

Participation of V4 countries in African peacekeeping missions

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Abstract

The article explores the peacekeeping activities of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia and the characteristics of their activities on the African continent. The paper examines the African peacekeeping missions carried out by Visegrád countries. The study uses comparative scientific literature and analysis of statements released by these governments and other papers and studies related to the African peacekeeping missions. In addition, I used my own experience from my previous African peacekeeping/peace support missions, and the lessons learned from other African operations published in my previous book about Hungarian peacekeeping missions. In summary, of the Visegrád states with differing levels of training and equipment, Poland was the most active in peace operations in Africa and in the lead, followed by the Czech Republic and Hungary, while Slovakia was the least involved in the African continent. This trend is, moreover, in line with the involvement of the above countries in Africa to date. Although these states cooperate in several areas, this is not the case for African peace operations, although cooperation in this area would be important. The research examines the background to the activities of the V4 countries in peace operations in Africa. The study is particularly important in view of the fact that, for a number of reasons (migration, terrorism), the V4 countries are preparing for greater engagement in Africa, one area of which is peace-support operations.

Keywords:

Africa, Visegrád countries, military cooperation, peacekeeping operations, EU-Africa relations

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Introduction

It is often said that there are several smaller or larger groups with a common interest or political alliances within the European Union, of which the Visegrád countries are mentioned more and more often than they were able to influence and change the decisions of the European Union. The V4 countries are increasingly cooperating politically, economically, and culturally, but their military cooperation is less successful. One of the areas of military cooperation is to participate in various operations abroad, for which a lot of research and publications have been prepared. However, fewer researchers are concerned with the V4 countries participation in and comparison of the African peacekeeping operations. This is a very important area because the V4 countries want to strengthen their presence in Africa and their involvement in various peace support operations for political, security and other reasons. Therefore, in my study, I examined the African peacekeeping missions carried out by Visegrád countries. The study uses comparative scientific literature and analysis of statements released by these governments and other papers and studies related to the African peacekeeping missions. In addition, I used my own experience from my previous African peacekeeping/peace support missions and the lessons learned from other African operations published in my previous book about Hungarian peacekeeping missions (Besenyő, 2019).

In the first part of my paper, I present the common history of the V4 countries, the frameworks and events related to their cooperation. I examine the peacekeeping activities of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia and the characteristics of their activities. I deal specifically with the issues of military co-operation between the V4 countries, noting the differences of opinion between them on certain security policy issues, as well as the differences in equipment, training, and application capabilities of their armies. I introduce the situation of these countries after their accession to the European Union and the impact this has had on their African policies. I then detail the current and past African peace operations in which these countries participated. I briefly describe the mandate, activities and the strengths of troops sent by V4 countries. Finally, I compare the activities and interest of the V4 countries in the African peacekeeping/support missions and come to a conclusion.

What is the V4?

The Visegrád Group (otherwise known as the Visegrád Countries, Visegrád Four, or V4) is a regional organisation which was created by Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia (then Czechoslovakia). The aim of the cooperation between these Central European countries is the joint representation of their political, diplomatic, economic, and military interests and the coordination of possible future measures. The organisation of countries declared that they do not intend for the V4 to be a parallel or even a competing organisation with the European Union or other Central European initiatives, in fact, it aims to strengthen the European defence capabilities and integration process with its activity.

The short history of the V4

The historical precedent of the 1991 foundation of today's V4 is the Congress of Visegrád in November 1335, when, after the initiative of King Charles I of Hungary, a conference was held together with King Casimir III of Poland and King John I of Bohemia to resolve past conflicts and discuss the founding of an economic-political alliance against Vienna's staple rights. New trade routes were drawn in order to bypass the staple port of Vienna. The main nodes of the Buda-Brno trade route were Buda, Esztergom, Nagyszombat (now Trnava), and Holič (Holíč), from which Buda and Brno was given full staple rights. Kassa

(Košice) was made the centre of the Polish-Russian trade route in Hungary. This cooperation proved so successful that the economies of the three kingdoms had their golden age in this period (Nagy, Rady, Szende, and Vadas, 2016, pp. 350–352).

To revive this cooperation, on 15th February 1991, Lech Wałęsa, president of the Republic of Poland, Václav Havel, president of the Czechoslovakia, and József Antall, prime minister of the Republic of Hungary signed the accord of Visegrad. When, in 1993, Czechoslovakia separated into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the then Visegrád Triangle became a 4-member organisation. Originally, Romania would also have played a role in the cooperation; however, due to tensions in Hungarian-Romanian relations, the Romanian prime minister finally announced that Romania would not participate in the work of the V4. The objectives of the organisation included the elimination of the remnants of the totalitarian system and the historical conflicts between Central European states, the protection of democracy and the cooperation of the three countries in economic progress, as well as the accession to NATO and the European Union (Fitzmaurice, 1998, pp. 181–183). Between 1991 and 1993, the new organisation held constant consultations with NATO and the EU. Meanwhile, in 1992, the Visegrád countries established the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). Based on the Western European model, this organisation facilitated international trade between the four countries, which led to the development of their economies (Šiljak, 2019, pp. 4–5). In addition to the prime ministers and presidents of the four member states, US President Bill Clinton also attended the organisation's summit in Prague on 11th and 12th January 1994 and pledged his support to the accession of the four states to NATO as well as promising other forms of support. In August 1994, the Four met again in the town of Česká Budějovice and laid down their common agricultural and agricultural trade policy. Observers from Austria and Slovenia also took part in this meeting. However, by the end of the year, close cooperation ceased, and after 1995, due to some disagreements as well as their own interests, the member states started pursuing their goals more and more individually, thus the joint cooperation continued in a more relaxed manner (Dangerfield, 2011a, p. 296). However, the leaders of the member states realised in 1998 that they could achieve much better results by renewing and strengthening their cooperation, which was officially announced at their summit meeting in Budapest on 21st October 1998 (Marusiak, 2019, pp. 116–117). In 1999, in several fields - defence, security, economic, trade, foreign affairs, etc. - talks were held, and on 9th June 2000, the four countries set up the International Visegrád Fund in Bratislava, which many considered to be the most successful venture of the V4 countries. The Fund provides different sources of funding in the fields of culture, science and research, education (scholarship programs, exchange programmes, teacher mobility, etc.) and youth exchanges (Dangerfield, 2011b, p. 53).

On 12th May 2004, the prime ministers of the V4 countries met in Kroměříž, where the cooperation between their countries became even more intensive. They stated the need for long-term cooperation on the Common Agricultural Policy, the Structural and Cohesion Funds, the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the operation of the Schengen system. Particular importance was attached to upholding the principles represented by NATO and strengthening transatlantic relations (Szemplér, 2019, p. 79).

The V4 countries also developed the military side of their cooperation with the creation of a 3,900-strong Visegrád Battlegroup under the leadership of Poland in 2011, which Ukraine joined and which reached combat readiness in the first half of 2016 (Németh, 2018, p. 18). However, the units of the Battlegroup had already taken part in the NATO exercise in Poland in 2013 and then had sent troops to defend the Baltic States (Michélot, 2018). In the second half of 2019, the leaders of the V4 countries set up another combat group, to which Croatia also sent troops. Despite the successes, the cooperation

is not perfect, as the countries' military cooperation, modernisation, and rearmament of the armed forces have not at all or only partially been realised (Jarocki, 2019). Although the leaders of the V4 countries have repeatedly stated that they want to upgrade and modernise their armies and to cooperate as closely as possible, this has not yet happened, except in Poland, where the army underwent a major modernisation with the help of the US (Chivvis *et al.*, 2017, p. 67). This is partly due to the fact that Poles regard Russia as a serious threat, while other Visegrád states prefer to mediate between the West and Russia and to cooperate with the latter (Krupa, 2019). For the US, Central and Eastern European countries, including the V4 states, have been appreciated again and, therefore, the Americans are stepping up their diplomatic, economic, and military cooperation with the countries in the region, which also affects the development of the V4 armed forces. The V4 countries are also members of NATO, but so far only the Poles have spent 2% of their budget on their armies, while the other 3 states have spent barely 1%.

Table 1. Visegrád countries' forces
 (Sources: IISS, 2018, pp. 94, 114, 135,145; SIPRI, 2018, *Peacekeeping Contributor Profile: Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic*)

Country	Military Budget (USD)	Percent of GDP	Active Forces	Reserve Forces	Paramilitary Forces	Mandate to Missions
Poland	10.749 billion	2	105 000	no data available	73 400	3 800
Hungary	1.568 billion	1.1	37 650	58 000	12 000	1200
Czech Republic	2.446 billion	1.1	23 200	no data available	3 100	1191
Slovakia	1.186 billion	1.2	15 850	no data available	no data available	638
Total	15.949 billion		181 700		88 500	6 829

The Engagement of Visegrád Countries in EU-Africa Relations

Although not previously involved in the colonisation of the continent, the V4 countries, as members of the socialist camp, especially on an ideological basis, pursued a very active policy during the Cold War years - economic, trade, and military cooperation, training, military training, counselling, scholarships etc. - in Africa. However, because of changed priorities (NATO, EU accession), much less attention was paid to African countries in the 1990s, and some were even completely withdrawn from. After the Visegrád countries joined the European Union, the African continent was re-appreciated and they began to renew old relations and build new ones. Although they were involved in various projects led by the Alliance under EU pressure. For example, Hungary sent peacekeepers to the EU support mission to Darfur to increase its weight within the organisation as a new member. However, none of the states that joined had sent troops or police to the operation at that time (Besenyő, 2016, pp. 107, 200). They were involved in their national interests rather than in the Alliance's interests (Chmiel, 2018, pp. 19–22). However, these relations are less important to them, as their African activities prove. Among them, the most active policy in Africa is pursued by Poland, which has recently significantly increased its presence and influence on the continent (Lorenz, 2015, p. 32; Fahron-Hussey, 2018, p. 172). The Czech Republic also tried to strengthen its presence, while Hungary and Slovakia were less visible. However, the events of the Arab Spring and the ensuing migration crisis have brought about changes, as for the V4 countries, Africa is regarded as a continent that is a source of migrants (Chivvis *et al.*, 2017, p. 23). Not wishing to accommodate a large number of African migrants, more and more humanitarian projects aimed at keeping the African population there and prospering have been included. In

addition, more and more troops and police have been deployed to the UN, EU, and AU African peacekeeping operations to thus contribute to the stability of African countries. At the same time, they have been increasingly looking for opportunities for economic, trade, and other kinds of cooperation, and have sought to increase their presence in Africa, with Poland and the Czech Republic now both having 12, Hungary 10, and Slovakia 6 embassies in Africa (Chmiel, 2018, p. 8).

V4 countries' current and former peacekeeping operations

The countries of the Alliance had previously only participated in a few peacekeeping operations during the Cold War.¹ However, only Poland sent observers to the UN peacekeeping operation in Africa. This mission was the UN Observer Team Nigeria (OTN), an attempt to resolve the Biafra war at the request of the United Nations following the Biafra conflict (Pietrzak, 2012, pp. 79–80). The Nigerians accepted Poland, despite Poland's most famous fighter pilot of the 20th century and commander of the 303 Squadron, Lieutenant Colonel Jan Zumbach, who created and directed the air force of the Biafran rebels against the Nigerian government (Polus, 2016, pp. 95–96).² During the Cold War, the UN was only present in Africa for two operations, the ONUC operation in Congo 1960–1964 and the observer mission in Nigeria 1968–1970. It was therefore a great honour for Poland to be invited to participate in the Nigerian operation. Large-scale involvement took place only after 1988, when the Visegrád states sent troops and police officers to prove their commitment to democratic change and to assist their integration. Later, when they joined NATO and the European Union, the Alliance's responsibilities shifted to the Balkans and Afghanistan, with fewer troops being deployed to African peace operations (Dunay, 2010, p. 86). The Visegrád states played a greater role in Mali and the Central African Republic, although Hungary withdrew from Central Africa's MINUSCA operation at the end of 2018 (Besenyő, 2019, pp. 33–34), despite the increased role of the African strategy adopted by the Hungarian government in African peace operations (Hungarian Government Resolution about Africa strategy 1177/2019). Interestingly, at the same time as the Hungarian withdrawal, the Polish government sent troops to the EUTM RCA operation and the Czech government planned to send soldiers to Libya to train border guards recognised by the international community (Čejka, Daniel and Lubin, 2018, p. 191). In the following, I briefly list the African peace operations in which the V4 states have taken part.

Poland is currently involved in four operations: in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Western Sahara, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic (Ministry of National Defence Republic of Poland, no date; Tarnogórski, 2012; Polish Peacekeeping, no date). Previously, Polish peacekeepers have served in Nigeria, Namibia, Angola, Rwanda, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Eritrea,³ Chad, Central African Republic, Somalia, and Mali (Pietrzak, 2012, pp. 79–80; Grevi, Helly and Keohane, 2009, pp. 311–323; 339–351; United Nations Peacekeeping, no date; Ministry of National Defence Republic of Poland, no date; Poland Perspectives, no date; Polish Peacekeeping Veterans Association of the United Nations, no date; Di Mauro, Krotz and Wright, 2017, pp. 54–55, 55, 57–59, 61, 72, 79).

The Czech Republic is currently involved in five African operations: in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, Somalia and Mali (Daniel and Wittichová, 2016; Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic, (n. d.); Jandová, 2016). Previously, Czech peacekeepers served in Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Chad, and Somalia (MoD

1. The very first peace-keeping-related Polish involvement was in 1953 on the Korean Peninsula, while the first Polish UN peacekeeping mission is considered to be UNEF II from November 1973 to January 1980 which was followed by International Commission of Control and Supervision in Vietnam and UN-DOF from 1974. (Polish Peacekeeping Veterans Association of the United Nations, no date, Czechoslovakia participated in the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC) on the Korean peninsula, but was not involved in any UN missions until 1993 (Daniel and Wittichová, 2016). Hungary participated in Vietnam too and the first Hungarian UN peacekeeping mission is considered to be UNIMOG from August 1988 to July 1990 (Besenyő, 2013, pp. 61–62; Dunay, 2005, p. 47).

2. This may have happened because Zumbach did not return after the WWII to Poland, where the communists gained power, but stayed abroad (Jowett, 2019, p. 68).

3. Polish soldiers not only deployed to UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea, but also to the UN operation to combat against famine in Ethiopia in 1985, where 3 MI-8 helicopters and 22 military pilots served (Polus, 2016, p. 96).

CR, 2013; Di Mauro *et al.*, 2017, pp. 63, 72, 79; Grevi, Helly and Keohane, 2009, pp. 311–323, 391–402; [United Nations Peacekeeping](#), no date).

Hungary is currently involved in three operations in Western Sahara, Mali, and Somalia (Besenyő, 2019, pp. 74–76, 79–80, 91–92). Earlier, Hungarian soldiers and police officers and NCO's had served in Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan, Chad, Libya, Somalia, South Sudan and the Central African Republic (Besenyő, 2019, pp. 61–98; Besenyő, 2016, pp. 107–118; Grevi, Helly and Keohane, 2009, pp. 18–185, 255–264, 311–323; Szenes, 2015).

As of the end of 2019, no Slovak soldiers are active in the African operations of the United Nations, the European Union, the NATO, nor as part of any other organisation. Slovakia is rather engaged in Afghanistan, as part of the NATO-led actions and is an active contributor to the NATO and EU forces operating in the Balkans. As for UN peacekeeping missions, Slovak personnel are assigned to the UNFICYP, UNTSO, and UNDOF peace-operations. The country has previously sent peacekeepers to Angola, Somalia, Liberia, Uganda, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, and Mali (Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, no date; [United Nations Peacekeeping](#), no date; Kríž and Urbanovska, 2013, pp. 371–392).

Table 2. Participation of Visegrád countries in African peacekeeping operations. (Source: Besenyő, 2019, pp. 61–98; Di Mauro *et al.*, pp. 63, 72, 79; Besenyő, 2013; Grevi, Helly and Keohane, 2009, pp. 18–185, 255–264, 311–323, 339–351, 391–402 and [United Nations Peacekeeping](#), no date)

Operation	Poland	Hungary	Czech Republic	Slovakia	Total
UN Operations					
OTN	5	-	-	-	5
UNTAG	373	23*	22	-	395+23*
UNAVEM I.	-	-	5	-	5
UNAVEM II.	-	28+14*	5	15	48+14*
UNAVEM III.	14	7+11*	-	15	36+11*
UNOSOM	-	-	5	2	7
MONUA	8	13+13*	-	6	27+13*
ONUMOZ	-	31+20*	39	-	70+20*
UNAMIR	5	-	-	7	12
UNOMUR	-	5	-	5	10
UNOMIL	-	1	28	10	39
UNOMSIL	-	-	5	-	5
UNAMSIL	-	1*	39	6	45+1*
UNMIL	22+35*	-	50	-	72+35*
UNOCI	30	1*	-	-	30+1*

MONUC	3	-	24	-	27
MONUSCO	19	-	18	-	37
UNMEE	44	-	39	715	798
MINURCAT	2	-	2	-	4
MINURSO	27	128+25*	-	-	155+25*
UNMISS	13	-	-	-	13
MINUSMA	-	1*	58	-	58+1*
MINUSCA	-	21	15	-	36
UN Total:	565+35*	234+109*	354	781	2122+144*
EU Operations					
DRC Artemis	-	1	-	-	1
EUSEC RD CONGO	-	11	-	-	11
EUFOR RD CONGO	130	3	-	-	133
EU support to AMIS	-	2	-	2	4
EUFOR Tchad/RCA	418	4	2	-	424
EU NAVFOR	-	3	27	-	30
EUCAP Somalia	1	-	1	-	2
EUTM MALI	40	46	390	2	478
EUTM SOMALIA	-	46	-	-	46
EUFOR RCA Bangui	50	3	-	-	53
EUFOR Libya	-	2	-	-	2
EUMAM RCA	2	-	-	-	2
EUTM RCA	2	-	-	-	2
EUAVSEC South Sudan	-	2	-	-	2
EU Total:	643	123	420	4	1190
NATO Operations					
NATO OUP LIBYA	-	2	-	-	2
Total of all three:	1208+35*	357+109*	774	785	3312+144*

The numbers marked with *symbol represent the number of police officers.

Conclusion - Comparison of the V4 countries in Africa

It is clear from my summary table that despite the fact that the Visegrád countries did not have an independent African policy (Berg, 2009, p. 63), some of them endeavoured to become more actively involved in the United Nations African Peace Operations at the end of the Cold War and in the 1990s. Most of the operations took place in the Czech Republic (15), followed by Poland (13), Hungary (12) and Slovakia (9). When it comes to headcount figures, most troops (781) were sent by Slovakia, although this is misleading because of the Slovakian technical contingent of 200 (a total of 715) serving in UNMEE for 4 years. Against this background, it seems that Poland's second place (565 soldiers and 35 police officers) was much more prominent. They are followed by the Czech Republic (354 soldiers) and Hungary, which sent the fewest soldiers (234 persons). The involvement of the Hungarians was somewhat improved by the fact that along with the soldiers, they sent most police officers (109) to UN operations in Africa. As a matter of fact, only Poland and Hungary sent police officers to the African continent. Today, the V4 states are playing less and less of a role in UN operations - not only on the African continent - as they are more involved in EU and NATO operations that are more in line with their interests. This change is also evident from the way Hungary's participation in the MINURSO operation has evolved. At the beginning of 1998, the UN Peace Operations Directorate called on the Hungarian leadership to send unarmed military observers to Western Sahara, to which the then political leadership responded positively in February 1998. Later, however, learning from the earlier mistakes, they were asked about the military leadership, who suggested sending a group of 10 – 20 during the changeover period. Thus, this number was offered to the mission of the United Nations for Western Sahara, which was carried out in 1999. Originally, Hungarian soldiers were expected in August 1999, but this was not due to the actual reorganisation of the Defence Forces and NATO accession. After NATO accession, the perception of sending troops to NATO operations rather than UN operations became more and more prominent. For example, this is why the Hungarian leadership did not agree that Major General József Bali, who was the commander of the UNMOGIP military observers, should accept the UN request to extend his mandate by one year. The Hungarian military leadership claimed that they were unable to fulfil the request due to the strategic transformation of the Hungarian armed forces. In addition, invitations to participate in a number of previously agreed UN operations - Operation MONUC / Congo, Operation UNAMSIL / Sierra Leone, etc. were refused. The leaders of the United Nations have also noticed the withdrawal of the Hungarian Defence Forces and the change of priorities and, therefore, Bernard Miyet, head of the UN Department for Peace Operations, initiated talks with Hungarian political and military leaders. At the reconciliation, the representatives of the UN took note of the changed Hungarian interests, but were fortunate enough to note that the Hungarian leadership continued to provide the 10-man contingent previously offered to MINURSO and the first three Hungarian military observers arrived on 15 May 2000 in the operation area. Shortly afterwards, in June 2000, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan paid a visit to Hungary and made a highly commendable statement on Hungarian soldiers serving in various UN operations and had further talks with the UN Peacebuilding Directorate, which resulted in the deployment of three more Hungarian military observers who arrived in the area in October. Later, the number of personnel deployed in the Western Sahara operation was 6 compared to the 10 previously agreed (Interview with a former officer in the Department of Defence Policy). The role of the Visegrád states in the operations of the United Nations is also indicated by the fact that in 2012, Poland sent 13 troops and police officers to the UN operations, Hungary 88, the Czech Republic 10, while Slovakia 201. This represents barely 6% of the 6943 people sent by European

states. The situation with financial contributions is even worse. In 2012, European countries provided 40.7% of the UN Peace Operation Budget, of which Poland provided 0.248%, Hungary 0.116%, the Czech Republic 0.209%, and Slovakia 0.042%, which together accounted for just 0.615%, which seems insignificant in relation to the weight of the organisation (Novosseloff, 2012). In May 2019, under the auspices of the United Nations, Poland took part in 5 operations (of which 3 were African - MINURSO, MONUSCO, UNMISS) with 5 personnel, Hungary 5 (of which 2 were African - MINURSO, MINUSCA) with 23 personnel, Czech Republic 5 (of which 3 were African - MINUSCA, MINUSMA, MONUSCO) with 17 personnel, while Slovakia deployed 251 personnel in 3 operations, for a total of 296 personnel (United Nations Peacekeeping no date). Recently, the four countries have contributed a total of 22 personnel to African operations, which is not a major contribution either, and as I mentioned earlier, Slovakia has not been sending peacekeepers to the African Continent in recent years, either for UN, EU or NATO operations.

Although the Visegrád countries are much more actively involved in NATO and EU operations, their national and, more rarely, federal interests are becoming more prevalent (Konda and Smura, 2018, pp. 38–41). This is also clear from the discussions over NATO's intervention in Libya. Poland and the Czech Republic, for example, have explicitly and firmly refused to intervene in any way in the NATO-led Libya operation (Fahron-Hussey, 2018, p. 131), while Slovakia has taken a more diplomatic stance, since it officially supported the operation but did not participate at all (Chivvis *et al.*, 2017, p. 103). On the other hand, Hungary sent 2 staff officers to the operation headquarters. Moreover, Hungary also sent 2 staff members to the EU Preparatory Staff (EUFOR Libya), while the other three countries did not support the operation. To date, in 6 NATO-led operations in Africa, only Hungary has participated with 2 people (Besenyő, 2019, pp. 94–95). However, the Visegrád countries are more active in other NATO operations, such as in the Balkans and Afghanistan, with larger contingents.

Polish troops (643) were also the largest contributor to EU operations in Africa, followed by the Czechs (420), the Hungarians (123) and the Slovaks (4). It can be seen that the role of the Poles and the Czechs in the EU exceeds that of the United Nations, while the role of Hungarians and Slovaks has fallen spectacularly. Poland's more active presence in African peace operations of the EU give a clear signal of its role within the European Alliance and its regional power position, which Poland increasingly seeks to strengthen. It is also visible that other countries than Poland have sent only a small number of 1-4 contingents to EU operations in Africa (Dunay, 2010, p. 80; Fahron-Hussey, 2018, p. 172). The countries' engagement in peace operations is a good reflection of the Visegrád countries which are active in the pro-African policy of the African continent. In 2019, 56 Polish, Hungarian, and Czech soldiers served in 5 of the 8 EU operations in Africa. These are EU NAVFOR Somalia, EUBAM Libya, EUCAP Somalia, EUCAP Sahel Mali, EUCAP Sahel Niger, EUTM RCA, EUTM Somalia and EUTM Mali (European Union External Action, n. d.). In the previous 11 operations, which have already been completed, 630 soldiers from Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia served in 7 operations. Another interesting fact is that Hungary alone did not send an independent military unit to African operations - despite repeatedly offering health or logistics units to the UN and the EU, which subsequently withdrew its offers - while the other three countries did. Several analyses indicate that Hungary generally sends small numbers of non-combat units to various operations, which has been criticised several times (Chivvis *et al.*, 2017, p. 61). This is especially true on the African continent, where more than 30 soldiers or police have never served in one operation at a time. Many security experts I spoke to believe that Hungary's operational radius does not allow for an African operation, but this is refuted by the fact that in recent years, there have been more independent Hungarian

units in Cyprus, Iraq and Afghanistan than the country's armed forces. So, this cannot be an explanation for the fact that the Hungarian leadership has not sent a unit to Africa. It is more likely, confirmed by several military leaders, that military leadership is not interested in the continent and would only be willing to send a smaller, autonomous contingent or to play a more active role on the continent only at the explicit command of the political leadership. This has not yet happened, although the Hungarian government adopted an Africa strategy in 2018, which is counting on the country's major engagement in Africa, including a more active role in peace operations. If we look at EU operations to date, it becomes clear that Africa is not a priority for the V4 countries, but rather a larger presence in EU operations in the Balkans or the Middle East ([Jandová, 2016](#)).

It is interesting that with the exception of Western Sahara (Poland and Hungary) and Libya (Hungary), the V4 countries did not send peacekeepers to the North African territories but did to the sub-Saharan region. Each of these countries sent troops and police to Angola, Mali, Liberia, and Somalia. At least three countries have sent peacekeepers to Sierra Leone, Chad, Ethiopia, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Namibia. At least two countries have sent peacekeepers to Western Sahara, Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan, and South Sudan, and only one country sent peacekeepers in Libya.

In summary, of the Visegrád states with differing levels of training and equipment, Poland was in the lead and the most active in peace operations in Africa, followed by the Czech Republic and Hungary, while Slovakia was the least involved in the African continent. This trend is, moreover, in line with the involvement of the above countries in Africa to date.

In my opinion, it is important for V4 countries with an otherwise low African presence to become more actively involved in African peace operations in order to carry out and achieve their national and federal interests. However, with the exception of Poland, they are capable of doing so on their own, with considerable limitations. Therefore, existing military cooperation should be broadened. These countries should collect, process, evaluate and share their existing African experiences, jointly training their soldiers for African operations. Even so, if their experiences so far are jointly processed and summarised, and their existing capabilities are harmonised, they would be able to jointly participate in African peace operations, thereby strengthening their role and influence within the European Union and within NATO.

In the event of possible cooperation, it would be worthwhile to gather the experience of previous operations in Africa, from which it would be necessary to draw up manuals not only for the military and the police but books that can be used by the Academic world too.

The V4 countries could increase the number of observers and police deployed to UN missions. The training of these staff could be carried out at the Hungarian Defence Forces Peace Support Training Centre (HDF PSTC) in Szolnok, which is accredited by the United Nations.

In my opinion, if the V4 countries were to send a common unit to any African operations, special forces, military police, logistics, military engineer, and medical areas would be the most appropriate. The possible locations are probably in Libya, Somalia, Mali, and the Central African Republic.

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