was able to launch its airlift operations in support of AMIS, with the first movement of Nigerian troops on 1 July. This was achieved by having NATO personnel deployed on the ground to coordinate NATO's airlift support. In reality, this only required eight people – seven to Addis Ababa and one to Nigeria. These were later transferred to other countries based on the airlift schedule. Airlifts of personnel from Gambia, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa continued through July, August and September. The initial airlift was undertaken by US C-130 and C-17 aircraft that moved approximately 680 troops to the region, while the UK later supported the airlift of another 680 troops.²⁶

Thus, the first task of NATO support to the AU, immediate and decisive strategic airlift, was successful within a three-month period. Integral to the success was the movement and control specialists and the NATO Senior Military Liaison Officer team. The latter succeeded in the main task to coordinate the planning and execution of cargo and troops between the troop contributing nations (TCN), the DITF Headquarters and various NATO air movement centres. On paper, the task seemed easy and the numbers seemed relatively small. However, it was a complex task because the troop movements had to be coordinated around eleven different Aerial Ports of Embarkation (APOE) and three different Aerial Ports of Debarkation (APOD).²⁷ It was clear that NATO was thus able to engage in a trans-regional military support operation in Africa without previous expertise.

This foray into Africa intrigued the world, and NATO was publicly questioned by the press over which NATO Treaty was being invoked, which NATO member state was being threatened and, if none, then why NATO was becoming involved in

²⁵ NATO Documents, NATO starts Airlifting African Union Troops to Darfur, 1 July 2005, <http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2005/07-july/e0701a.htm> accessed 24 August 2008.

²⁶ NATO Documents, 1,300 African Union Peacekeepers Airlifted to Darfur, 3 August 2005, <http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2005/08-august/e0803a.htm> accessed 8 July 2008.

²⁷ NATO Documents, NATO Starts Airlifting African Union Troops to Darfur, 1 July 2005, <http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2005/07-july/e0701a.htm> accessed 8 July 2008.

Africa. Jamie Shea (NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General for External Relations) responded,

NATO needs to use its forces in a reasoned manner with clear objectives which might not only include active conflict but also situations to address human indignities certainly as in Darfur, and I think that it's very appropriate that we do have that involvement in a contingency like Darfur.²⁸

Whilst the airlift was underway, NATO commenced its second task – that of staff capacity-building training. The NATO liaison team for this task worked with the DITF staff leadership and the tactical commanders on the ground to collect the staff capacity-building training requirements. A plan was formulated, and NATO responded by providing two phases of training, targeting two different training audiences.²⁹

The first phase was conducted in August 2005 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia at the DITF Headquarters and was designed to train the DITF staff members on strategic level tasks. The second phase of the training was conducted in El-Fashir, Sudan at the AMIS Force Headquarters compound and was designed to train the Force Headquarters on operational and tactical level tasks. This training was widely accepted and in total, 114 Force Headquarters and Sector Headquarters staff officers were trained from all the combined Force HQ components (Military, Civilian Police, CIMIC and NGOs).

NATO support was not confined to solely supporting the AU directly. As part of the initial diplomacy, it was clear that NATO would support UN initiatives to the AU as well as the EU in its assistance to the AU. As regard NATO support to the EU in its assistance to the AU, it was on 7 August that NATO airlifted the first team

²⁸ NATO Documents, *The Transatlantic Alliance in the 21st Century*, 11 July 2005, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2005/s050711i.htm> accessed 8 July 2008.

²⁹ NATO Documents, *NATO Starts Airlifting African Union Troops to Darfur*, 1 July 2005, <http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2005/07-july/e0701a.htm> accessed 8 July 2008.

of 49 AU civilian police as well as an additional 533 military peacekeepers into Darfur.³⁰

Given these successes in airlift support and training, NATO then turned to the third critical mission that was requested. This was NATO support to the UN-led map exercise (MAPEX) designed to help AU personnel to understand and operate effectively in the theatre of operations, as well as to build their capacity to manage strategic operations.³¹

Towards the end of August 2005, staff capacity-building activities started in Nairobi, Kenya. NATO helped to train AU personnel in key headquarters functions such as command and control, logistics and planning. The UN asked NATO for assistance in helping to write the scenarios for the exercise and then to provide exercise controllers both in the Force Headquarters and the Sector headquarters. In a cost-effective operation, only sixteen NATO personnel were deployed to conduct the exercise and another eight to organise the staff capability building. In the words of both the AU and UN leadership during the exercise and in the after action review, “NATO involvement and participation in the MAPEX was pinnacle to the success of the entire operation.”³²

Thus, within six months of the initial request and within three months of the start of operations, a unique milestone was established. This was the first time that NATO was involved in an operation on the African continent where the NATO contingent was accepted as a full partner by the AU leadership and the collective group of partner nations from the AU, the EU and the UN. This resulted in the appointment of a NATO Civilian Senior Representative (NCSR) from the Norwegian embassy in Ethiopia on an informal basis to assist with the political contacts and to work directly with NATO Headquarters. Clearly, this particular NATO mission opened a whole new array of opportunities for the NATO alliance and cast a very positive light on its member states’ intentions to the international community.

³⁰ NATO Documents, First NATO Airlift of Civilian Police into Darfur, 7 August 2005, <http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2005/08-august/e0810b.htm> accessed 8 July 2008.

³¹ NATO Speeches, Back-round Briefing by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer on the Upcoming Ministerial Meeting in Sofia Bulgaria, 25 April 2006, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2006/s060425a.htm> accessed 24 August 2008.

³² NATO Documents, News, <http://www.nato.int/ahd/news/2006/n060317a.htm> accessed 8 July 2008.

Given this state of affairs, it was no surprise that on 21 September 2005 that the NAC agreed to extend the duration of NATO's airlift support in order to ensure the airlift of the remaining peacekeeping reinforcements in Darfur until 31 October 2005.

Sustaining the strategy and policy

The rapidity of the decision to support the AU had not left time to justify the actions to an eager public audience nor to undertake an introspective review of the decision and the initial implementation successes. In a show of transparency, an open debate was therefore organised on 30 September 2005 with the topic "NATO, the AU, the UN and Darfur".³³ The debate was chaired by Jamie Shea, with a panel of Eirini Lemos (resident UN expert on the NATO international staff), Dr. Klaus Becher (Associate Director of Wilton Park, UK) and Professor Mats Berdal (Kings College London). The debate highlighted that the policy was not a spontaneous decision. It had been clearly defined in political terms with military participation. The military had been given the ability and capability to undertake the mission. Strategic and tactical goals were clearly defined and limitations were clearly demarcated. The panel accepted that NATO's success meant that it could expect more such requests in the future and it would be hard pressed to reject them, given this precedence.

Following this debate, having suffered no casualties and having gained immense public support for contributing to the AU mission, the NAC agreed on 30 September 2005 to continue to offer support to the AU until 31 March 2006. The policy and strategy remained the same – the coordination of strategic airlift during further troop rotations of the peacekeeping forces as well as additional staff capacity building, in order to add to the military skills of the AU officers. Having reviewed the AU troop rotation schedule on 9 November 2005, the NAC amended this support until end May 2006.³⁴

Ultimately, NATO relies on its member states commitments and such decisions required high-level political consent. Clearly, the pressure was on for more to be

³³ NATO STOPWATCH, Debate 1: NATO, the African Union, the United Nations and Darfur Special Interactive Video Forum Series with Jamie Shea, 30 September 2005, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2005/s050930a.htm> accessed 8 July 2008.

³⁴ NATO Documents, NATO's Assistance to the African Union for Darfur, 2 April 2008, <http://www.nato.int/issues/darfur/practice.html> accessed 24 August 2008.

attempted in Darfur. For example, President Bush on 17 February 2006 called for a sizeable UN force and a bigger role for NATO in the peacekeeping effort.³⁵ Similarly, the UK's International Development Secretary frequently suggested that Darfur "represented the most serious humanitarian emergency in the world today".³⁶

Hence, by mid-March 2006, Pentagon authorities were tasked with and had completed a review of various options, and were ready to back a large team of NATO advisers into Darfur. US Secretary of Defence Donald H. Rumsfeld was briefed on the proposal and approved it for discussion with the White House and State Department. However, a larger force with a different mandate was not to be. A number of reasons were cited. Foremost, NATO relied solely on contributing member states where no single member state was willing to make a significant increase in forces citing that NATO as an alliance had a growing role in securing Afghanistan, and Darfur might distract this role.³⁷ Another reluctance cited was the fear of sending significant numbers of Europeans and North Americans that could inflame regional sensitivities, particularly if the mainly Muslim Sudanese government opposed such a NATO deployment. This fear in part emanated from an Osama bin Laden tape that accused the US of igniting strife in Darfur. Last but not least was the minimal domestic interest in Western countries about Darfur in the sense that political elites perceived that they would neither gain nor lose any electoral or popular support by either invoking a smaller or larger military commitment through NATO or unilaterally. It was no surprise that the word from NATO HQ on 29 March was that NATO was not planning, discussing or considering a NATO armed force on the ground in Darfur though NATO would continue to provide what it was already providing.³⁸

It was at this stage that the UN escalated its efforts. Firstly, the UN Security Council, for the first time, imposed sanctions on four men accused of atrocities in Darfur. Secondly, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan formally appealed to NATO by way of a phone call to the NATO Secretary General on 27 March for help in fortifying the ability of the AU force to restrain armed groups and to ensure the

³⁵ Jim Van der Hei and Colum Lynch, *Washington Post* Editorial, 17 February 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/09/AR2006040900957.html> accessed 7 July 2008.

³⁶ UN Document A/60/L.1 (Sixtieth Session, 20 September 2005), paragraphs 138-140.

³⁷ Jim Van der Hei and Colum Lynch, *Washington Post* Editorial, Online.

³⁸ Eric Reeves, Michael Brassard, *A Long Day's Dying: Critical Moments in the Darfur Genocide* (London: Key Publishing House, 2007), p. 292.

safety of civilians.³⁹ Lacking the mandate from a UN Security Council Resolution, all that the NAC could do, was to announce its readiness to continue NATO's current mission. The formal statement to this effect came on 13 April, when the NAC announced its readiness to continue NATO's current mission until 30 September 2006 in full consultation, transparency and complementarity with the EU, the UN and all other donors concerned.⁴⁰

Despite the good intentions and successes, all those involved knew that more was needed, and on 30 May 2006 the UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Jan Egeland, visited NATO HQ to discuss Darfur and the role of the military in disaster relief. This was complemented on 2 June when the Chairman of the AU Commission, Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, requested that NATO extend its airlift and training support. The NAC consulted the contributing NATO member states and decided to extend NATO's assistance to AMIS until the end of 2006.

This was affirmed on 8 June 2006 by NATO Defence Ministers who also stated NATO willingness to expand its training assistance to AMIS in the fields of Joint Operations Centres, pre-deployment certification and lessons learned. They also stated NATO willingness to consider support to an anticipated follow-on UN mission to the AMIS mission. This follow-on AU-UN hybrid peacekeeping mission was at the time in the planning stage but was formally announced on 16 November 2006 in Addis Ababa, and would later be officially created in UN Security Resolution 1706 (31 August 2006). It would come into being on 1 January 2008 as UNAMID when AMIS was disbanded. Egeland's efforts were successful to the extent that his initiatives were in time to be placed on the agenda of the NATO Riga Summit held on 28-29 November 2006. At the Riga Summit, NATO reaffirmed its support to the AU and its willingness to broaden this support. It also reiterated its commitment to coordinating with other international actors and regional alliances.

Some 18 months after the first lift, NATO decided to extend its support mission for six additional months. This was after a meeting on 15 December 2006 between the Secretary General of NATO, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer and US Ambassador Andrew Natsios, US Special Envoy to Darfur. Ambassador Natsios had just returned from an extensive mission in the region. They discussed the security and

³⁹ Jim Van der Hei and Colum Lynch, *Washington Post* Editorial, Online.

⁴⁰ Editorial, The AU Remains in the Driving Seat for Solving the Conflict in Darfur, <http://reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/EKOI-6QQ3VR?OpenDocument&rc=1&emid=ACOS-635PIQ> accessed 7 July 2008.

humanitarian situation in and around Darfur and concluded that any larger NATO commitment would be expensive, difficult due to the terrain especially the lack of water, could not be set up in a hurry and would be met by strong resistance from the government of Sudan who might view it as an act of war.⁴¹ Having concluded that a NATO reaction force intervention was not possible, other options for enhanced support were considered, and on 15 January 2007 NATO announced that it would provide staff capacity training at the AU Mission HQ in Khartoum, in addition to training provided in El Fasher and Addis Ababa.⁴²

Conclusion

Drawing a line on the chronology of NATO support to AMIS which concluded on 31 December 2007 when AMIS was disbanded and UNAMID was created, leaves this article to draw conclusions about the role of regional alliances (the AU and NATO), about regional alliances supporting other regional alliances (NATO supporting the AU), and specifically about NATO as a trans-regional actor.

Firstly, it is clear that regional alliances have an important role to play. Africa is perhaps the latest geographic region to recognise this and to create a continent-wide alliance with a mandate to intervene should circumstances permit. Previous experiences by ECOWAS/ECOMOG (Economic Community of West African States/Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group), demonstrate that regional alliances in Africa can make a difference for the better. Peace operations by an Africa solution for an Africa problem justify the continuation and strengthening of the AU. African states have granted the AU the authority to intervene. African states are not reluctant to offer manpower to the AU and this is accepted in the African “brotherly context” where intervention is not seen as a bellicose act. So the AU looks ready to become a major actor in Africa, as NATO has been in Europe.

Secondly, the AU has been pragmatic about its limited capabilities in many areas. This includes the lack of experience in being a regional alliance as well as tangible issues, such as limited airlift capability. In requesting help, the AU has

⁴¹ NATO Documents, NATO News, 12 December 2006, <http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2006/12-december/e1215b.htm> accessed 10 July 2008.

⁴² NATO Documents, NATO’s Assistance to the African Union for Darfur, 2 April 2008, <http://www.nato.int/issues/darfur/practice.html> accessed 24 August 2008.

shown that it is willing to recognise its deficiencies and to ameliorate them. The assistance that NATO provided the AU offers a unique basis to construct new theories and notions about trans-regionalism and to break the historical bad connotations of colonialism. Such activities highlight the evolving and dynamic world order and system that permits global humanitarian assistance overcoming the constraints of sovereignty vested in the Westphalian state system. This system proved especially painful to Africa where lines were drawn on maps to create states, often dividing traditional ties and sometimes imposing political systems that could not offer functional government.

Thirdly, the specific NATO-AMIS experience was positive to the extent that additional trans-regional assistance between NATO and the AU emerged. By March 2007, during a visit to NATO headquarters, the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Said Djinnit, evoked expansion of NATO-AU cooperation into new areas including possible long-term capacity-building support. In June 2007, NATO agreed in principle to provide support to the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).⁴³ On 5 September 2007, as part of NATO's capacity-building support to the AU, the NAC agreed to provide assistance to the AU with a study on the assessment of the operational readiness of the African Standby Force brigades. On 13 December 2007, consultations between AU and NATO staff were conducted to identify further specific areas for NATO assistance to the ASF.⁴⁴ Only time will tell whether NATO-AU relations will evolve further to the stage of trans-regionalism with a unique secretariat for research, policy planning, preparation and coordination of meetings and implementation of decisions.

In sum, regional alliances have an important role to play, regional alliances helping other regional alliances for peace-support operations seem likely to increase, with NATO firmly committed to the AU where such trans-regional activity bears no resemblance to colonial intervention, to hegemonic interference or to the detriment of sovereignty.

⁴³ NATO Documents, *African Union looks to long-term cooperation with NATO*, <http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2007/03-march/e0302a.html> accessed 10 July 2008.

⁴⁴ NATO Documents, *NATO assistance to African Union missions*, 8 April 2008, <http://www.nato.int/issues/nato-au/index.html> accessed 7 July 2008.