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INTERVENTIONISM AS PRACTICE

Security Identities and 'No More, No Less' Operations: On Making NATO's Involvement in Darfur Possible

Julien Pomarède and Théa Schjødt

This article explores NATO's support mission to the African Union's peacekeeping operation in Darfur, Sudan between 2005 and 2007. NATO policies are commonly presented as functional responses to events, but how did a conflict on the African continent become the Atlantic Alliance's business? In this essay, a poststructuralist practice-oriented approach is used to understand the way in which discursive practices progressively establish a policy option as 'natural' in a given situation. It is argued that the normalization of NATO's support mission to the African Union in Darfur and the integration of this operation in NATO's security identity were the result of complex and conflict-ridden social interactions between different discursive practices supported by different actors.

Keywords NATO; Darfur; discursive practices; identity; intervention; African solutions to African problems; world police; responsibility to protect; poststructuralism

Introduction

From July 2005 to December 2007, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) organized a strategic airlift in support of the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS). NATO's operation consisted in transporting African Union (AU) peace-keepers into the Darfur region of Sudan, where a violent conflict between rebels and government-sponsored militias was taking place. NATO also provided the AU personnel with training.

   NATO's operation in Darfur was of limited scope, did not include the deployment of NATO combat troops, and was subordinated to the political and military leadership of the AU. Yet it arguably constituted a ground-breaking event. Darfur represented the farthest NATO had ever embarked from two points of view. First, in geographical terms, it was the first time the Alliance engaged its forces on the African continent and one of the first times in an 'out of area' operation (Bosnia and Kosovo being considered before as an 'extension' of the

European security landscape). Secondly, NATO's operation in Darfur was portrayed as a purely humanitarian one. Contrasting with past international actions on the part of the Alliance, strategic considerations were not deemed to be at stake in this intervention. The organization was considered to be engaged in a 'security presence' of an exclusively humanitarian nature, a situation which was seen as relatively 'unusual' considering NATO's previous interventions.

We are not arguing that this engagement in Darfur represents a revolution in NATO's logic of intervention. Indeed, the humanitarian dimension of NATO engagements was already present in Bosnia and Kosovo (Huysmans 2002; Chandler 2006). As a consequence, 'Peace Support Operations' carried out in the name of 'humanitarian' values were to a certain extent already part of NATO's social identity prior to the Darfur mission. Nevertheless, even if this 'humanitarian interventionist identity' (as we will call it) is now relatively routinized within the Alliance, it does not correspond to what is commonly described as NATO's 'core business' (the conventional military defence of the North Atlantic area). Therefore, this recent post-cold war identity, and the competences that actualize it, have to be regularly consolidated and validated through specific operations. The mission in Darfur is precisely one of them. How did the North Atlantic alliance, created to ensure the collective defence of its members in Western Europe and North America, wind up in Eastern Africa to help protect local civilians in an internal conflict? To answer this question we show how the Alliance's practices in Darfur were not only made possible and constrained by its 'humanitarian interventionist identity', but also partly reframed this identity.

Drawing on a simultaneously poststructuralist and practice-oriented approach, this article theorizes NATO's intervention in Darfur as having been enabled by discursive practices (see also Doty 1993) framing the alliance's mission in Darfur as not only desirable but also as an obvious outcome given what NATO is claimed to be and what the context is said to make necessary. It is in the light of representations conveyed by official texts and transcripts of public discourses and declarations that this engagement will be explored. In so doing, we 'foreground' the social and discursive practices through which an international intervention is legitimized. The core of our demonstration lies in a conceptualization of NATO's identity as a set of practices: NATO is what it is because of what is done on the international scene in the name of NATO. Our reflection hence focuses on the ways in which NATO practitioners framed the organization's intervention in Darfur as an integral part of its generally accepted (but simultaneously contested) security identity as an interventionist and humanitarian 'peace supporter'.

Our analysis begins by presenting our poststructuralist practice theoretical framework. Then we discuss the socio-historical construction of the most important practices, mapping the discursive field during the operation in Darfur and their implications at the time. Thirdly, we come to our empirical study by explaining how NATO progressively negotiated the legitimacy of its operation in Darfur. Finally, we conclude on the implications of our analysis for NATO as well as from the point of view of the more general issues addressed by this special section on 'interventionist practices'.

NATO, Poststructuralism and Practices

Understanding NATO's Identity

NATO's changing identities is a subject that gained in importance on the international relations (IR) research agenda after the end of the cold war. The dissolution of the Soviet Union should, according to dominant realist theories, have made NATO obsolete (Waltz 1990; see also Mearsheimer 1990). Critics of the realist understanding of the organization suggested that it had been more than a mere alliance against the USSR. From this perspective, some constructivist theories used the concept of *security community* to theorize the 'new NATO' (Adler and Barnett 1998, 3). According to the proponents of this concept, NATO's persistence after the fall of the Soviet Union can be explained by its identity as a security community (Risse-Kappen 1996). NATO's identity as a security community is here generally considered an independent variable that explains an outcome (a policy). The logic of cause–effect carries a suggestion of determinism, yet developments in NATO's policies have been hard to predict. Some of these shortcomings result from the assumption, present in some constructivist accounts, that identities are relatively stable, which leaves little room for accommodation to change, crisis and discord (Mattern 2005, 10–11). From this point of view, the choice of a simultaneously poststructuralist and practice-oriented theoretical framework allows breaking with the analysis of policies as functional responses to events and of NATO's identity as a stable given (Hansen 2006). It rather approaches NATO's 'humanitarian interventionist identity' as 'that which exists, but which does not yet exist enough' (Foucault 2008, 4) from the viewpoint of those whose practices 'produce' (and are dependent upon) this organizational identity. This identity does not exist as such; it is permanently made to exist by a set of practices that might not be new but that, once they are coordinated and interlinked by a given discourse, consolidate this identity and thus reinforce the practices that are seen to embody it. This identity construction is however fragile and contested since competing discourses frame and coordinate these practices differently. Moreover, the conformity of these practices to what they 'should be' according to particular discourses can always be questioned.

What is a Practice?

As Christian Olsson explains in the introduction to this special section, practices are historical and collective acts, yet are simultaneously embodied in irreducibly singular 'doings' (Olsson 2015). This raises the question of the conformity of the latter 'doings' to these collective acts. To be 'competent', practices have to be socially recognized as such by social agents. In other words, practices partly flow from the incorporation by their practitioners of the frames through which other agents are likely to (in)validate them as (in)competent (Goffman 1959, 17–19). From this perspective, practice-oriented approaches consider social

phenomena to be the result of 'doings' that are patterned by controversies over their meaning as well as by the power relations that permeate these controversies. As a consequence, the (in)competent and (un)patterned nature of practices does not flow from purely subjective factors (Schatzki 1996). On the contrary, a practice is inseparable from systems of meaning that are collectively recognized and shared (Bourdieu 1977, 78–79; Giddens 1986, 15–16). In other words, a practice always interacts with other socially anchored practices (Reckwitz 2002, 250) and is never totally independent or isolated from other practices. This is particularly the case for what Lene Hansen calls 'general practices' and 'specific practices'. For the author, 'specific practices are performed as exemplars of a general practice, which means that they are measured against the—socially constituted—understanding of what a general practice implies' (Hansen 2011, 293). The taken-for-granted dimension of general practices implies that actors try to reduce the gap between what they are doing and this socially accepted type of (general) practice. The (in)stability of the relation between the two types of practices determines the (in)competent nature of a specific practice and, ultimately, its recognition as an integral part of the general practice it depends on (Hansen 2011, 294–295). Hence, as we will see in more detail, the justification and normalization of NATO's intervention in Darfur (specific practices) depended on its more or less conflicting relations with three types of general practices related to: (1) the 'Responsibility to protect'; (2) the recognition that 'African problems' call for 'African solutions'; and (3) the avoidance of any practice that might lend credence to the idea that the Alliance had ambitions to become a 'global policeman'.

The concept of identity is generally not central in analyses foregrounding practices. Since it is important to our demonstration, some explanations might here be useful in order to highlight the particular meaning it has in our practice-oriented framework. Agents' identities are not considered as a simple set of representations; they are bound up with, and hence inseparable from, different routinized ways of acting in the world (Wenger 1998, 152). Identity is at the core of an actor's practical knowledge, in the sense that it will act in accordance with a stratified set of practices inscribed in its identity. From this perspective, the evolution of an actor's identity depends on the interaction between what it is supposed to do given the identities that are assigned to it and what it actually does in different situations. Identity is practical, both in the sense that it structures an agent's way of acting and in the sense that it is stabilized and transformed by practices. What NATO has to do is determined by the Alliance's practitioners on the basis of what it should be according to them but, given the generative nature of practices, the reverse is also true. NATO's existence is initially inseparable from its political-military *raison d'être*, which is the defence of the North Atlantic area. In this sense, NATO's post-cold war humanitarian activities are not self-evident. We have to denaturalize the generally taken-for-granted identity these activities are bound up with in order to understand how it has emerged and been validated. To what extent was NATO's operation in Darfur normalized as an obvious outcome of its humanitarian interventionist identity? What were the concrete mechanisms

through which this intervention was progressively enacted as a 'normal' part of NATO's humanitarian interventionist identity?

Practice as Discourse, Discourse as Practice

In order to explain how practices perform, we will use the concept of 'discursive practice' in a poststructuralist perspective. Three main theoretical points have to be highlighted in this regard. Practices being about socially recognized competences, the system of meaning related to this recognition are, among others, fixed through discourse. Discourses are social and political constructions that establish a system of relations between the meanings assigned to practices (Foucault 2008; Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000, 3). This ordered system of meanings appears as normal, and validates the (in)competence of a practice. So, 'practice cannot be thought "outside of" discourse' (Neumann 2002, 628), because 'the constitution of competent performance … is fundamentally epistemic, insofar as accounts of lived practices are textually constituted' (Adler and Pouliot 2011, 14).

As already seen, a practice is considered as competent or incompetent depending on daily processes of validation. Poststructuralism will help us to address this unstable nature of practices. Whereas structuralist theories posit that certain webs of meaning constitute structures that can be uncovered through the study of language (de Saussure 1960), poststructuralists consider that the relationship between meanings is inherently unstable. Structures exist, but they are temporary and changeable (Hansen 2006, 3). There can be only temporary and partial fixations of meaning (Foucault 1966, 148–149; 1976, 47). More specifically, the (in)stability of a practice is the result of a constant negotiation between general practices and specific practices by which the former are (re)produced by the latter. Conversely, in order for a specific practice to be recognized as a competent performance, it has to be subsumed under a general practice. It is this precise interaction and (in)stability between general and specific practices that we are going to address in this article: how did the specific practices performed in the context of NATO's engagement in Darfur interact with the general practices of which they were seen as instantiations? How could the different and sometimes divergent discursive practices normalizing this NATO operation be articulated?

Thirdly, discourses highlight the relational nature of practices. This is why we will use the concept of *discursive field* referring to a range of competing discourses that are relevant to a particular realm of social practice (Kenny 1992, 179) in which the position of a dominant discourse can be undermined if more or less powerful carriers of alternative discourses manage to impose their conflicting meanings (Milliken 1999, 230). This notion also allows addressing the discursive relations between general and specific practices. In our case, we will see that NATO's ability to normalize its specific practices deployed in Darfur depended on (un)stable discursive interactions with the three abovementioned general practices. In other words, we consider the discursive field as the social space in which the normalization of NATO's intervention in Darfur took place through

conflict-ridden interactions between the specific practices the Alliance deployed on the one hand, and the three aforementioned general practices on the other.

Empirical Material

Our poststructuralist and practice-oriented inquiry mainly focuses on official discourses as one of the main means through which NATO's actions were legitimized. They allow an understanding of how the organization portrays its role in the world. Conscious that NATO is far from being a homogeneous organization, and that struggles surely took place between different types of bureaucracies within the remit of NATO's organizational structure, we here focus on the discursive practices on the part of the officials endowed with the legitimacy to speak in the name of the institution as a whole. We consider their discourses as reflecting NATO's official self-representation during its Darfur operation. In this respect, we will consider that NATO can be treated as an actor producing real effects by discursively inter-linking the diverse sites and practices that are seen to constitute it.

Identifying General Practices: Responsibility to Protect, African Solutions and World Police

NATO's intervention in Darfur was constituted by a set of specific practices that interacted with three general practices. The international debate on NATO's intervention indeed took place in a *discursive field* structured by three general practices defended by different agents: the exercise of the 'responsibility to protect', the promotion of 'African solutions to African problems', and the denial of wanting to become the 'world's policeman'.

From a methodological point of view, the selection of these general practices was not made arbitrarily. In accordance with a practice-oriented approach, this choice progressively emerged from the systematic analysis of the empirical material described above. NATO has specific histories with these practices. The organization was not confronted with them for the first time. On the contrary, these international practices have been a component of NATO's post-cold war evolution and have been anchored within the Alliance (even if it is less the case for the 'African solutions to African problems' discourse). These previous inter-actions between NATO and these general practices have conditioned the way in which the Alliance justified its operation in Darfur.

The Responsibility to Protect

The 'responsibility to protect' (R2P) was introduced by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in 2001 in its report named *The Responsibility to Protect* (ICISS 2001). The concept emerged as an

attempt to resolve the conflict between the principle of state sovereignty and the possibility of intervention for human protection purposes (ICISS 2001, VII). R2P is an element of a more generally accepted discourse claiming that populations have the right to be protected from 'genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing or crimes against humanity' (UN General Assembly 2005, 31; for a critical take on the concept, see Mamdani 2010; McCormack 2010; O'Connell 2010). A state that does not provide such protection can be considered as aberrant according to the report, and intervention by the 'international community' can thereby be justified.

R2P is relevant for NATO in at least two ways. Firstly, NATO's post-cold war identity has gradually been transformed by cultural framings of the organization (Neumann and Williams 2000, 369–370; Behnke 2012). R2P's core principles have been crucial in this 'cultural' restructuring of the Alliance's identity. As a 'community of values' (Gheciu 2005, 55) that promotes human rights, democracy and the rule of law, NATO is arguably endowed with a special responsibility to implement the R2P. Increasingly seen in the 1990s as an organization promoting respect for human life, NATO was in the first decade of the twenty-first century more easily identified as a legitimate actor to implement R2P. Indeed, NATO's member states have been significant contributors to the development of R2P.

Secondly, NATO has participated in the naturalization of an initially non-obvious linkage between military power and humanitarian principles. The core argument in this security 'continuum' is that a military capacity can serve humanitarian purposes, be it through material assistance or coercive means. Therefore, NATO has crystallized a part of the R2P debate by consolidating dominant representations of the material means necessary in order to implement the R2P principle competently. Conceptually, R2P would be performed by the 'international community', but a special responsibility is given to actors with the material capacity and competences to act (Bellamy 2006, 145). NATO is in this context portrayed as one of the few actors of the 'international community' that can take on such a responsibility in practice (Thakur 2002, 324). NATO's intervention over Kosovo was an important moment from the point of view of the organization's articulation of this military–humanitarian nexus: 'The key issue for NATO was to convert its military know-how and capabilities into humanitarian practices' (Huysmans 2002, 605).

Concerning our empirical case, the concept of R2P had been developed shortly before the crisis in Darfur, and Darfur was seen by many observers as a test case for this concept (Slim 2004, 811; Bellamy 2005a, 2005b). The 2001 report on R2P and NATO's post-cold war evolution seems to have had an impact on the language chosen to support greater Western engagement in Darfur, specifically on the part of NATO. In the Alliance's official discourse on Darfur, the idea of a value-based community having a moral responsibility and a credible material capacity to provide help to the defenceless is a recurrent trope (de Hoop Scheffer 2005a).

'African Solutions to African Problems' and the Practice of Sovereign Equality

The mantra of 'African solutions to African problems' has been historically structured around an ambiguity that was present during the crisis in Darfur and that conditioned the terms of the debate at the time. The meaning of this catchphrase has been constituted both by the rhetoric on the part of African elites promoting 'African independence' in the wake of the continent's decolonization and by Western elites wanting (mainly after the Cold War) to disengage from the continent while maintaining more discrete forms of assistance and influence.

The 'African solutions to African problems' narrative surfaced in the wake of decolonization (Goldman 2005. 459). In its original form, it went hand in hand with the affirmation and consolidation of the post-colonial state. It became a particular expression of the more general principle of sovereign equality between states. From this point of view, the principle of 'African solutions to African problems' conveys the idea of African pride, initiative and empowerment. It expresses a will to break loose from former colonial powers and to implement policies tailored to African interests and contexts as opposed to accepting the condescending and euro-centric attitude of the former colonizers (Nkrumah 1961, xi–xiv). The Organization of African Unity (OAU) was established in 1963 to provide a venue for the debate on 'African solutions to African problems. However, the actual problem-solving abilities of the organization fell short of the expressed intents. In practice, the OAU gave priority to non-interference and eschewed its role in the management of internal conflicts on the continent (Omach 2000, 77).

The end of the twentieth century saw a revival of the concept of 'African solutions to African problems'. During the 1990s, (sub-)regional African organizations became more involved in peace operations on the continent (Mays 2003, 106–107) and in 2002 the African Union replaced the OAU, with an aspiration to play a bigger role in peacekeeping on the continent. The principle of 'African solutions to African problems' is part of the norms governing the AU (Williams 2007, 261). In the latter's constitutive act this is expressed through the idea of 'self-reliance within the framework of the Union' (African Union 2000, art. 4k). An important reason for the persistence of the concept in the AU, besides the will to highlight its rejection of external interference in continental affairs, was the progressive withdrawal of Western states from conflict management in Africa after the heavily mediatized disasters in Somalia and Rwanda (Mays 2003, 107). However, in its new institutionalization, the 'African solutions' discourse faced the same problem as the last one: 'While it is important that Africans have recognized the need to take primary responsibility for responding to crises and armed conflict, their political will far surpasses their peacekeeping capabilities' (Berman and Sams 2000, 41).

To reduce this discrepancy—between pride and self-help on the one hand, a lack of capabilities and dependency on outside help on the other—the

representation of foreign interventionism was altered. Instead of being constituted as interference, the reinforcement of African capabilities with foreign help was presented as conducive to the definition and implementation of 'African solutions'. In its late-modern version, the African solutions discourse was institutionalized as an arrangement whereby the AU, possibly with the aid of sub-regional organizations, takes the political responsibility for military interventions on the continent under a UN mandate. Western states are expected to provide funding, logistics and training to strengthen the African forces' capabilities to successfully conduct these missions. In this version, the 'African solutions' discourse is not monopolized by African elites; it is also promoted in the West. In principle, it seems to be a relatively consensual discourse as it serves the interests of both African and Western political elites. It strengthens the AU while the West may avoid politically costly interventions in which its own interests and security are not seen to be directly at stake (Piiparinen 2007).

Some NATO member states have a long history of military and administrative imposition in African states, but NATO as an organization does not have a history of engagement in Africa. The access point of NATO to the 'African solutions' discourse goes through the division of labour introduced by the idea that the AU takes on the military and political responsibility for operations, and the West provides the AU with the logistical and financial capabilities to live up to these responsibilities. NATO in this ordering of roles represents the technologically advanced and military superior West, which may have a supporting role but does not interfere in domains in which the AU is the leading authority. The unwillingness on the part of NATO to take on larger responsibilities is framed in terms of the AU's leading position as a competent peacemaker on the African continent.

The Practice of Accusing NATO of Seeking to be the World's Policeman (and its Denial)

The idea that NATO should take on responsibilities on behalf of the international community, be it in a leading role as advocated by the responsibility to protect discourse, or in a support role as favoured by the African solutions discourse, was not welcome to everyone. Opposition to NATO involvement in operations outside of its traditional area of interest surfaced. This viewpoint was commonly expressed by the metaphor of NATO as the 'world's policeman' or 'global policeman'. The influence of this discourse explains the frequent assurances in official declarations that NATO does not have the ambition to become a 'global policeman' (de Hoop Scheffer 2005b, 2005c, 2006; Rizzo 2006a, 2006b).

The expression 'world policeman' was traditionally used in the context of debates on US foreign policy. American foreign policy has been analysed as oscillating between introversion and extroversion, defined as 'the willingness to bring its influence to bear upon other nations' (Klingberg 1952). The idea of a 'manifest destiny' to extend US influence—be it over the region, over the North American continent or over the world—began to gain influence in the mid-1840s

(Merk 1995, 24). Inherent in this idea is the sense of a higher purpose making US efforts to influence the outside world a natural and inevitable endeavour. Those who favoured isolationism or non-intervention, on the other hand, argued that the US should avoid interfering in conflicts that are not directly relevant to US security interests. This debate is still alive, most visibly in the criticisms addressed to US policies in Afghanistan or Darfur.

The expression 'world policeman' is in this context generally used to criticize US ambitions of global hegemony and imperialism, or what is perceived as such (Chomsky 2003; Todd 2003). The underlying assumption is often that global ambitions will invariably end with financial and military overstretch and the fall of great powers (Kennedy 1987). Being a 'world policeman' in this context means carrying too much of the burden of upholding world order (Nye 1992, 95–96), or intervening in conflicts without considerations for one's own national interests. The expression also bears relevance for the discussion of the relationship between the US and the UN, as it is the latter organization that on a formal and institutional level is the closest contender for a legitimate 'world policeman' status. For the US to strive for a role as the 'world's policeman' could thereby imply that the UN is being sidestepped.

The fears and critiques addressed to NATO's influence globally are associated with the designation of NATO as a '*gendarme du monde*', as 'an armed wing in charge of imposing Western goals to the whole world' (Kamp 1999a, 254). The French government has taken a particularly tough stance against such ambitions on the part of the Alliance (Menon 1995), even if the fear of NATO overstretch due to an expansion of missions that exceed capabilities is shared by many NATO members (Ringsmose and Rynning 2009, 16-21). These states fear that operations far away may jeopardize the Alliance's cohesion and undermine the principle of collective defence. It is principally the United States which is pressing for NATO to take on global responsibilities to match US global strategic interests (Kamp 1999b). The discourse that argued that NATO should not get involved in any way in the conflict in Darfur—or on the African continent in general—sometimes also portrayed the Alliance as a potential 'Trojan horse' for US dominance.

As a consequence, from a practice-analytical point of view, acting like a 'world policeman' is not a competent performance. It is a 'negative' practice that is likely to be negatively sanctioned should it be performed. Acting like a 'world policeman' can be said to be a practice to the extent that it is composed of routinized sets of doings that are socially identified (a form of global interventionism). It is however a negative practice in opposition to which competent performances can be defined. The world policeman metaphor is hence used in a very particular way in the discursive strategies deployed by NATO professionals. Whereas NATO associated itself with the two other discursive practices, the organization used the 'world policeman' metaphor to define what it is not. NATO officials did not want their organization and its specific practices to be portrayed in terms of the 'world policeman' metaphor because of the negative connotations attached to this expression.

Portraying the Operation in Darfur as a Set of Competent Performances on the Part of NATO

Performing the General Context: Making Darfur an International Concern

Before NATO got involved in discussions about Darfur, a discursive construction of this conflict as an international concern took place. The conflict in Darfur went on practically unnoticed by Western security professionals for a year after its violent eruption in the first months of 2003, until the tenth anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda, in April 2004, which provided the background for an exponential rise in media coverage of the conflict (Murphy 2007). UN humanitarian coordinator for Sudan, Mukesh Kapila, contributed to this international concern when he declared on 6 April 2004, that 'the only difference between Rwanda and Darfur is now the numbers involved' (Kapila, cited in Power 2004; see also Prunier 2005, 127). The comparison with Rwanda and suggestions that the crisis amounted to genocide are significant because a situation deemed to constitute genocide is frequently seen as creating an obligation on the part of the 'international community' to take action in order to halt the violence (Straus 2005, 129). In this regard, rapidly, the situation in Darfur was framed through the R2P discourse.

Throughout the summer of 2004, demonstrations and campaigns to prompt action on the part of the 'international community' to stop the killing intensified, especially in the US and Europe (de Waal 2007). However, humanitarian intervention by Western states was not seriously discussed internationally. The US intervention in Iraq in 2003 had indeed given a serious blow to the idea of humanitarian intervention (see Bellamy 2005a). The Sudanese government opposed the idea of foreign troops in Darfur (see debate accompanying the UN Security Council's first resolution on Darfur, UN Security Council 2004) and the Security Council focused on finding a diplomatic solution. The 'African solutions to African problems' discourse was immediately used to counterbalance the emerging R2P framing. This primary interaction seemed to crystallize an emerging international discursive field as previously defined.

The interplay and interaction between these discursive practices became clear when Chad hosted talks between the Sudanese government and rebel groups, in late March 2004. By referring to R2P, foreign involvement, which had initially been excluded, became more acceptable. At the same time, the Sudanese government imposed a division of responsibility when it argued that 'the crisis in Darfur is an African problem—therefore, only the Chadian Government and the AU should facilitate the talks [in N'djamena], while the participation of other international observers should be limited to the discussions on humanitarian matters' (AU Peace and Security Council 2004a, 4). On 8 April 2004, the parties signed the N'djamena Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement that allowed the AU to deploy ceasefire monitors in Darfur (de Waal 2007, 1041; Appiah-Mensah 2006, 3). This was the point of departure for what became the *modus operandi* of the international response to Darfur: the AU assumed responsibility for the

military and political responses to the conflict and Western states and institutions focused on diplomacy, humanitarian aid and financial support to the AU. The discourse on this 'division of labour' adopted the idea from R2P that the 'international community' had a responsibility to help stop the suffering of people in Darfur and from the 'African solutions' framing the idea that full transition of the 'responsibility to protect' to the 'international community' as a whole was neither possible, nor desirable. The government of Sudan was seen as retaining its full sovereignty, while the international community was considered to have the duty to assist the government of Sudan in the fulfilment of its responsibility to protect.

In July 2004, the AU began discussions on the possible deployment of a military force to protect the observers (AU Peace and Security Council 2004b, para. 8). For such a protection force to be accepted by the Sudanese government, the mandate was limited with regard to the protection of civilians. The protection force was mandated only to protect civilians 'under immediate threat' in the 'immediate vicinity', and it was confirmed that the primary responsibility for protecting civilians lay with the Sudanese government (AU Peace and Security Council 2004c, para. 6).

NATO's Entry into the Setting: Exceptionality and African Leadership

The first step of NATO's involvement in the management of the situation in Darfur was a speech held on 9 September 2004 in which NATO's Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer mentioned Darfur for the first time. The speech was delivered the same day as US Secretary of State Colin Powell and US President George W. Bush described the Darfur crisis as genocide (Weisman 2004). De Hoop Scheffer mentioned Darfur at the end of his speech, as an example of an operation in which cooperation between NATO and the EU could be useful, and where the two organizations should 'think creatively' about how they could complement each other, '[f]or example, by giving logistic or other assistance to the African Union, if it would ask' (de Hoop Scheffer 2004). This enunciation was effective to the extent that it put Darfur on NATO's agenda. The justification given for this agenda-setting conferred a particular meaning to Darfur, that of 'exceptionality': Jaap de Hoop Scheffer talked about '[t]he humanitarian disaster, the mass murder taking place in Darfur' when he reported that the subject of Darfur had been discussed at the informal meetings of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Vilnius, Lithuania on 20 and 21 April 2005. At the same time, a lot of efforts were made to exclude any linkage between NATO's concern for Darfur and military intervention under NATO auspices (de Hoop Scheffer 2005d).

The specific practices performed by NATO in Darfur began their normalization process by combining the humanitarian potential of NATO's military capacity with the general 'African solutions' practice. When NATO introduced itself as a possible contributor to the international response to the crisis in Darfur, it did so by affirming its practical competence but situating it within the confines of

African leadership. NATO would focus on assisting the AU with logistical support. However, the idea of African leadership required an explicit request from the AU for such support.

NATO's Internal Rivalries and Strategies of Dissimulation

The idea of a support mission to the AU in Darfur was not unconditionally accepted by all NATO members. Four actors—NATO, the US, Belgium and France—struggled for the imposition of their own meaning of international intervention in Darfur.

The French and Belgian governments were negatively inclined towards a role for NATO in the response to the crisis in Darfur, and deemed it to be outside the Alliance's functions (Stroobants 2005). The opposition was largely expressed in terms of a 'world policeman' discourse (Leclerq 2006).

At the NATO informal meeting of Foreign Ministers in Vilnius on 20 and 21 April 2005, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice urged the Alliance to act quickly if there were a request from the AU to do so, since 'we all have a responsibility to do what we can to alleviate the suffering in Darfur' (Rice 2005a). At the same meeting, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Michel Barnier, disagreed that there was a role for NATO in Darfur, since, he argued, 'NATO is not intended to be the world policeman' (Barnier 2005). He said that France preferred the EU to assist the AU, arguing that the EU was better suited for the task (Zecchini 2005a). The special relationship between Africa and the former colonial powers was emphasized, and used as an argument to promote the EU rather than NATO as the main instrument of Western logistical support (Stroobants 2005; Le Monde 2005).

The French considered that the question of support to the AU was not devoid of strategic interests, and that there was more at stake in the response to the crisis in Darfur than mere moral responsibility. The question of which organization should take responsibility for logistical aid was framed as a question of European versus US influence. *Le Monde* declared that the 'Africanization of conflict resolution on the continent, which induces a division of labour—Africa providing men, the international community the means for their implementation—is the scene of a struggle for discrete influence' (Rémy 2005). The difference of opinion on burden sharing between the EU and NATO created a rift between states that had to be mitigated before the decision on NATO support to AMIS could be announced. Washington wanted the airlift operation to be commanded by NATO, but France insisted on the EU taking charge (Agencies 2005). In the end, no agreement on a common chain of command could be reached, and finally NATO and the EU would operate with separate command structures (Miranda-Calha 2006).

How did NATO officials legitimize the engagement of the Alliance in spite of these internal rivalries? NATO's first strategy consisted in building consensus by masking these divergences and displaying a 'Western world' united in its motivation to intervene in Darfur. The struggles described in the French press were

largely absent from NATO's official accounts. The unproblematic nature of the Alliance's engagement was upheld. Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer denied that the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Michel Barnier, had taken a critical stand towards NATO involvement in Darfur (de Hoop Scheffer 2005e).

The question of rivalry between the EU and NATO was nevertheless apparent in the repeated assurances of 'full transparency' in the coordination between the two institutions (NATO 2005b, 2005c, 2005d; de Hoop Scheffer 2005f, 2005g). When questioned directly, NATO spokespeople tended to dismiss the idea of an inter-organizational rivalry, and instead stressed that international support to the AU was a common project where the 'international community' stood together:

> I mean it would be absurd, I think, there's no other word than absurd, if you would see any form of competition between international organizations when the African Union tries to alleviate the unspeakable suffering of the people in Darfur and international organizations are going to assist them. (De Hoop Scheffer 2005h)

The second strategy was to reaffirm the leitmotiv of 'African solutions to African problems' in order to build or simulate consensus. The cornerstone of this strategy was the idea of African leadership. Applied to NATO's policy on Darfur, it meant that the AU was solely responsible for the military response to the crisis, and that the rest of the 'international community', of which NATO was a part, would only get involved via limited logistical support to the AU (de Hoop Scheffer 2005i; Appathurai 2005). In a sense, this policy, and the 'African solutions' discourse as a whole, brought the discursive practices that made up the discursive field closer. It allowed NATO to be seen as 'doing something', as requested by the R2P concept: 'As you know, the situation in that region [Darfur] is appalling, and we must do all that is in our power, in coordination with other organisations, starting with the EU, to assist the African Union in its efforts' (de Hoop Scheffer 2005j). At the same time, 'African leadership' allowed for the Alliance to legitimately avoid a costly and controversial NATO leadership of the operation (de Hoop Scheffer in Zecchini 2005).

The AU was reluctant to accept the offer of logistical assistance and strategic airlifts laid out by NATO, in part because the Sudanese government was strongly opposed to the idea of Western military involvement in Darfur (see Bellamy 2006, 143–169). Meanwhile, the AU's limited capacity in terms of logistics and transport was repeatedly pointed at and criticized (Freedland 2005). The AU came under considerable pressure to enhance its logistical capabilities, and the formal request to NATO for logistical support finally came from the AU on 26 April 2005, in the context of an expansion in size of the AU mission. Indeed, NATO received a letter from the AU, followed by an official visit on 17 May by the Chairman of the AU, Alpha Oumar Konaré, to NATO headquarters. On 9 June the same year, the decision to assist the AU peace support operation in Darfur with the coordination of strategic airlifts and staff capacity-building was announced (NATO 2005a). The NATO airlift began on 1 July 2005, showing that the Alliance succeeded in performing competently by putting its material/logistic

capabilities and competences at the service of the 'African solutions' discourse (a logistical deployment under AU political control).

Ultimately, the Alliance's ability to overcome internal rivalries did not rely on a discursive offensive against 'NATO-critical' voices, but on building consensus. More generally, NATO's intervention was progressively normalized by negotiating its meanings in the light of the perceived requirements of the three previously mentioned general practices. In other words, NATO isolated some consensual elements from conflicting meanings to build its intervention. As a consequence, the anchoring of NATO's legitimacy in the Darfur crisis was founded on a complex mixing of meanings extracted from competing discursive practices. The key concept of this discursive strategy was 'African leadership' around which NATO's spokespeople reconciled conflicting views.

Challenging the Role of NATO in Darfur—NATO Leadership?

The AU's exclusive responsibility for handling the international response to the crisis in Darfur soon came under criticism, even after logistic support on the part of NATO had started (Lanz 2009). NATO's intervention being launched, a second discursive struggle, revolving around the degree of NATO implication in Darfur, took place.

Challenging Discursive Practices: The R2P Tide

The demand for an increased role for NATO in Darfur came first from activists mainly located in the US. Civil society organizations, religious communities and some NGOs constituted a powerful movement that demanded action in Darfur (Lanz 2009; Hamilton and Hazlett 2007). The activists challenged the policy following which only the AU took responsibility for the military response to the crisis in Darfur and argued in favour of a strengthened Western engagement including military force. In this context, the International Crisis Group (ICG) presented a concrete proposal for an increased military role for NATO in Darfur in its report entitled *The AU's mission in Darfur: Bridging the Gaps* (2005). In the report, the ICG argued that AMIS was too weak to provide sufficient protection for Darfuri civilians, and that the principle of R2P required an increased effort by the 'international community'. ICG's recommendations had some impact and were to be reproduced by some journalists, activists and politicians. On 26 September 2006 the House of Representatives approved its Resolution 723 (109th Congress, 2005–6) recommending the deployment of a NATO civilian protection force by 412 votes against 7. This challenge to the specific form in which NATO's intervention in Darfur had been normalized can hence be theorized as a discursive struggle between the 'African solutions leitmotiv and R2P.

The US government also challenged the view of NATO as a supporting actor. Madeleine Albright along with other former foreign ministers had already

recommended that NATO should do more. Their policy proposal was explicitly framed within a R2P discourse: 'the international community, consistent with the emerging international norm of the "Responsibility to Protect", must act in this glaring case of genocide and do whatever is necessary to halt the killing and abuse of innocent civilians' (Albright 2005). Albright and her homologues' proposal included putting a brigade-sized element of NATO troops on the ground in Darfur, under UN authorization, while waiting for the AU to build up sufficient capacity of its own. They also suggested that NATO pursue a Security Council approval for the establishment of a no-fly zone, which the Alliance would enforce.

The most apparent challenge to official NATO policy came on 17 February 2006. President Bush said that NATO could play a key role in 'the stewardship, planning, facilitating, organizing, probably double the number of peacekeepers that are there now in order to start some sense of security' (Bush cited in Sanger 2006b; see also Moorcraft 2006). This could be taken to mean that the Alliance would expand its role from being a limited logistical contributor to taking over the leadership of the peacekeeping mission and send NATO soldiers. The same day, at the US Congress, Senators Joe Biden and Sam Brownback introduced a Resolution, S. RES. 383, where they recommended that NATO enforce a no-fly zone and deploy troops in Darfur. Bush's speech challenged the principles that had hitherto been laid out for NATO's role in Darfur. NATO's Secretary General had stressed that it should not play a political role in Darfur, and that the peacekeeping mission was entirely under the leadership of the AU. De Hoop Scheffer had even stated that 'there's no way NATO is going to send soldiers into Darfur. It's the African Union, it's the Africans who take, quite rightly, the responsibility for this major problem on the African continent' (de Hoop Scheffer 2005e). President Bush's reference to a NATO 'stewardship' could possibly destabilize the division of tasks that had constituted the foundation for agreement between the AU and NATO, and which was based on African leadership.

No More No Less: Reaching Consensus about NATO's Role

The demands for an increased role for NATO in Darfur, through the deployment of troops or the enforcement of a no-fly zone, were not ignored by NATO. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer addressed these demands for a strengthened NATO role in a speech on 20 September 2005 at Columbia University in New York. Through this speech, NATO entered the *discursive field* by giving the impression that it would have liked to do more, but that the 'political realities', and more precisely a lack of a more extensive UN mandate, were preventing it from doing so (de Hoop Scheffer 2005k).

The Secretary General's statement in Egypt three weeks later however conveyed a slightly different message. He explained that NATO 'has no intention to be the global policeman. Allies have neither the desire nor the necessary capabilities to take on the job of the *gendarmes du monde*' (de Hoop Scheffer 2005l). In the US, where the greatest pressure for an increased role for NATO was found, NATO's policy in Darfur was presented as restrained by the lack of a UN

mandate and the opposition of the Sudanese government and the AU to the deployment of Western troops. In Egypt, on the other hand, one of the states that most whole-heartedly supported the Sudanese government, it was emphasized that NATO had no intention of becoming the world's policeman, implying that NATO was not interested in leading operations on the African continent. NATO's refusal to become a world policeman allowed it to dissimulate the ambiguities of its discourse on 'African solutions'.

Even if the discursive pressures exercised by the US administration were significant, Bush's proposal was ultimately not seen as a challenge to NATO's official policy. Indeed, NATO progressively reached a consensual position about its role in Darfur. In this regard, Bush's challenge to official policy was dealt with through both denial and 'constructive ambiguity'. From 20 to 21 March 2006, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer paid a visit to Washington, and Darfur was among the subjects discussed. In a NATO press statement, it was reported that the Secretary General and the US President shared the same opinion on a possible role for NATO if the UN were to take over the responsibility for peacekeeping in Darfur (NATO 2006). However, a certain amount of ambiguity remained at the press conference with George W. Bush and Jaap de Hoop Scheffer on 21 March 2006. In summarizing their meeting, Bush's statement upheld a divergent representation of what NATO's role could be in Darfur, by continuing to insinuate that NATO could take on a leadership role. The picture of NATO 'moving in', and making it 'clear to the Sudanese government that we are intent of providing security for the people there' (Bush cited in NATO 2006) could be interpreted as a suggestion that the Alliance could intervene in Darfur with ground troops in the framework of an enforcement mission.

At the weekly press briefing with NATO spokesperson James Appathurai the following day, a journalist suggested that there was a 'sense of lack of clarity' between what Bush was proposing, and what de Hoop Scheffer claimed that NATO had agreed on, since Bush continued to mention a NATO lead whereas de Hoop Scheffer talked about an enabling role (Appathurai 2006a). Appathurai simply denied that there was any lack of clarity (see also Appathurai 2006b). By denying that there was any request for a leading role for NATO in Darfur, NATO managed to uphold the idea of the Alliance's supporting role as a consensual policy. Ultimately, the organization did not address the views voiced by the US administration by intensifying the discursive struggle, but by appropriating these competing discourses and presenting a unifying portrait of the West based on a balance between R2P and 'African solutions to African problems'.

The Operation in Darfur as a Constitutive Part of NATO's Security Identity

Developments in NATO's policy on Darfur were inseparable from changes in the Alliance's identity. Firstly, the Darfur operation impacts on NATO's security identity by opening it even more to 'humanitarian' preoccupations. De Hoop Scheffer initially distinguished out-of-area engagements where NATO's interests are directly at

stake, such as in Afghanistan, from out-of-area engagements where NATO's interests and security are not threatened, such as Darfur (de Hoop Scheffer in Zecchini 2005b). Later on, he used an extended definition of security to present humanitarianism as a continuation of NATO's security identity. The idea was that missions like the one in Darfur illustrate the Alliance's ability to adapt to change, but do not question the Alliance's focus on security: 'values' are presented as an integral part of NATO's security policy (de Hoop Scheffer 2006b, 2007; Rizzo 2006c).

Secondly, NATO's Darfur policy contributes to the consolidation of the Alliance's competence to carry out 'Crisis Response' and 'Peace Support Operations' beyond the confines of its member states. NATO's support mission to the AU has to a certain extent allowed for the Alliance to take on more global tasks without being seen to aspire to global leadership and a 'world policeman' role (see e.g. de Hoop Scheffer 2007). NATO is framed as a member of the 'international community', working together with other organizations to bring about a safer world (Rizzo 2007). Darfur is hailed as an important turning point in the Alliance's relations with the UN (Lemos 2005) and is used to argue for the importance of a close relationship between NATO and the UN. The demand for NATO support is used as an example of the Alliance's continued relevance (de Hoop Scheffer 2006c, 2006d, 2006e; Rizzo 2006d, 2007).

Conclusion—On Interventionism as Grey Zone between Transgression and Heterogeneous Meanings

The assumption guiding our analysis was that NATO's policy on Darfur can be analysed in the light of the discursive practices that shaped it. What we have tried to show is that this policy was made possible by discursive practices and strategies that successfully presented the specific practices constituting NATO's intervention in Darfur as instantiations of the three general practices that were deemed essential in this regard. This outcome is all the more noteworthy as it was produced in a relatively competitive environment constituting a discursive field. Our analysis ultimately consisted in an exploration of the ways in which NATO normalized its specific practices as competent performances through a stabilization of their meaning in relation to different kinds of general practices.

Alternatives supported by different social agents (activists, journalists and some politicians) potentially challenged the stability and legitimacy of NATO's specific practices in Darfur. However, NATO successfully marginalized these alternative meanings. It did so by anchoring its policy within a consensual discourse around the African leadership concept. NATO managed to counter critics both from those who felt the Alliance did too much, and those who felt it did too little. By framing its specific practices through this consensual discourse, NATO reproduced a particular understanding of the principle of African leadership and consolidated a particular view of NATO's role and security identity.

In this regard, we want to conclude more generally on the core issues of this special section. Firstly, our approach shows that interventionism is constituted by

very different types of practices that are not 'interventionist' per se but that progressively and when combined define an 'interventionist' way of managing a situation: declaring a state of emergency through the rhetoric on genocide, insisting on humanitarian necessities and on a lack of national or regional capabilities to address them etc. Secondly, our analysis sheds light on the transgressive 'grey zones' in which interventions are performed. NATO's operation in Darfur has not simply been legitimated by emphasizing generally accepted principles and by silencing or condemning unaccepted practices (such as the one of the 'global policeman'). Rather, the latter was as integral part of NATO's negotiation strategy. Interestingly, what is commonly rejected was subtly brought into focus in order to legitimate the operation. The 'world policeman' trope was neither ignored nor condemned, but used to legitimate the operation. Ultimately, interventionism and its transgressive practices cannot be studied independently from discursive strategies redefining, rather than simply conforming to, accepted ways of acting in the world.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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