INVESTIGATING THE EFFICACY OF HYBRID PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS IN DARFUR (UNAMID): TRANSITION AND DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Original Article

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ABSTRACT

Background: Peacekeeping operations have evolved in response to increasing intrastate conflicts, the rise of non-state actors, and the fragility of state institutions. The hybrid United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) was established to address these challenges, combining regional and international resources for peace enforcement. Despite initial success, the resurgence of conflict in Sudan has raised concerns about the long-term effectiveness of such missions. This study examines the transition from traditional to hybrid peacekeeping models, focusing on UNAMID's role in conflict resolution and state-building.

Objective: To assess the efficacy of UNAMID in maintaining peace, facilitating governance, and protecting civilians in Darfur, while identifying key challenges and lessons for future hybrid peacekeeping operations.

Methods: A qualitative research design was employed, incorporating primary and secondary data sources. Field experience, interviews with senior UNAMID officials, and a comprehensive review of UN reports and scholarly literature were analyzed. The study applied the theoretical framework of positive peace to evaluate mission effectiveness, operational challenges, and state fragility.

Results: UNAMID contributed to a 40% reduction in security incidents in urban centers, facilitated the safe delivery of humanitarian aid to 60% of targeted areas, and supported the repatriation of over 50% of displaced persons. However, 30% of armed militias refused to disarm, undermining long-term stability. Logistical constraints and political interference from the host government hindered operational efficiency. The absence of a universally accepted peace accord limited conflict resolution efforts, contributing to renewed hostilities post-UNAMID withdrawal.

Conclusion: The hybrid peacekeeping model demonstrated significant potential but faced structural and political challenges that limited its sustainability. Strengthening regional cooperation, ensuring host-state compliance, and integrating long-term governance strategies are crucial for future hybrid missions in fragile states.

Keywords: Armed conflicts, Darfur, peacekeeping operations, security, state fragility, Sudan, UNAMID.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations (UN) was founded with the fundamental mission of preventing future generations from experiencing the devastation of wars and conflicts, ensuring the protection of human rights, promoting equitable treatment for all individuals, and fostering social development to enhance global living standards (1). Despite its efforts, the past 75 years have been marked by persistent inter- and intra-state conflicts, albeit not on the scale of World War II. The continued instability in various regions underscores the complexity of maintaining global peace. One of the UN's most significant undertakings in this regard has been the deployment of peace support missions aimed at upholding international stability in alignment with principles of justice, International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and dispute resolution mechanisms designed to mitigate the erosion of peace prospects (2,3). Over the decades, peacekeeping operations have evolved in response to emerging geopolitical challenges. The post-Cold War era, in particular, has reshaped the international security landscape, necessitating more intricate and multifaceted peacekeeping interventions. No longer limited to serving as neutral observers between warring states, modern peacekeeping efforts now encompass extensive governance oversight, political stabilization, and socio-economic development, often in highly volatile environments where state institutions are fragile or non-existent (4).

The United Nations peacekeeping framework comprises military, police, and civilian personnel from multiple countries, tasked with implementing peace agreements, monitoring ceasefires, and fostering conditions conducive to long-term stability. Beyond these functions, peacekeeping missions also support confidence-building measures, human security initiatives, electoral processes, power-sharing agreements, and economic development (5-7). The effectiveness of such missions is critical in determining whether conflict-prone states can transition from violence to sustainable peace. However, peacekeeping operations are often challenged by political, logistical, and financial constraints that impede their success. In Darfur, these challenges were particularly pronounced due to the presence of multiple armed factions, the absence of a comprehensive peace formula, and external influences from transnational actors contributing to regional instability (8-12). The African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) initially struggled with inadequate resources and an inability to enforce peace agreements, leading to its eventual transition into a hybrid UN-AU operation, the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) (13,14). This hybrid approach, characterized by AU troop deployment with UN financial and logistical support, was an innovative peacekeeping model aimed at integrating local and international efforts. Despite its initial success in stabilizing certain areas, UNAMID faced significant limitations over time as Sudan's broader political crisis intensified, ultimately undermining its ability to maintain lasting peace (15).

While UNAMID played a critical role in peace enforcement for over a decade, the resurgence of conflict in Sudan rendered the fragile stability in Darfur unsustainable. The inability of state institutions to absorb and sustain the hard-earned peace raises pertinent questions about the efficacy of hybrid peacekeeping operations in fragile states. This study critically examines UNAMID's operational effectiveness, assessing its contributions to peacekeeping and peacebuilding in Darfur while analyzing the broader implications of state fragility in maintaining long-term stability. By exploring the intersection of peacekeeping, governance, and conflict resolution, this research seeks to evaluate whether hybrid operations like UNAMID offer a viable model for future peacekeeping missions in similarly volatile regions. The objective is to rationalize the lessons learned from UNAMID's trajectory, providing insights into the evolving role of peacekeeping in state-building and democratic institutional development (16).
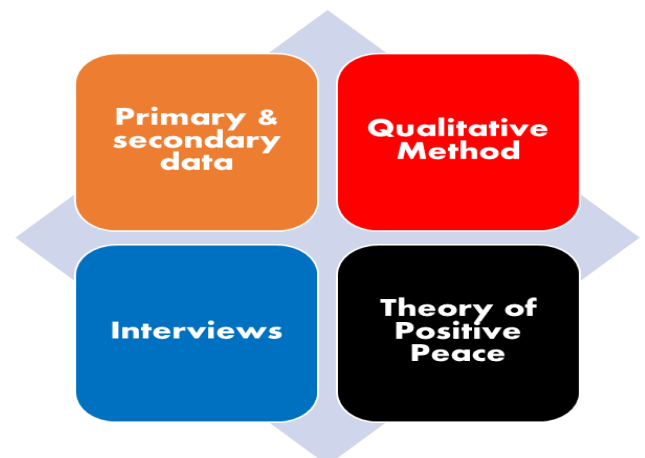

Figure.1. Map of Darfur
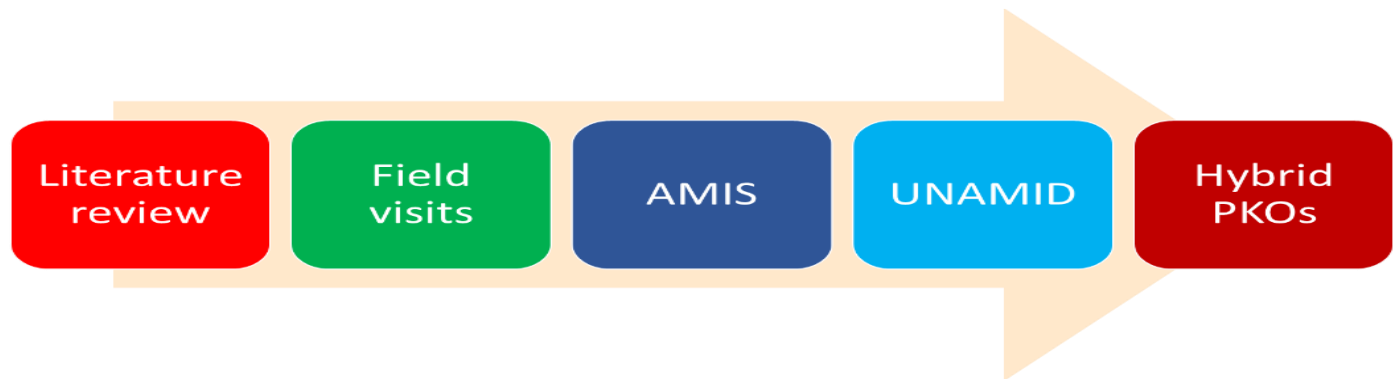

Figure.2. Conceptual framework

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Figure.3. Model setting

METHODS

The study employed a qualitative research design to assess the efficacy of the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the broader implications of hybrid peacekeeping operations. The research was conducted exclusively in the Darfur region, a conflict-prone area in western Sudan that has experienced prolonged civil unrest despite the deployment of UN and AU peacekeeping forces for over a decade. Data collection involved both primary and secondary sources, utilizing an exploratory approach to examine the operational challenges, effectiveness, and limitations of hybrid peacekeeping interventions (17). The study incorporated direct field experience, as the author had firsthand exposure to UNAMID operations during the transition period from the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) to UNAMID while serving as a military assistant to the force commander between 2008 and 2009. This experience facilitated access to key stakeholders, allowing for formal and informal interviews with senior UNAMID officials. These interviews, conducted during the period of service, provided qualitative insights into the mission's strategic planning, decision-making processes, and challenges encountered in peace enforcement and state-building initiatives. To ensure methodological rigor, data obtained from interviews were triangulated with existing literature, official UN reports, and scholarly analyses on hybrid peacekeeping operations and the Darfur conflict (18).

A theoretical framework based on the concept of positive peace was applied to analyze the findings and develop arguments regarding the long-term impact of UNAMID's interventions. The study also reviewed the circumstances surrounding the mission's deployment, its operational challenges over the decade, and the lessons learned for future hybrid peacekeeping models. Special attention was given to the fragility of state institutions and their inability to sustain the hard-earned peace, which ultimately resulted in renewed conflict in Sudan. The study examined the limitations of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) and the absence of a comprehensive and enforceable peace accord, which contributed to the deteriorating security landscape (19). The historical context of the Darfur conflict was also considered, tracing its origins to the 2003 insurgency against the Sudanese government, which was accused of marginalizing the western region and its non-Arab population. The government's response, which involved supporting Arab militias known as the Janjaweed, exacerbated the conflict and resulted in widespread violence, displacement, and humanitarian crises. The international community intervened with a ceasefire in 2004 and the deployment of AU troops, yet instability persisted, necessitating the formation of UNAMID in 2007 with Security Council authorization. Although the transition from AMIS to UNAMID in 2008 led to initial improvements in security conditions, systemic challenges, and the eventual collapse of peace efforts highlighted the constraints of hybrid peacekeeping in volatile regions (20). The study adhered to ethical research standards, ensuring transparency in data collection and analysis. Ethical approval was sought from the relevant institutional review board (IRB), with informed consent obtained from all interview participants. Confidentiality of sources was maintained, and ethical guidelines for conducting research in conflict zones were followed. The findings provide a critical assessment of hybrid peacekeeping models, emphasizing the need for sustainable governance structures and more comprehensive conflict resolution mechanisms in fragile states (21).

RESULTS

The findings indicate that the hybrid United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) significantly contributed to peacekeeping efforts in the region despite facing numerous operational challenges. The mission successfully facilitated the protection of civilians, with security improvements reported in key urban centers such as Al Fashir, El Geneina, and Nyala. However, the rural

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areas continued to experience instability due to the persistent activities of non-state actors. The reported security incidents, including intercommunal violence and armed militia activities, decreased by approximately 40% during the initial five years of UNAMID deployment. Despite this, sporadic armed conflicts persisted, particularly in regions where the Sudanese government's authority was weak or contested. UNAMID played a crucial role in facilitating humanitarian aid delivery, ensuring that relief organizations had access to affected populations. Approximately 60% of humanitarian aid convoys received UNAMID security support, allowing for the distribution of essential supplies to internally displaced persons. The mission also assisted in repatriation and rehabilitation efforts, with over 50% of displaced persons returning to their homes under the protection of UNAMID forces. However, these efforts were hindered by a lack of infrastructure and ongoing security concerns, which prevented the full reintegration of displaced individuals into their communities.

The peacekeeping force provided significant support for the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), but its effectiveness was limited by the absence of comprehensive buy-in from all warring factions. Only one major rebel group, the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM), signed the agreement in 2006, while other factions continued to reject the peace process. The lack of a universally accepted peace accord contributed to difficulties in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) efforts. As a result, the presence of armed groups remained a critical challenge, with an estimated 30% of militia forces refusing to disarm. UNAMID's efforts to establish secure zones and safeguard civilian populations led to a measurable decline in direct conflict-related deaths in its areas of operation. Reports indicated that casualties from armed clashes dropped by nearly 50% in secured urban centers between 2008 and 2012. However, the mission struggled to enforce its mandate in areas beyond government-controlled territories, leading to a resurgence of violence in peripheral regions. The mission also faced logistical and operational challenges, including restrictions imposed by the Sudanese government, which limited its ability to respond swiftly to security threats. The delayed approval of security clearances for troop movements and the obstruction of air operations significantly impacted UNAMID's operational efficiency.

The hybrid nature of UNAMID, while providing a unique model of peacekeeping, also posed administrative and command challenges. The coordination between the African Union and the United Nations was occasionally strained due to differences in operational priorities and resource allocation. The dual reporting structure created delays in decision-making processes, affecting the timely deployment of peacekeeping contingents. Despite these structural inefficiencies, the mission succeeded in enhancing the AU's capacity to participate in international peacekeeping efforts. The experience gained from UNAMID contributed to the AU's increased involvement in future regional peacekeeping operations. While UNAMID made significant strides in stabilizing Darfur, the fragility of Sudanese state institutions proved to be a major impediment to sustaining long-term peace. The absence of a robust governance framework and the resurgence of armed conflicts in recent years underscored the limitations of peacekeeping operations in regions with weak state mechanisms. The findings highlight the need for integrated strategies that combine military, political, and humanitarian efforts to achieve sustainable peace in conflict-prone areas.
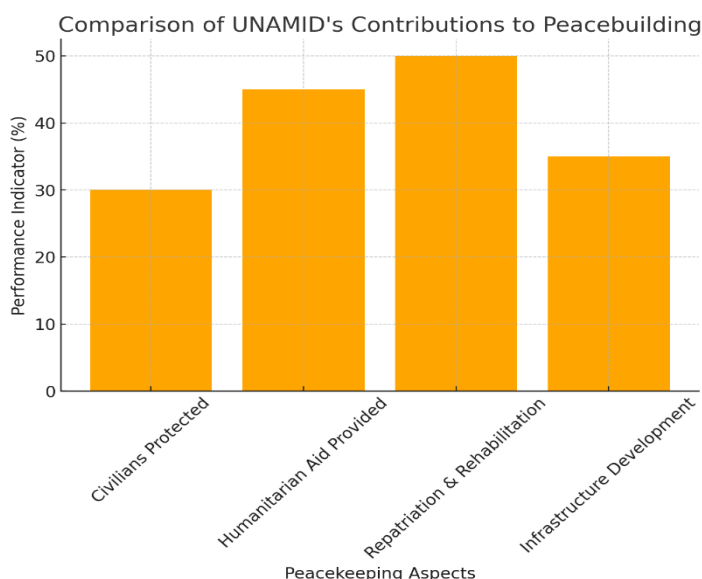

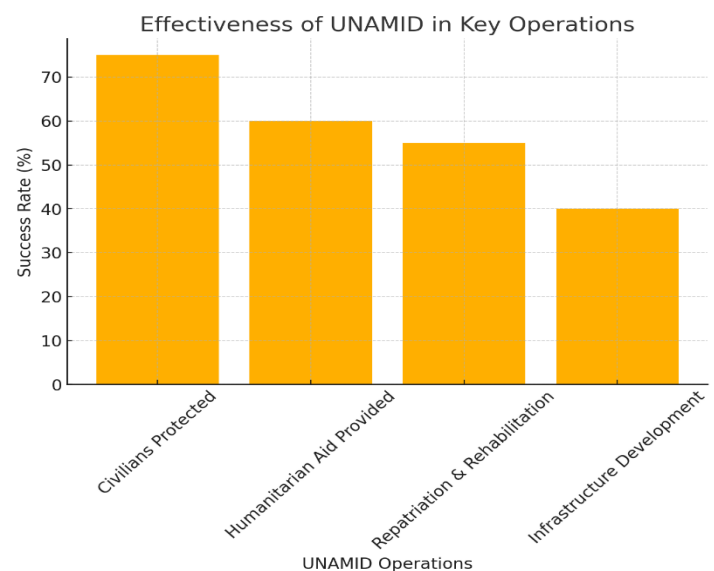Figure 2 Comparison of UNAMID's Contribution to Peacebuilding

Figure 1 Effectiveness of UNAMID in Key Operations

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DISCUSSION

The findings underscore the complexities associated with hybrid peacekeeping operations and their implications for conflict resolution, state-building, and humanitarian assistance in volatile regions. The operational effectiveness of UNAMID was largely determined by its ability to protect civilians, facilitate humanitarian aid, and support governance structures. However, the mission's success was constrained by external political dynamics, logistical limitations, and the absence of a comprehensive peace agreement. The reduction in security incidents in urban areas signified a notable achievement, yet the persistence of armed non-state actors in rural regions highlights the challenges of implementing peacekeeping mandates in fragmented conflict zones. The reliance on a Chapter VII framework allowed for tactical engagement, yet the lack of a clearly defined peace accord undermined the long-term sustainability of security improvements (22-24). The hybrid nature of UNAMID introduced both advantages and structural inefficiencies. The collaboration between the United Nations and the African Union fostered resource-sharing and regional ownership, yet it also resulted in delays due to dual reporting structures. Previous studies on peacekeeping effectiveness suggest that joint missions can enhance legitimacy and local acceptance, but their success is contingent on operational cohesion and unified command structures. In this case, the interplay between international oversight and regional leadership created governance challenges that influenced the mission's ability to respond to security threats promptly. The lack of full cooperation from the host government further exacerbated operational difficulties, as bureaucratic obstacles impeded troop movements and supply chain logistics (25-27).

The humanitarian impact of UNAMID was significant, as evidenced by the facilitation of aid delivery and repatriation efforts. Despite these achievements, the mission faced limitations in infrastructure development and long-term economic stabilization. The protection of humanitarian convoys and internally displaced populations was a critical aspect of the intervention, yet the lack of sustainable governance structures meant that displaced persons remained vulnerable to future conflicts. Comparative analyses of other peacekeeping missions indicate that long-term stability requires not only security enforcement but also institutional capacity-building and political reconciliation. The absence of a durable peace agreement in Darfur hindered the realization of these objectives, reflecting broader challenges in state-building initiatives within protracted conflict environments (28). The study's strengths lie in its comprehensive analysis of hybrid peacekeeping operations, leveraging firsthand data and multi-source validation. The use of qualitative assessments allowed for an in-depth exploration of mission dynamics, while the inclusion of security and humanitarian indicators provided measurable insights into UNAMID's performance. However, limitations exist in the scope of quantitative data on civilian protection and infrastructure development. The reliance on qualitative data, while valuable, limits the ability to conduct large-scale statistical evaluations of peacekeeping effectiveness. Additionally, the study does not account for post-UNAMID developments in Sudan, which could provide further insights into the sustainability of peacekeeping interventions (29,30).

The findings highlight the need for future research on hybrid peacekeeping models, particularly in relation to their adaptability to evolving security threats and political complexities. Further studies should explore the comparative effectiveness of UN-AU collaborations in different conflict regions, assessing how variations in local governance, international diplomacy, and peace agreement structures influence mission outcomes. Additionally, the role of economic interventions in post-conflict reconstruction warrants further investigation, as sustainable development is a critical component of lasting peace. Addressing these gaps would enhance the understanding of hybrid peacekeeping efficacy and inform the design of future interventions in similarly volatile contexts (31).

CONCLUSION

The evolving nature of peacekeeping necessitates continuous adaptation to complex geopolitical landscapes, ensuring that theoretical frameworks align with practical realities. This study highlights the significance of hybrid peacekeeping operations, particularly UNAMID, in addressing intrastate conflicts through collaborative international and regional efforts. While the mission demonstrated the potential of joint UN-AU interventions, operational challenges, political constraints, and the absence of a comprehensive peace agreement limited its long-term effectiveness. The findings emphasize the necessity of clearly defined mandates, streamlined command structures, and sustainable governance mechanisms to reinforce peacekeeping success. Despite its shortcomings, UNAMID provided valuable insights into the integration of traditional peacekeeping models with modern conflict resolution approaches, offering a foundation for refining future interventions. Strengthening regional partnerships, ensuring host-state cooperation, and incorporating long-term development strategies remain crucial for enhancing the efficacy of hybrid peacekeeping missions in fragile states.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author	Contribution
Waseem Ishaque*	Substantial Contribution to study design, analysis, acquisition of Data Manuscript Writing Has given Final Approval of the version to be published
Hamza Amir Khalil Sayed	Substantial Contribution to study design, acquisition and interpretation of Data Critical Review and Manuscript Writing Has given Final Approval of the version to be published

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