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**AFRICAN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS IN RECENT YEARS\***

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**Abstract.** The article aims to present a general outlook of the ongoing peacekeeping operations of the most important international, European and African military and civilian organizations. Peacekeeping has become very important after the independence of African countries because of the continuous conflicts that devastate the war-torn continent. The establishments taking part in this effort include the United Nations, NATO, the European Union and the African Union. After giving a general picture of the nature of the peacekeeping operations, the article goes on one by one each of the organizations to describe their role and participation in the recent peacekeeping activities that characterize the world's landscape now. In the end, the author assesses the situation, gives a comprehensive conclusion and provides some future aspects that he thinks will be probable in the forthcoming years regarding peacekeeping attitudes.

**Keywords:** Peacekeeping; Africa; United Nations; NATO; European Union; African Union

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**1. Introduction**

African peacekeeping operations are an essential part of the world of modern security (Agyekum, 2020; Richmond, 2021; Elliott et al. 2021, Fisher & Wilen, 2022; Besenyő, 2023). There are a lot of dangers in the world that must get addressed, and there are a lot of problems and conflicts in the modern era that are to be handled. Terrorism, drug- and arms trade, migration and other security-related issues are widespread across the continent and Sub-Saharan Africa. Water shortage, food security problems, famine throughout the area, and many land debates and ethnic or religiously-based conflicts are present in the territory which the Sahara governs. These problems present a clear risk to the people living there, and they are prone to various dangerous factors that overwhelmingly affect the population on the continent. The disaccords between the different groups, armed militias and civilians often lead to aversive disagreements, which can produce awkward situations in an area full of problems and complex agricultural and industrial interests. The conflict-ridden areas are dangerous because the remnants of wars and regional skirmishes are still present in the politically and socially divided territories. Land

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mines and other appliances from precious conflicts can be found in the desert and elsewhere on the continent, so caution is advised when someone crosses the war zones, even by vehicle. These reasons are only part of why there is a need for peacekeepers in the area where conflicts have devastated the environment and the life of the people. Peacekeepers try to resolve the situations and give hope to the people in the conflict zones as they try to handle delicate situations between warring partners. To understand better the African situation, we must consider the organizations that try to consolidate the conflicts between the different sides opposed to each other. This article will consider the main international military and civilian organizations participating in peacekeeping methods and operations on the continent. The most important organizations in restoring peace in recent years in the area are well known to the public. These peacebuilding and peacekeeping establishments are led first by the United Nations Peacekeeping Operation (UNPKO), followed in importance by the NATO operations mainly conducted in Somalia and Libya. The most crucial organization in the European Union, which is a civilian entity, usually organizes training missions to help to strengthen the military capacity of a given country.

Last but not least is the African Union, a relatively new institution (created in 2002), and it represents the African nation's power that has been neglected for a long time. This way, not only European and international organizations can enter into the country's peacekeeping activity, but also the nations that belong to the area. The African Union is still a young establishment, but it contributes a lot to the peacekeeping operations that try to resolve peace on the continent. After discussing all of the possible and available organizations that have taken part in peacekeeping operations in recent years on the continent, the article would like to assess the situation and give an opinion on what the future lies for the peacekeepers on the continent, if there is an opportunity for them to better the peace resolving activity they try to accomplish in Africa.

## **2. General peacekeeping tendencies in Africa**

African peacekeeping missions are becoming more and more important in recent times. Before we analyze each organization that takes part in the peacekeeping activities of the continent, it would be proper to give an overall view of the operations and processes that are going on in the area. Thus, it would be interesting to look at the activities in general, what efforts these organizations make and how they relate to each other.

The missions started in the wake of the independence of the African countries, namely around the 60s. The number of peacekeeping operations has been abundant since that time, reaching nearly 30 deployments. Recently, the number of peacekeepers on duty exceeded 50.000 personnel (Klobucista, Renwick, 2021). Other sources confirm these operations' magnitude, as they reached high numbers in the 20th century. According to Williams, there have been 90 missions during 1947-2013. He also lists the number of operations started after 1990 and comes to a count of 77, which is a relatively high number (Williams, 2015). These data confirm that there was a considerable effort in the second half of the 20th century from the international military and civilian organizations, such as the UN, NATO, EU and their African counterparts, to increase their efforts to participate in the peacebuilding initiatives on the continent. As Besenyő concludes, due to the consistent problems that threaten Africa, such as kidnappings, terrorism, colonial struggle and corruption that permeates the countries' ruling groups, issues still exist on the continent. That is one reason why international organizations such as NATO, the UN and other powers like China and Brazil took an interest in the area struck by poverty and conflict (Besenyő, 2019). However, some sources point to the fact that peacekeeping in Africa was widespread in the 90s and the reasons for that are twofold: first, it was coincidental that the conflicts that needed handling in Africa increased exponentially in number, and at the same time the main superpowers of the Cold War and with its end ceased to support the sides in the countries which they have done before. Thus the conflicts multiplied (Jackson, 2019, p. 16).

Before entering into a detailed discussion about the organizations and their general work on the continent, it might be helpful to define peacekeeping. To provide a short but thorough explanation for the term, we will turn again to Paul D. Williams, a famous expert in African conflicts. He writes the following:

*"Peace operations" are defined as the expeditionary use of uniformed personnel (troops, military observers/experts, and police), with or without a United Nations (UN) mandate but with an explicit mandate to assist in the prevention of armed conflict by supporting a peace process; serve as an instrument to observe or assist in the implementation of ceasefires or peace agreements; or enforce ceasefires, peace agreements or the will of the UN Security Council to build a stable peace."* (Williams, 2015, p.40)

After defining the meaning of peacekeeping as a phenomenon, it is interesting to turn to the general organizations that send contingents to the continent to reach order in the conflict-ridden areas. One of the most critical international establishments is the United Nations, the most significant contributor to peacekeeping operations in Africa. To mention some of them, we could cite UNISEA (Abyei), MINUSMA (Mali), UNMISS (South Sudan), MINURSO (Western Sahara), MONUSCO (Democratic Republic of the Congo). Other organizations also take part in the operations; it is enough to mention the name of the European Union, NATO, African Union, ECOWAS or SADC (Southern African Development Community). They are the creators of operations AMISOM (Somalia) or MNJTF (Chad and neighbouring countries) (Klobucista, Renwick, 2021).

To understand why it is necessary to conduct these operations, it is helpful to know the major problems that the continent faces and what these operations are trying to get an answer for. If we got a better grip on the events that happen on the continent and make the situation terrible, we could understand better why the continent is devastated by war and interstate conflict. According to Besenyő, we can conclude the reasons for these hostilities in a few lines, which could be the following causes: racial and ethnic differences, religious radicalism, border disputes, corruption and political inequality, fights for dominion over the countries, the effects of colonization that still lives on (Besenyő, 2019). The peacekeepers thus have a lot to achieve on the continent since the problems and conflicts are widespread in the area, and it will take a lot of effort to at least mend some of the difficulties that make the situation unbearable for the people living there. After understanding the difficulties that the peacekeepers face, let's turn to the role of the officers on the ground, their job and the mandate they are trusted with. These include DDR (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration) processes, landmine controls, keeping up the democratic standards, the defence of human rights and the protection of safe elections in conflict-torn countries where the military forces and the police are unable to keep up the order (Klobucista, Renwick, 2021). The peacekeepers' duties are, therefore, not as easy as it looks because they face a lot of hardships that devastated the countryside. However, it can be said that the military and police officers sent there do their best to improve people's lives and solve the long-standing conflicts that govern the continent. However, one organization itself doesn't seem to be enough sometimes to handle the ongoing problems in the African countries, so – according to some experts – the different peacekeeping organizations started to cooperate; thus, various pairs of hybrid operations came into being. This means that the hardships of the area brought together European, African and other organizations to tackle the situation and make life better for the civilians living there. For example, there are instances for the EU-AU, UN-AU and similar cooperations, and even bilateral relationships became favourable among the different countries interested in the region (like France, the US, Germany, UK) (Williams, 2015). It is interesting to note that African organizations – such as the African Union and the ECOWAS – have also become interested in participating in peacekeeping organizations in the country. Still, they face several challenges in their participation. They need capacity-building, logistics help and management assessment to improve their role in these operations, and they are also lacking enough funding, so they are continuously forced to ask for help from foremost the UN, but also other European or other organizations to make them possible to work in the area (Holt, Shanahan, 2005). Besenyő also corroborates this because, in his opinion, the African organizations aren't ready for the appropriate planning and logistical execution of these missions, because they have to rely on the United Nations and other organizations which have more experience on the continent regarding peacekeeping activities

(Besenyő, 2021). However, the peacekeepers not only face practical problems; according to Paul D. Williams, they have four major problems: they are not appropriately informed all the time, the UN Security Council sometimes gives misleading orders to the soldiers, the warring parties may protest to the presence of the soldiers in the area, and they also counter very harsh environmental circumstances (Williams, 2015). Finally, it is worth mentioning the so-called Brahimi report, which intends to bring closer the United Nations and the African-led forces into better cooperation because it could give a view of what future could lie there for international peacekeeping. The report suggests that the AU and the ECOWAS ought to develop a common strategy and structured draft to improve their effectiveness in the area. The report also advises developing a better understanding of the so-called African Standby Forces, which would help the military capability of the African forces (Holt, Shanahan, 2005). There are two another, huge problems for the peacekeepers in general, first of all, because according to research they are used as an alternative solution for a reasonable goal to achieve in the governmental circles, so when the politics are unable to negotiate a deal, peacekeepers are sent in. Secondly, the governments that lend territory for the peacekeeping missions to operate wouldn't allow them legal concessions in the country, this way the effectiveness of the missions is in question sometimes (Bamidele, 2013, p. 118). Although these problems are existent in the realm of peacekeeping in Africa, the peacekeepers are eager to find solutions to ease the tensions between the aforementioned governments and their organizations, so they are continuously trying to facilitate peaceful solutions between the state and the peacekeepers in order to make operations in the conflict-ridden area more comfortable. According to research, the governments' orders and opinion is taken into consideration by the military officers and their leaders, but sometimes it is hard to maintain a fair relationship with some African governments which hinder the movement of the peacekeeping troops in those countries (Piccolino, 2019, p. 3).

### **3. The role of the United Nations in the peacekeeping activities**

The United Nations is one of the most important – if not the most – contributors to peacekeeping activities in Africa. It has deployed several missions to restore peace in the conflict-torn area with more or less success. To be brief, at least the largest ones should be mentioned along with the countries they operate in MINUSCA (Central African Republic), MINURSO (Western Sahara), UNMISS (South Sudan), MONUSCO (the Democratic Republic of Congo), UNISFA (Abyei) and UNAMID (Darfur). For the time being, it is important only to mention their names and their countries of origin. Peacekeeping operations by the UN also face many difficulties when deployed to African areas because the continent is full of various conflicts. To mention some of them: they must ensure the rights of civilians, who are continuously harassed, and they should prevent the occurrence of mass atrocities. There is always the problem of the governments, who are usually reluctant to help the non-African peacekeepers in their efforts. Another problem is posed by sexual abuse, which is a serious and dangerous crime committed by soldiers and even peacekeepers. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the military observers and police officers serving in the missions have clear mandates to follow, which include: civilian protection, assisting governments in stabilizing the conflict situation, DDR processes, promoting humanitarian goals, keeping up equality in the country's legislation, and finally, they must monitor the compliance of the rules admitted by the parties (Congressional Research Service, 2019).

As we can see, UN peacekeepers make a lot of efforts to try to maintain peace in the conflict-ridden areas in Africa, facing difficult circumstances and the dire environment in which people of the continent live. Even though they have good intentions and want to help the countries in question, they sometimes have to face fierce resistance from governments, locals and civilian organizations who – because of their colonial experiences – wish that the foreign soldiers should rather disappear from their country. This was the case in two specific countries, Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. At the end of October 2022, several protests broke out demanding the departure of these missions (MINUSMA in Mali and MONUSCO in the DRC). Experts say there are two main reasons why these organizations are not welcomed besides the obvious colonial resentment Africans feel toward European peacekeepers. One of them is their ineffectiveness in countering the jihadist threat permeating the two

countries in recent times. The other one is the lack of discipline, which has come to govern the UN operations in the last few years. As mentioned before, the resentment from local governments and their involvement in local politics for which they use anti-Western sentiment has been hindering the effectiveness of the peacekeeping operations, which this way struggles to keep up the excellent work. There is also the question of the civilians, the innocent population threatened by the jihadist forces, and becoming annoyed by the inertia of the peacekeeping forces to control these insurgent radicals (Dessu, Yohannes, 2022).

There is another crucial aspect from which we could assess the effectiveness of UN operations in Africa. There are different approaches to the success of the missions. At the same time, some experts think they are not producing enough results; others believe that they are relatively successful and help improve the situation of the people in the area. Let's begin with one opinion about the failure of such operations and listen to the author's reasons for his thoughts. Isaac Mugabi thinks that one of the main reasons the UN missions are unsuccessful is that they don't belong to the areas at hand and don't know about the local situations. He gives the example of MONUSCO, which in his opinion, has not stopped the raping and looting that has been going on in the eastern district of the country for a long time. He also thinks the intervention speed of the contingent is very slow and ineffective; that way, the insurgents have time to commit atrocities in the Kiwu area of the country (Mugabi, 2021). Another sign that peacekeeping is not going so well in the area is a recent event in the summer of 2022, near August, when UN peacekeepers shot dead two rebels in the DRC. This happened during tense demonstrations against the MONUSCO units to pull out of the country. The eastern part of the country is full of rebel groups that incite violence in the territory, for example, the ADF (Allied Democratic Forces) or the March 23 Movement (M23). It is said that even Rwanda supports these rebels so there were diplomatic crossfires from both sides considering this problem (Wembi, Dahir, 2022). It can be seen that the military confrontations and the diplomatic hostility between the sides produces a harsh and difficult environment for the peacekeepers to work in. It is no different in other African areas, like Mali with the MINUSMA. There have also been difficulties for the European and UN forces concerning the ineffectiveness of handling the radicals' breakthrough in the country. One of the main issues is that while Europeans are reluctant to stay in the country, Russia is interested in moving there, which could create more international debates (Mugabi, 2021). The United Nations is also active in Mali, where it set up an operation which helps the MINUSMA in gathering intelligence information regarding the activities of the enemies of the operations – this operation is called ASIFU –, thus creating another opportunity for the international and national organizations to assess the information regarding the homegrown terrorist networks roaming the country (Karlsrud, Smith, 2015, p. 4). However, there are not always positive aspects of the peacekeeping activities of the United Nations, because according to some experts, the effectiveness of the largest international organization is not always as effective as it seems regarding the countries they try to make peace in. The biggest problem in the eyes of some critics is that some of the operations that the United Nations coordinates answer too late to the ongoing problems, or are not able to prevent them in time, thus it becomes a burden for the problematic area rather than a solution because of its lack of consistency (Phayal, Prins, 2019, p. 5). This problem was so acute, that some experts on the theme came to a conclusion that it is not enough to just prepare for such occasions in which the UN has to get involved in an operation, but rather the organization should establish an office that would provide information on the possibilities of such outbreaks of conflicts to prevent the escalation of problematic episodes better (Benson, 2021, p. 13). Another pending issue that definitely weakens the African community and the chances of the countries to have a peaceful and prosperous life on the continent is the role of the so-called warlords, who represent a serious problem for the United Nations forces who try to do their utmost to prevent these chieftains or rulers from producing more catastrophe than they have already done to the African environment and society as a whole. These warlords are eager to thwart and hinder the ongoing peace negotiations between governments and the United Nations since they have their own political and financial interest in the areas devastated by conflict, thus it is a great challenge for the UN to involve and at the same time handle these military figures to broker peace deals between warring parties (Akpan, Olisah, 2019, p. 88).



There is, however, a more positive opinion on the effectiveness of the troops taking part in peacekeeping operations on the continent. Howard, for example, thinks the missions were relatively successful and useful in restoring peace in the conflict-torn environment. He assesses the missions and concludes that the successful missions superseded the failed ones. He praises the three most essential operations, the MINUSMA, MONUSCO and MINUSCA. He also despises the troops he calls mercenaries who appeared in Mali and the Central African Republic. In his opinion, the peacekeeping operations helped develop the local civilians' human rights. At the same time, he praises the operations for being effective as, according to his sources, there have been fewer fatal incidents regarding the indigenous people. The missions help solve, or at least try to maintain, the stability of civil wars and decrease the aggression permeating the continent for hundreds of years. He mentions 11 successful missions after the Cold War, which is, according to his counts, a 2/3 victory over the forces that would like to push the zone into conflict to exploit it (Howard, 2022).

After enumerating the countless operations that the UN peacekeepers have taken part in, it may be useful to look at one of the essential conflict zones in the region, namely the Central African Republic and what happened there. To be brief, after the Muslim Seleka came to power, Christian forces started to mobilize units called the Anti-Balaka, who started a civil war among each other. Thus UN deployed a peacekeeping force into the area called MINUSCA, which is responsible to handle the delicate situation between the warring parties. It is a typical situation, as there was an African Union-led force before the UN had to step in. Still, they needed the assistance of a more professional organization, although they did quite an excellent job handling the delicate situation between the parties. UN deployed 1800 soldiers and police officers, while 4800 African soldiers remained in the contingent (Smith, 2014).

We cannot disregard as well the case of women in relation with the peacekeeping efforts and how the UN tries to involve the role of the gender-based activities in recent times. According to research, women's role is increasing on the continent, and they are more and more able to receive a leading role in the decisive issues that characterize a country's social and political life. Thanks to the UN and their efforts, women are more included in security related cases, where they were neglected before. They receive more and more protection from harassment and get a larger role altogether in the politics of the governments of the aforementioned countries, and the United Nations also helps them in the gender-based problems that they face in their hardships on the war-torn continent (Sharland, 2021, p. 115). This gender-centered approach was established in 2000 in the document by the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000): this writing establishes the basic rights of women to participate in the peacekeeping operations on a same level as men do. They should – according to the document – take more active part in the governmental, political issues of the countries and the peacekeeping forces that try to equalize the genders in the missions to promote the rights of women as well (Holmes, 2020, p.1).

It is perhaps interesting to note the role of China in the UN peacekeeping missions. In spite of what the international media and people usually think about Chinese influence, the large Asian country's intentions are not exclusively hostile to the goals of the UN, instead, they are the believers in diplomatic efforts and want to contribute to the UN peacekeeping efforts. In cooperation, the two forces could achieve something beneficial for both sides and also for the world power sharing (Coleman, Job, 2021, p. 1451).

Concluding the activities of the UN-led forces in the region, perhaps it is to summarize what the operations of the UN peacekeeping missions were mandated for. First, they had the duty to protect the civilian populace to ensure the safety of African citizens. Then they must have stepped up against mass atrocities, which created a fearful environmental atmosphere in the region. One of the biggest challenges was for the peacekeepers to work out a diplomatically appropriate cooperation with the governments, who were very sensitive to European troops because of their colonization experiences. Perhaps the most crucial task was to hinder the jihadist threat spreading across the Sahara and which causes people to fear for their lives and makes their living sometimes unbearable. The sexual abuses also had to be stopped, and with more or less success, the peacekeepers managed to get the

situation in hand, so these atrocities might start to diminish. It was also essential to strengthen their ties to the African-led operations, so they could work together on restoring peace to the continent with their African counterparts (Congressional Research Service, 2019).

#### 4. NATO operations in recent times

First, before we conclude NATO's participation in operations in Africa, we should conclude the organization's basic rules during missions. It has three primary rules: it wants to uphold the equality between the participants of the world order; second, it coordinates its efforts with parallel institutions like the United Nations and the European Union; and third, it would like to improve the humanitarian situation that is devastated by conflict on the continent (Segell, 2011). From these guidelines, we can assess that the organization's primary goals are to protect the fragile peace in Africa or to balance the ongoing conflicts that threaten civilians' safety. NATO is an organization designed mainly to preserve world peace and ensure the safety of the citizens of its countries. It helps where it can in the world elsewhere as well. If we visit the homepage of the organization, it gives a detailed account on its mission mandate and goals that it wants to achieve in the world:

*“NATO is an active and leading contributor to peace and security on the international stage. It promotes democratic values and is committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes. However, if diplomatic efforts fail, it has the military capacity to undertake crisis management operations alone or in cooperation with other countries and international organizations.”* (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2022)

From this, we can understand the values the organization proposes and tries to follow in the international world of conflicts and troublesome events. However, NATO doesn't participate as much in the continent's problematic conflicts as for example the UN. Its first incursion into Africa's security issues occurred during the Darfur conflict that erupted in 2003 between the black African farmers and the Sudanese Arabic government forces called the Janjaweed. At that time, an African Union mission was already underway at the scene and tried to resolve the situation. Still, sooner or later, they had to realize that they alone were not enough to put things in their place, so first, they called for NATO's assistance to help stabilize the conflict. The humanitarian situation was so dire that foreign intervention was required from the international organization, which didn't refuse it due to the human rights abuse cases in the area.

Nevertheless, this became the first mission that NATO helped another country out of its jurisdiction, and they cooperated with the African Union force AMIS in the second half of 2005. NATO decided to deploy non-combatant units to the ground, and at the end of the year, it started work in the area. NATO's main tasks were airlift support which it provided to African Union troops, and the organization also took part in capacity-building measures that helped strengthen the armies of the African forces (Segell, 2011). Not soon after, however, this proved insufficient, so the United Nations had to enter the scene with its hybrid force called UNAMID in 2008. However, NATO – for the first time in its history – proved that its intentions are not only selfish, and it wants to promote world peace and restore international order wherever there is a conflict-ridden area which requires its help to get secure again.

Nevertheless, NATO participated not only in this mission in Africa but had another episode worth mentioning because it had a severe effect on the continent's history and political life. The African Union began another mission after Darfur in Africa. Still, this time it aimed at restoring the peace in Somalia, which became a base for terrorists and pirates in the Eastern African area. NATO's main goals involved getting rid of piracy in the waters close to the country, and the presence of terrorism was so threatening that the organization had to deploy its troops to ensure that the dangerous elements were either eliminated or neutralized. The security situation was also precarious in Somalia; thus, NATO's presence was unavoidable to give at least a minimal feeling of security to the Somali citizens who suffered a lot from the jihadist attacks and never felt safe because of the continuous activity of the terrorists organizations in the area. NATO also took responsibility for training the soldiers of the

African Union's units, so capacity-building here also became an issue. As the African organization was establishing so-called African Standby Forces – which would have served as rapid reaction commandos against the dangerous elements and situations – NATO also undertook their improvement and training, thus developing the capacity of the African forces in the frame of international cooperation. NATO, however, faced other problems mentioned previously in this article concerning the UN forces: they were not always welcome by local troops, as they reminded them of the past when colonizers invaded their country, so they required the utmost diligence in their diplomatic efforts to relieve the tensions accumulated by past experiences (Kaim, 2013).

After taking part in the fight against piracy and terrorism in Somalia, NATO took part in another operation when the Arabic Spring broke out. The organization participated in Operation Unified Protector in Libya in 2011 to make an order to the revolution-torn country. After assessing the facts from this mission, some conclusions can be summarized: NATO was authorized by the UN, and it used only air force instead of combat troops, and the main reason why it interfered was the care for the well-being of the population, namely humanitarian reasons (Segell, 2011).

The organization had controversial issues concerning Turkey and Mali as well. For example, Turkey and France were part of Operation Sea Guardian's mission, which aimed at reducing the maritime terrorism threat near Libya and the Mediterranean. Turkey, however, was pushing its limits in 2020 when it allegedly attacked a French battleship – which was not acknowledged by Turkish forces. This shows the flaws that appear in the cooperation between the countries in the organization, and it presents the danger that inside NATO there can be debates about important issues which can be determinant in the security issues the organization is concerned with (bbc.com, 2020). The other case was with Mali when the Spanish foreign minister Jose Manuel Albares didn't deny the possibility of the country entering the ongoing Mali conflict in the 2022 Madrid summit if there was an urgent need. This came at a time when the migrant flow was unbearable towards the southern borders of Europe, and the country was one of the areas in the Sub-Saharan region that caused massive flow towards the European countries. This remark has caused unwanted tension between the African country and the Spanish government because the conflict has been ongoing for several years (france24.com, 2022).

## **5. The activity of the European Union in Africa**

The European Union is mainly a civilian organization with no real army or military force to intervene in conflicts of other countries. However, the establishment is eager to participate at least in helping the countries above with security safety and capacity-building measures along with logistical help. That said, it can be expected that the European Union doesn't take part in the affairs of the African continent as seriously as, for example, the United Nations and NATO, but it would like to offer its assistance to the African countries who need training and humanitarian aid so that it could contribute to the peaceful solution of the continent which suffers from endless conflicts. The European Union was always the upkeep and propagator of human rights and equality between nations. It would like to uphold its standards in parts of the world where assistance is needed.

Nevertheless, the European Union is looking forward to cooperating with regional African organizations such as the African Union, which became reality in February 2022, when a summit was held between the two organizations. These talks discussed the main issues at hand, stemming from the COVID-19 disease that devastated the world and took millions of lives. They agreed on improving their cooperation to rebuild the former stability that characterized the relationship between the two entities. They couldn't evade the current problems that have threatened the peace of the regions between the two areas, for example, terrorism, migration, sexual violence, assassinations, attacks by jihadist forces, etc. They agreed that these problems caused a lot of people to lose their homes, becoming internally displaced people (IDPs), which reached the number of 2.2 million persons. They also agreed to further their goals of cooperation: humanitarian assistance, cooperation on migration and restoring the healthy situation because of the end of the COVID-19 illness (Désir, 2022). The European Union



bases its directives on these basic instructions and suitable measures. It tries to grow up to the standards that the world requires to restore the direct conversion between the two organizations and continents. In the further sections, we will consider the operations and the situations the EU launched in recent years on the black continent.

It is perhaps well known that the European Union has had a training mission in Mali for several years (EUTM Mali), which is responsible mainly for capacity-building measures in the Malian army. However, recent events in world politics – and this goes for other operations the Europeans have started on the continent – have entirely changed the effectiveness of the European forces on the ground. We are talking about the so-called Wagner Group, which –although denied by the Kremlin – is led by a close associate of Putin called Yevgeniy Prigozhin. These Russian mercenaries appear everywhere in Africa and chase away European forces ruthlessly. Let's consider first the Malian training mission, where the Malian government tied itself to the Russians, and supports – not officially – the Wagner group, so even Joseph Borell (EU foreign policy chief) said the mission couldn't work in the area further along the Russian mercenaries, who allegedly killed 200 civilians in the village of Moura. Also, according to the news, Paris is withdrawing from the country because of the incidents (africanews.com, 2022). Besides the French troops, there was an additional contingent of Germans also in the country. However, they are only present in a small number. Although they are deployed there to fight the jihadist forces, their enthusiasm is questioned after they see what Wagner Group is capable of. Thus foreign minister Annalena Baerbock visited the area to inspect the situation and is on the verge of withdrawing the German contingent entirely from the area because she doesn't want to get confronted with the Russian mercenaries and their activities on the ground (france24.com, 2022). Later, in November, the German government decided that due to unbearable security circumstances in the area, they gradually pulled out their troops from Mali, because they couldn't guarantee the safety of their soldiers in the country, especially with Mali supporting Russians in the area. The withdrawal mentioned above will take place in 2023 and finish by May 2024. The decision came after remarks from the Malian government concerning their excellent relationship with the Kremlin. In light of this development, the German government thought it wiser to pull out from the war-torn and dangerous country to protect their soldiers from Russian influence (dw.com, 2022).

The European Union is not only active in Mali, but has other operations going on on the continent. Its policies usually don't let it intrude very much into the life of African people since its traditions include respecting other cultures and religions, and it only enters into other countries' sovereign territory with good intentions to help strengthen their military or train their forces, to give military or financial support. However, the situation in the Central African Republic became so dire that the European Union devised a technical assistance mission to train CAR soldiers to restore order in the country. Nevertheless, with the rise of Russian imperial politics, it was expected that Wagner Group would appear at the scene and intrude on the life of the training mission, which comprised only 70 experts. Because of this, the European Union decided to pull back these soldiers so that the training mission couldn't continue because of the presence of the Russian mercenaries (euractiv.com, 2013). The other country that the European Union was interested in is non-other than Mozambique, which has substantial oil reserves (LNG). Since the Russian-Ukrainian war affects European gas distribution, Europe is looking for the possible energy resources it can find globally that can replace the Russian gas they are willing to sanction. The problem is that in Mozambique, jihadist networks also carry out attacks against these targets. This makes it challenging to harvest abundant energy in the country and would help the European community survive Russia's blackmailing politics relating to gas reserves. To achieve a more peaceful situation by getting a share of these resources, to European Union supports the SADC with financial aid to help them in their peacekeeping mission against these radicals in the country (Guarascio, 2022). Besides Mali, the Central African Republic and Mozambique, the European Union also takes part in confidence building measures in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Its main politics are to help ensure the safety and financial capability and capacity building of the Congolese country and military. The peace-building activity in the state by the European organization has been

overwhelming and it gives a great opportunity for the African nation to become more stable than it has been in the past decades (Froitzheim, Söderbaum, Taylor, 2011, p. 46).

## 6. The African Union and its politics in Africa

The African Union was established in 2002, reaching its 20th year. It has also significantly emphasized the continent's role in international politics and peacekeeping. The organization started with 55 members, which comprised almost all African countries. Its predecessor was the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and it tried every means in its possession to improve the effectiveness of the cooperation of the African countries in the peacekeeping methods (Eyssen, 2022). Africa has had a lot of tricky situations in the past 20 years; it is enough to enumerate some of them: terrorism in the Sahel region, conflict in Ethiopia, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, along with coup d'états in Sudan, Mali and Guinea. There have been two agendas that came to hit the headlines in African countries: first, in 2015 the African Union devised a common plan called Agenda 2063, which aims at development in every way possible for the continent, and the other one was 2016 reform designed by Paul Kagame (Rwanda). This points to the plan of the African Union to strive for economic integration, which could bring the African countries closer together and make them easier to cooperate (Pinto, 2022).

After describing the main objectives the organization undertook in these 20 years, it is likely to enumerate some of the missions they took part in and evaluate with what effect they have participated in the peacekeeping operations they have started. The African Union first undertook the operation in Burundi from 2003 to 2004. The name of the mission was AMIB, or AU Mission in Burundi. The African Union mission had almost the same mandate as the European organizations usually have: the DDR methods, ceasefire agreement oversight and the like. However, as mentioned before, there was always a problem with AU operations: they needed more funding to run a smooth mission where they could arrange their issues the way they wanted without foreign interference. After the Burundi mission, the African Union embarked on a much bigger adventure. They entered Sudan, Darfur region, which was torn by conflict since 2003.

The mission started in 2004 and lasted until 2007. Their tasks were similar to what they had been before: humanitarian assistance to the people suffering in the area and checking the ceasefire violations by the parties at war. They monitored the movements of the conflicting groups and the civilians to intervene when necessary and supervise police officers during their duty to see if they were making the correct decisions and had acted reasonably. However, the same problem occurred as before. The organization alone could not take matters into its hand, and it had finally to rely on the help of the United Nations. They took over the operation at the end of 2007. The African Union had another critical mission in the area, namely in Somalia, where they created the mission AMISOM, which was established to thwart the terrorist and piracy acts in the region. The operation started in 2007 and has been designed to support the anti-terrorist efforts of the country to make it a safer place for its citizens. Their main problem was the notorious Al-Shabaab terrorist organization, which carried out regular attacks against installations in the country. After 2009, not many things changed, so the operation was missing the key instruments to implement peace in Somalia. Summarizing its most valuable effects on the world of peacekeeping could be the handling of the international media, it could be enhanced with the cooperation of the local tribesmen and community, and even the psychological maintenance of the locals is considered to be a very important part of the preparation for the peacekeeping operations regarding the indigenous population (Mohamud, 2019, p. 1353). Another important aspect of the contribution to the African Union mission is the issue of the Brexit regarding Great Britain, which has been among the main suppliers of trade in the area along with other greater European States, thus the Somalians now have to negotiate with the British separately from the EU which will complicate things for the African Union mission (Tor, 2017, p. 3). To summarize the main characteristics of the African Union missions, one could conclude the following: there were not enough soldiers given from the participating states, the AU had to ask for foreign intervention and financial aid to continue its work, they had problems with the host country as how far they can go with their mandate, and all of the missions had to be

undertaken sooner or later by the UN. Paul D. Williams, an expert on this theme, concludes that the African Union should design its operations better to achieve better results because they need more planning, logistic and financial capabilities (Williams, 2009). One of the main characteristics of the African Union's missions was that it not only went to conflict-ridden areas to create peace and to negotiate between warring parties, which needed international or domestic powers to intervene in their problematic issues, but the organization's other feature is that it also gets involved in handling terrorist-related incidents and areas where there radical organizations show up. The operations which the African Union organized were mostly against the Boko Haram, a Nigeria-based terrorist organization and the previously mentioned Al-Shabaab in Somalia. Thus the AU is not only taking care of simple conflict issues, but also tries to intervene when its necessary to prevent terrorist activities from taking place (Botha, 2021, p. 40.). It is may be of interest that in the previous paragraphs the peacekeeping organizations were described as being late from entering into a conflict, and they only get involved when its already too late to intervene. However, according to some, there is for example an interim force in the African Union called Continental Early Warning System (CEWS). Its job is to maintain a constant attention to all nearby elements of conflict to be ready to prevent them from happening, so the African Union may have found some kind of solution to the huge problem of the other organizations of being late in a conflict zone (Lawson, 2018, p. 3).

## Conclusion

When we summarize the operations the main organizations undertook in recent years, these missions all started to solve the widespread conflicts on the continent. With more or less success, they tried their best to ensure that the rights of the civilians who were the victims of these aggressions get treated right. However, in an environment like this, it isn't easy to reach a common solution where every party gets what it wants and the rights of every side are satisfied. All UN, NATO, EU and the AU tried their best to ensure that the conflicts that devastated the continent get resolved, and people could live a peaceful life again. However, the civilians living in the area are still very far from acquiring that status. There are a lot of consequences that could be deduced from this research, but there needs to be more space to write them all down. However, some basic remarks could be stated according to the assessed data. For example, there should be greater cooperation between the European, international and African organizations to ensure closer participation between these establishments to find a common solution that would benefit all African people and help to get them the respectful life they deserve. The missions should be better planned logistically and better coordinated by their leaders, and the soldiers' training should be more thorough in enduring extreme circumstances to reach results that can help improve the lives of ordinary citizens and civilians living on the war-torn continent. To conclude everything, it is essential to cooperate at every level possible so that the prospects for reducing conflicts could improve and the effectiveness of the peacekeeping operations could improve. If we were to achieve this by every method at our disposal, the life of the African people would be able to be improved by far in the following decades.

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