

Neo-colonialism, violence, and the EU's approach to peace operations in Africa¹

Dávid Vogel², Katalin Horváth³

Abstract:

The article examines the European Union's (EU) approach to peace operations in Africa through the lens of neo-colonialism. The authors begin by situating Africa on the Richardson scale of violence, comparing its conflict levels to other continents, and exploring the root causes of its persistent instability, including colonial legacies and weak post-colonial military institutions. The study outlines evolving models of peace operations, contrasting traditional UN missions with ad hoc coalitions (AHCs) and highlighting the shift in EU missions from direct intervention to capacity-building (in form of training and advising). The paper argues that EU's strategy is fragmented, reactive, and often shaped more by geopolitical self-interests than normative commitments. Through a detailed case study of the Central African Republic (CAR), the article analyses four EU missions, evaluating their scope, impact, and limitations. The authors claim that while EU operations have achieved tactical successes, they remain constrained by limited mandates, political ambiguity, and growing anti-Western sentiment in Africa (often fuelled by competing foreign actors), raising deeper questions about the possibilities and necessities of Europe's long-term role on the continent.

Keywords:

Africa; African Union; European Union; Sahel; Peace Operations; Peacekeeping; Military.

¹ DOI: 10.12700/jceas.2025.5.2.420

² Deputy Head of the Africa Research Institute at Óbuda University, Hungary; ORCID: 0000-0002-8412-7337; vogel.david@bgk.uni-obuda.hu.

³ PhD student at Óbuda University, Hungary; ORCID: 0009-0002-2837-7216; matkovsky32@gmail.com.

Introduction

The aim of this article is to shed light on the strategic approach of the European Union (EU) to peace and stability in Africa, especially through its own military Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) crisis management operations. Before we can even begin to discuss that, however, we lay the ground by reiterating the Richardson scale of violence, compare the situation of Africa to other continents in terms of violent conflict, and shortly conceptualizing peace operations and their evolution. Following that, we dive into the EU's strategic approach to African peace and stability in general and the EU's peace operations in Africa in particular. Finally, we provide an even closer look at the seemingly never-ending spiral of violence taking place in the Central African Republic as well as the international effort to restore peace and stabilize the country.

Richardson scale of violence and Africa compared to the world

To be able to situate Africa on the “violence map” of the world, in other words, to see how much violent conflicts characterize Africa compared to other continents, we must first establish what the scale of violence is. The method we can use to measure violence globally has been invented by Lewis Fry Richardson in his (posthumous) book titled “The Statistics of Deadly Quarrels” in 1960. A “deadly quarrel”, in Richardson's definition is any human violence that leads to the purposeful death of humans, be it 1 human, or 1 trillion humans and everything in between. This includes everything from simple homicides to conflicts to wars to nuclear annihilation. He used the base-10 logarithmic scale to be able to measure human violence at this range in one scale, which we find extremely useful. His scale – reminiscent of the Richter scale of earthquakes (which is also logarithmic) – we call the Richardson scale of violence:

Richardson scale of violence			
Magnitude 0	1 to 9 ⁴ deaths	10	murder, small scale group violence
Magnitude 1	10 to 100 deaths	10 ²	battle
Magnitude 2	100 to 1000 deaths	10 ³	conflict
Magnitude 3	1 thousand to 10 thousand deaths	10 ⁴	war
Magnitude 4	10 thousand to 100 thousand deaths	10 ⁵	war
Magnitude 5	100 thousand to 1 million deaths	10 ⁶	war (e.g. Rwandan genocide)
Magnitude 6	1 million to 10 million deaths	10 ⁷	war (e.g. Taiping)

⁴ Of course, for the rest of the table, the numbers after the „to” should be 99, 999, etc. However, for the sake of easier understanding and memorizing, we have given up some precision.

			rebellion, US civil war, Congo wars)
Magnitude 7	10 million to 100 million deaths	10^8	World War I and II
Magnitude 8	100 million to 1 billion (1000 million) deaths	10^9	nuclear war
Magnitude 9	1 billion to 1 trillion (1 million million) deaths	10^{10}	nuclear war, potential annihilation of humanity

Figure 1: Richardson scale of violence, table compiled by the authors, based on Brian Hayes' article (Hayes, 2002) from 2002 about Richardson's book.

We can get an excellent general overview of the situation regarding violent conflicts in Africa from the 2022 article of Palik et al. in the PRIO paper series, "Conflict Trends in Africa 1989-2021" (Palik et al., 2022) (they also include a significant part of data going back to 1946). One of the key takeaways from this paper is that nine African countries – Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, DR Congo, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia – have been experiencing conflict and war linked to the activity of the Islamic State (IS). Furthermore, IS extremism is spreading, with the Islamist terrorist group expanding even into Tanzania, a country that has not faced internal conflict for decades. State-based and non-state-based conflicts and wars often appear in the same geographical regions and countries in Africa. Interstate conflicts and wars are rare in Africa (they have counted 7 between 1990 and 2021). The most common form of violence is civil conflict and war and internationalised civil conflict and war, e.g. in 2020 all the 30 state-based conflicts and wars in Africa belonged to these categories. Most of the battle-related deaths (BRDs) result from low intensity conflict. Africa had the highest number of state-based conflicts and wars in the world from 1946 to 2021, namely 105, while Asia had 82, the Middle East 41, Europe 38, and the Americas 27.

Palik et al. (2022) define conflict as resulting in yearly BRDs between 25 and 999 and war as above 1,000 BRDs. On the Richardson scale, this mostly corresponds to Magnitude 1 and 2 as conflict, and Magnitude 3 as the beginning of war. In 1990, one of the worst years, they have counted 63,000 BRDs from 8 wars (of Magnitude 3) and 1,563 BRDs from 5 conflicts (of Magnitude 2). The years 1999-2000 witnessed another spike in BRDs: in 1999, 6 (Magnitude 3) wars accounted for 58,000 BRDs, and in 2000, 6 (Magnitude 3) wars resulted in 56,500 BRDs. After this, BRDs declined sharply, to start to rise again in the 2010s and 2020s (Ibid, p. 12). According to their research, African wars are fought for two reasons, either over territory, or over government (replacing or changing the composition of governments). With a few exceptions, conflicts do not spread to entire countries but are contained in a specific geographic area within affected countries (hot spots).

Here, we reproduce one of the most striking illustrations from the PRIO paper, which reveals that the majority of the conflict-affected countries in Africa – across all types of conflict – are concentrated roughly in the central region of the continent, while violence appears significantly less prevalent in the northern and southern parts of Africa:

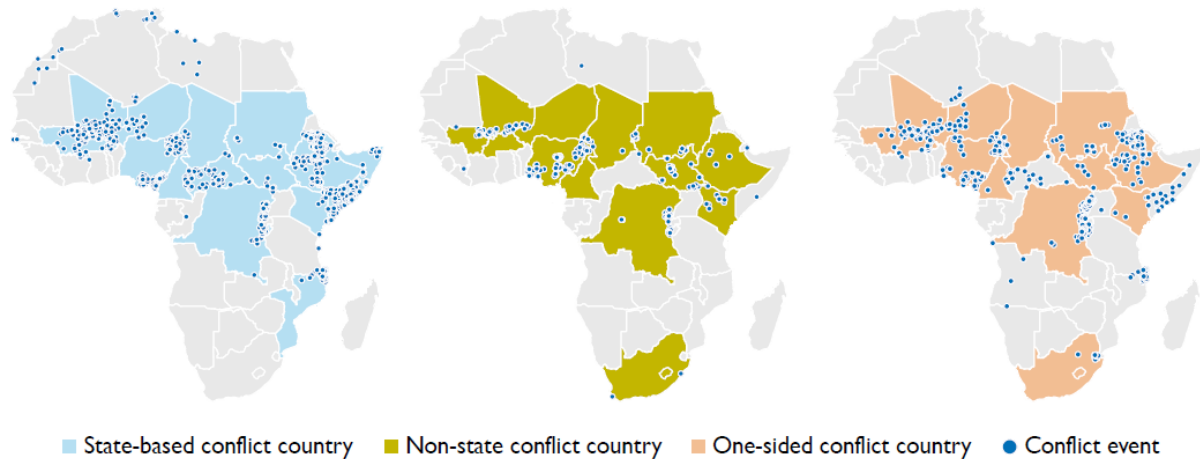


Figure 2: Illustration of geographical spread of conflicts based on the PRIO paper
(*Ibid*, Figure 21, p. 26)

Additionally, Africa is the most severely affected continent by state-based, non-state-based and one-sided conflicts – when governments or non-state-based organisations commit armed violence against civilians, e.g. genocide, in case of Rwanda or Sudan – in the world (Besenyő, 2019, pp.70-72, 84-86). The number of non-state conflicts is growing. While most of the violence remains low-intensity – and the majority of BRDs stem from these conflicts – a small number of high-intensity conflicts, particularly those reaching Magnitude 3 or higher, account for high levels of BRDs, when wars erupt.

The comprehensive picture is this: Africa suffers the most violence out of all continents, and the reason for that is mostly communal violence (violence between ethnic and religious communities, represented by organized armed non-state actors), and to a lesser extent violence over territory and government (regime change). A lot of this can be laid squarely at the door of European colonizers, who have drawn African boundaries with rulers – arbitrary borders (Kleynhans & Wyss, 2025) – not paying any attention to the ethnic and religious realities on the ground, and to pre-existing indigenous African polities and states, only to their own imperial interests. These arbitrary borders have become one of the major sources of conflict, since they separate African ethnic and religious communities.

Furthermore, colonial states did not have robust militaries, first, because they only served as auxiliaries to the militaries of their colonizers (*Ibid*, p. 666), second, because if they had strong militaries, they could have used those *against* their colonizers. At decolonisation, the European colonizers have thus left the new African states with very small and weak militaries. There is a cold political logic to this: the ancient and classic method of “divide and conquer”.

Favouritism was a systematic and strategic feature of colonial rule. The preferential treatment of specific ethnic groups—such as the Hausa in Nigeria, the Tutsi in Rwanda, or the Acholi in Uganda—led to their disproportionate representation in colonial militaries, police forces, and gendarmerie units. This entrenched ethnic imbalance fuelled tensions among communities. Moreover, such favouritism was typically paired with hierarchical discrimination: African soldiers were rarely promoted beyond junior ranks, depriving local personnel of opportunities to gain leadership experience or strategic expertise. These structural imbalances played a major role in post-independence instability, contributing to Africa's first military coup in Togo in 1963, which culminated in the assassination of the elected president and the eventual rise of Gnassingbé Eyadéma, who ruled from 1967 until his death in 2005. Similar patterns were evident in Nigeria's 1966 coup and, decades later, in the roots of the 1994 Rwandan genocide (Ilorah, 2009).

These examples also show that even after African states had become nominally independent, they were in general politically unviable and economically and militarily very weak. This made it easy for Western states to continue to exploit them in covert political and economic ways, in other words, to practice neocolonialism. Three states in the Sahel, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger have recently taken decisive steps to distance themselves from Western (French) influence, including expelling French military forces and reassessing bilateral agreements, forming the Alliance of Sahel States (Alliance des États de Sahel, AES), and turning to Russia and China for assistance). They are reclaiming their economies, asserting national sovereignty, and embracing both nationalism and pan-Africanism. While such moves may signal the potential for transformative change across the continent, they also carry significant risks. In the short term they are contributing to increased instability. The security vacuum created by the withdrawal or expulsion of Western forces, including national troops and multinational peacekeeping operations, is often filled rapidly by international terrorist organizations that are already established and expanding their influence in the region. These escalating security threats place an increasing burden on national armed forces (even if they claim to have an international ally such as Wagner) and may ultimately lead to renewed need for international peace operations to stabilize the situation.

What are peace operations and how do they evolve?

Peace operations have evolved through several generations since their inception after the Second World War in the framework of the United Nations (UN) and later regional organisations and multilateral treaties. They have been characterized traditionally, since the end of the Cold War, as having “generations” by a wide range of authors, Kai Michael Kenkel being a good example. He distinguishes between five generations (Kenkel, 2013): 1 – traditional peacekeeping, 2 – multidimensional (military+civilian), 3 – peace enforcement, 4 – peacebuilding, 5 – hybrid missions (UN+regional organisations). Recently, categorisation into “generations” has been criticized, and an alternative method of categorisation proposed based on what the objective is:

minimalist (end violence), moderate (end violence+establish good governance), maximalist (address the root causes of the conflict) (Hellmüller et al., 2022). The common ground in all these categorisation attempts is that we must deal with the increasing complexity of peace operations, which manifest in their outside characteristics, their mandates, their composition and their objectives.

Beyond these categorisation methodologies for peace operations, we are also interested in the more fundamental issue of what peace operations actually *are*. Different schools in international relations theory (such as realism, liberalism, constructivism, Marxism, feminism, post-colonialism) have conceptualized peace operations in different ways, and they all have a point, but for the purposes of this short introduction we will choose the lens of liberal institutionalism, which in our view has the most general explanatory power for the phenomenon of peace operations. In contrast to the pre-1945 anarchic international system—where states operated solely based on rational self-interest and conflicts erupted without any overarching authority trying to put a stop to them - the post-Second World War era saw the emergence of a rules-based global order. Rooted in the Bretton Woods system and institutionalized through the United Nations, this new framework introduced a form of international policing. The UN, alongside authorized regional organizations, assumed responsibility for maintaining peace and stability. Under Article 51 of the UN Charter, which affirms the inherent right to self-defence, these actors are empowered to operate in conflict zones when authorized by the Security Council, effectively formalizing mechanisms for collective security. In this system, UN peace operations (since they are not in self-defence) must receive a mandate from the UN Security Council and/or be invited in by the host country's authorities.

Since there is still nothing close to a global authority accepted by everyone that could keep the peace between states, and in that sense act as a sort of world police force, and the UN has no standing army, the UN tries to keep (restore, enforce, etc) the peace by conducting peace operations. In lieu of a non-existent UN force, the UN must resort to raising the forces for these operations from its member states and reimburse their expenses from the UN peacekeeping budget. Viewed through this lens, peace operations are basically “policing” efforts of the international community to overcome a brutal Hobbesian international system in which wars could rage on unchecked and civilian populations would suffer without any hope for outside help and protection (which was the case for most of our history up until the establishment of the UN, and unfortunately for numerous conflicts, it still is the case today).

The UN is the major international organisation that conducts peace operations, with the most legitimacy. However, the UN cannot deal with all international conflicts alone, so regional international organisations, such as NATO, the OSCE, the CIS, ASEAN, the League of Arab States, the EU, the AU and its RECs (regional economic communities) and international forces based on multilateral agreements (such as the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) on the Sinai Peninsula) also engage in mediation,

peacekeeping, peacebuilding and peace enforcement efforts, some of them in the form of peace operations.

Most military peace operations have been conducted by the UN, the EU and the AU and its RECs. The other international organisations listed above have conducted very few altogether. Most states outside the Western world (who besides the UN, are also involved in NATO and EU peace operations) mostly contribute troops and police forces (Troop Contributing Countries, TCC and Police Contributing Countries, PCC) to UN operations and not try to organize their own operations in the framework of their own regional international organisations. NATO, which also did a relatively large number of peace operations, is focused not on Africa, but elsewhere. The AU and its RECs conduct peace operations only in Africa, although African countries contribute, together with Asian countries, the most military personnel to UN peace operations (mostly in Africa, but outside of Africa as well).

Malte Brosig, in his chapter on peacekeeping in the Handbook of African Defence and Armed Forces (Ibid, pp 696-715) provides a comprehensive overview of the history and present of UN peacekeeping on the African continent, which has seen 31 UN operations as of July 2025, most of them after the end of the Cold War. He describes the biggest difference between traditional UN operations and what seems to be the future of peace operations, the so-called AHCs (military ad hoc coalitions). This difference is that UN operations are defensive, lightly armed and not able to engage in the armed conflict itself (also due to the historic political impartiality of UN operations), while AHCs have been “invented” with the specific intent of having an operational force that can and does engage in the armed conflict. The emergence of AHCs was necessitated by the intensification of violence in Africa. Older missions worked reasonably well in Burundi, Sierra Leone, Darfur, Liberia, Ivory Coast, but peacekeepers with both equipment and mandates for keeping an existing peace (ceasefire) are unable to deal with ongoing high intensity conflicts with no ceasefire or peace in sight, such as we can witness in the DRC, CAR, Mali, South Sudan and Somalia.

The UN tried to deal with this situation, putting as many troops and money into its African operations as possible (peaking in April 2015 with over 107,000 peacekeepers worldwide, reaching almost 100,000 (95,219 to be exact) in Africa) (UN Missions Summary, 2015), but the new generation of UN operations are struggling to deliver results, because the real watershed, making the UN operations an actual fighting force in Africa, is something that UN member states outside Africa would not support. To put it bluntly, nobody from outside Africa really wants to die for Africa. Thus, the solution that has been found is that AU and REC operations, and AHCs made up of the troops of willing African nations are fighting the wars in Africa against terrorism, religious extremism and separatism based on the incompatibility of the reality of ethnic communities and arbitrary state borders. The outside world (mostly the UN, the EU and the US) is supporting the efforts of African states and their regional organisations through either financial support, training or capacity building.

Many AU and REC missions are acting as a first entry/bridging force, after which the UN, when the circumstances are more suitable, takes over. African nations are engaged with peace operations in Africa for natural reasons: they have an interest in stabilizing their neighbours and preventing the spillover of violence, and for some of them the UN reimbursement for peacekeeping is a very important contribution to their very low defence budgets.

Brosig defines AHCs as “autonomous arrangements with a task-specific mandate established at short notice for a limited period of time” and lists six examples of AHCs in Africa. These are: the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA) between 2011-18, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) fighting Boko Haram, the G5 Sahel Joint Force (which fell apart because Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger left) (Security Council Report, 2024), the Accra Initiative (against terrorism in the Sahel), and the East African Force (against the M23 in the DRC) (Ibid, pp 711-712). The AHCs are legitimized by the AU's Peace and Security Council. The AHC's advantages over peace operations (other than the main one, being able to fight a war) is fast decision making, little bureaucracy (since they circumvent all international organisations and are down to the political will of the African countries who establish them), and direct control over the resources that their members contribute. AHCs operate under Article 51 of the UN Charter, since the African countries participating in them act in self-defence and generally only on the territories of the AHC members. This means that AHCs do not need to get UN, AU or EU blessing first.

We can see that the task of the AHCs is to fight terrorist, religious extremist and separatist organized armed groups, which is something that UN-EU type peace operations are not prepared to do, but this is what Africa really needs. The UN type peace operations can come later, when the war is over and there is a peace to be kept, along with state-building, security sector reform, training, capacity building and humanitarian assistance, for which peace operations are much better suited than AHCs would be. We agree with Brosig that AHCs are not institutional competitors to peace operations, but they are in some cases the prerequisite of a peace operation to start working. Peace operations and AHCs thus operate at different phases of the process. International donors are funding AHCs, for example the EU through the European Peace Facility (EPF).

EU military operations in Africa

The EU has started conducting civilian and military peace operations in 2003, and in the 22 years since then, has conducted and continues to conduct 45 missions and operations altogether. Out of its civilian missions, some have been in Africa, but out of its military operations, almost all have taken place in Africa, as the table below shows.

EU CSDP missions and operations in the world		
	civilian	military
ongoing	12	10

out of which in Africa	4	8
completed	13	10
out of which in Africa	6	9

Figure 3: EU CSDP missions and operations in the world, authors' compilation based on EEAS data: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/missions-and-operations_en#11929

The ongoing missions and operations around the world, including Africa, are also illustrated on the map below:

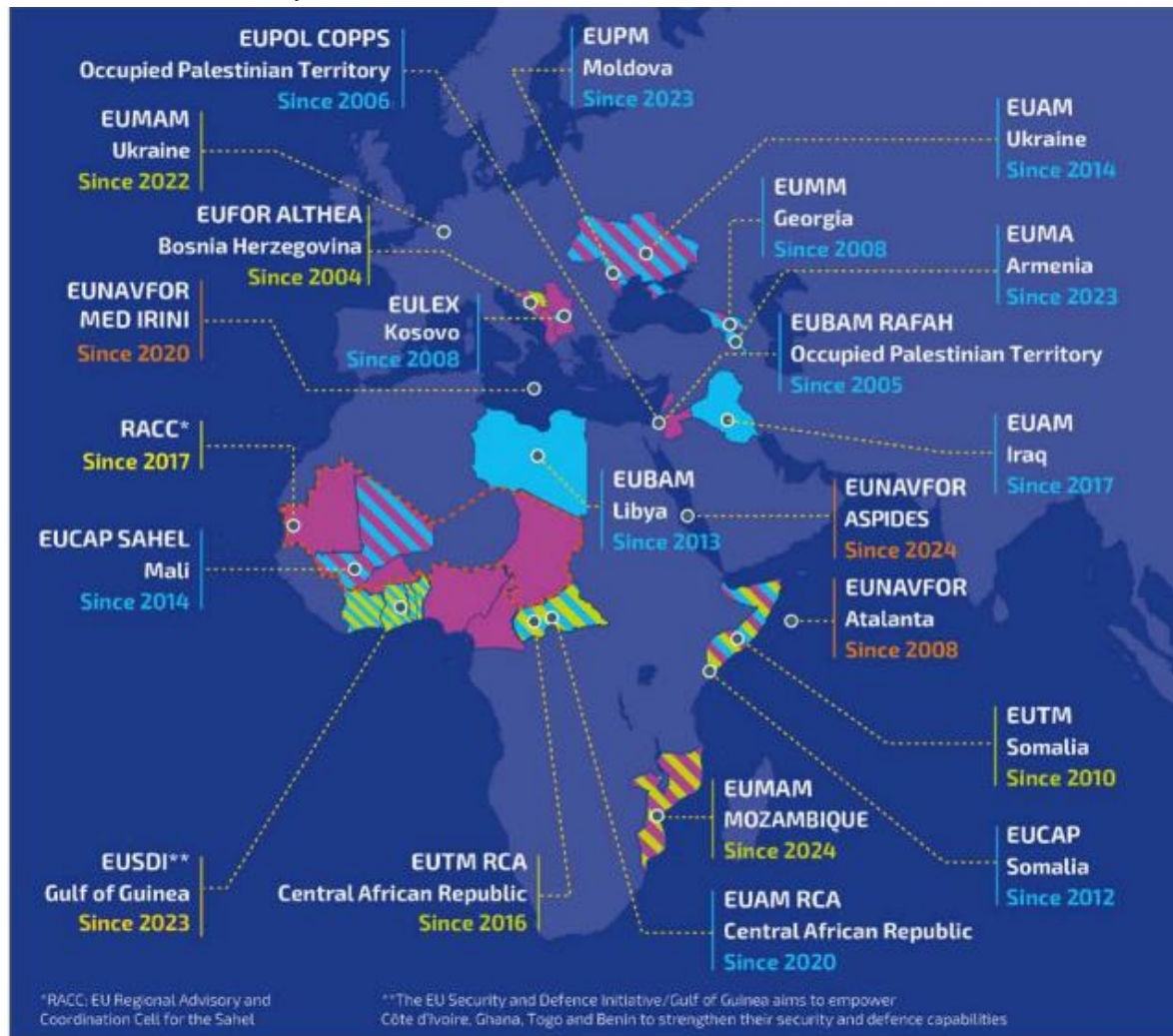


Figure 4: EU security and defence engagement around the world. Source: EU missions, 2025.

We can see that out of the CSDP military missions and operations, both in the past and in the present, most were or are in Africa, or in the case of the naval operations, around Africa. This tendency of the EU to militarily engage in Africa more than anywhere else in the world stems from several reasons. One is the simple fact shown earlier in this article that Africa has the most violent conflict zones in the world. The other is that the

colonialist past of some European states ties Europe economically and politically to Africa. The third reason is that Europe does not want migration from Africa to overwhelm it, so it aims to contribute to stabilizing the continent to stem migration, terrorism and radical Islamism (Ibid, p. 642). CSDP land operations in Africa can be said to have evolved through several types.: From 2003 to 2009, the EU conducted EUFOR operations (Artemis, EUFOR DRC, EUFOR Chad/CAR), with executive mandates to provide protection to civilian populations as bridging operations until the UN can take over. The EU has also started on naval operations (EUNAVFOR), naming these after Greek goddesses (Atalanta, Sophia, Irini) and gods (Aspides), mostly to respond to migration (Molnár & Vecsey, 2022) and the threat of terrorism. From 2010, the EU has changed its approach, and it switched to training missions, hence the acronym EUTMs (EUTM Somalia, EUTM Mali, EUTM RCA) (Ibid, pp. 646-657). Besides EUTMs, the EU has “invented” other mission types as well to deal with the African needs, and to utilize the full spectrum of CSDP, including the military and civilian crisis management instruments as well. They have introduced EUCAP missions, aimed at civilian (police, judiciary) capacity building, EUAM (advisory missions), and EUMAM (military advisory missions). The direction of the evolution is clear, both the EU and Africa want African solutions to African problems, hence the shift to training, capacity building and advisory missions which aim to train and equip African militaries to deal with their own conflicts, and the less European troops and more African troops on the ground. The EU is training and financing African armies, so it does not have to send its own troops anymore.

The EU's strategic approach to Africa

The EU's strategic approach to Africa regarding defence is in a process of transformation at present, and both the EU institutions and the EU Member States seem to be confused about how to go forward. The official strategic documents, such as the EU Global Strategy (EUGS), the Strategic Compass, the “Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa” document, the Sahel Strategy, the joint communiques of EU-AU summit and ministerial meetings, consist of three elements related to peace and security. One, they emphasize the strong strategic partnership between the two continents and the indispensable nature of African peace and prosperity for the EU. Two, they have a strong normative element, emphasizing democracy and human rights. Three, the implementation mostly consist of the EU supporting African ownership, throwing money at Africa (through the African Peace Facility, the European Peace Facility, the NDICI and other instruments), providing training and advisory missions to African militaries, and development assistance to treat the root cause of terrorism and migration in place and keep the migrants the EU cannot deal with at home.

On the other hand, as Peo Hansen shows, this seemingly normative, “soft power” approach of the EU is only the narrative, the surface, behind which the EU has always acted and continues to act as a geopolitical actor just like all the others. Despite the normative rhetoric, it cooperates with authoritarian regimes, tuning down the normative narrative, whenever that is what its interest dictates. Also, this divide

between rhetoric and reality is closing, as the EU, in response to the Russian threat, has started to act openly as a geopolitical actor, which is less and less apologetic about abandoning its post-Cold War vision of placing itself above global power politics (which never worked beyond the rhetoric), and returning into the arena of hard power and global competition (*Hansen, 2025*).

Examining the EU strategic documents themselves, their authors have clearly been bureaucrats, not visionary leaders. The EUGS wasted few words on Africa and contains no substance beyond platitudes such as we will invest more in Africa, human rights and development in Africa are the key to security and prosperity in Europe, we will fight terrorism, and we will support the AU and the RECs (EU Global Strategy, 2016). The Strategic Compass goes one step further and is a bit more concrete, emphasizing the EU's support to African-led peace initiatives, including support to African peace support operations (EU Strategic Compass, 2022).

The document "Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa" from 2020 has a section on defence, which clearly states that "African states bear the main responsibility to act, as they are the foremost guarantors of their own security", however the EU is willing to support Africa in these efforts (Towards a Comprehensive Strategy, 2020) by financial support and EU missions and operations. The EU's Sahel Strategy from 2021 is in the same vein: it emphasizes African ownership, EU support and its insistence on democracy and human rights (EU Sahel Strategy, 2021). After the spectacular failure of this strategy in the Sahel, the EU institutions have not been able to come up with a new strategy yet which they could propose to the Member States. Witnessing the rapid unfolding of events in the Sahel, this is now not even possible, as the Sahel seems to have started to make its own choices, which means that the EU must change its own mindset regarding Africa as well.

The newest strategic document of the EU on defence, the White Paper of March 2025 is primarily about the war to the east of Europe and the efforts to rearm and ramp up defence industrial capacity, with the goal of reaching defence readiness by 2030. Africa is mentioned in the White Paper only four times (as opposed to about 30 times in both the EUGS and the Strategic Compass), which, since the focus of the White Paper is defence readiness and defence industry, is understandable (EU White Paper, 2025). Africa is mentioned as a region of instability, from where the spillover effects of migration, terrorism and climate change threaten Europe, and where the European interest is the stabilisation of the continent.

The European approach to African peace and security right now, to put it bluntly, seems to be "we have our own problems right now, so please deal with your own", encouraging African ownership and supporting AU-led and REC-led peace operations. This chimes with the African approach of "African solutions for African problems", and with the awakening pan-African movement that emphasizes the dignity, independence and sovereignty of Africa. (Though to be precise, we need to mention that there have been outside players who felt the opportunity to fill the vacuum on their own (such as the United Arab Emirates financing proxies, or Türkiye and China also engaging in the

region) or by invitation such as Russia through Wagner's invitation). This is also the spirit expressed in the May 2025 communique of the EU-AU ministerial meeting, which emphasizes African ownership, and the EU's support to UN, AU and REC peace efforts, also through equipment provided through the EPF (EU-AU ministerial, 2025).

Outside of the DRC, the Sahel is the most virulent hotspot of violence in Africa, where the EU's approach has spectacularly failed, the EU missions and operations were asked to leave, the Sahel countries one by one left the G5 corps established for peace operations in the Sahel, three of the Sahel countries left the ECOWAS as well, and instead have established the AES. Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger have gone their own way, invited in Russia in the form of the Wagner Group to assist them, and are on their way of renationalizing their economies (e.g. gold mines in Burkina Faso), rejecting further Western influence and control (even making steps to leave the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU or UEMOA – Union économique et monétaire ouest-africaine), abolish the CFA Franc – guaranteed by the French Treasury – as their legal tender and create their own common national currency), which they regard as neocolonialism and imperialism. As Hansen (2025) shows, not without cause, as the EU's history with Africa points to a seamless transition from colonialism to neocolonialism, with the continuation of exploiting Africa's natural resources for economic gain for Europe. France went even beyond simple exploitation in its vision, which was to include its overseas territories in Africa in the common market evolving in Europe, to create a Euroafrica, which would amount to a power the world would have to reckon with (Hansen, 2025). In Hansen's thinking, the "strategic autonomy" the EU is striving for is of the Hobbesian kind, and it will not leave Africa alone, but will try to keep Africa as Europe's sphere of influence, even it is not Europe's colony anymore. In other words, the EU, as all great powers, acts as an empire, which advances its interest through turning its neighbourhood into its backyard.

Meanwhile, Africa might have come to a point of awakening with the events in the Sahel in the last few years. There is no consensus in the wider world either on how to regard for example Ibrahim Traoré, the President of Burkina Faso: as an authoritarian, undemocratic military leader who came to power through a coup and is not ready to organize general elections to return to civilian rule, or as a genuine nationalist leader who has risen from the bottom up, is an organic product of Africa, and has wide popular support. This issue goes to the heart of what democracy is, and whether we should expect African nations to practice democracy exactly in the European way, or we are prepared to accept that in Africa, democracy might look different and let Africans define for themselves what democracy and sovereignty means for them.

Case study: the peace efforts in the Central African Republic

This evolution of EU peace operations is perfectly demonstrated in the Central African Republic (CAR). The European Union has engaged with CAR under its Common Security



and Defence Policy four times due to the country's instability and the domestic security situation, basically continuously since April 2014.⁵

The first of the four EU peace operations in the Central African Republic was launched in response to total state collapse after the 2013 coup d'état, overthrowing President François Bozizé on 24 March 2013. There were widespread atrocities and ethnic cleansing, and the ongoing international efforts – particularly the understaffed and underequipped African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (AFISM-CAR/MISCA) – failed.⁶ The European Union military operation in the Central African Republic (EUFOR RCA) was authorised by UNSC Resolution 2134 (2014) forming the legal background for Decision 2014/73/CFSP of the European Council (Council Decision (CFSP), 2014).

The mission was launched on 1 April 2014 – even though originally, the EU force generation meeting on 13 March could not provide either the sufficient number of troops or the logistic support necessary for deployment (Nimark, 2014) – and reached full operational capability (FOC) of 700 personnel a bit more than two months later, on 15 June, under the command of Major General Philippe Pontières of France for its entire deployment. Manned by 14 European countries (including non-EU states such as Georgia, Serbia and Türkiye, besides Estonia, Finland, France, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Spain) (Yuksel, 2020), EUFOR RCA had a strong executive mandate, the UNSC authorizing “*the EU operation to take all necessary measures within the limits of its capacities*” (United Nations Security Council, 2014). The robust mandate was necessary to cope with the challenging security situation in the CAR as well as to deliver results in the very limited timeframe. As a military bridging operation, EUFOR RCA was to contribute to the establishment of a safe and secure environment, to pave the way for and hand over the mission area (Tardy, 2018) – originally to the African-led International Support Mission in the CAR (AFISM-CAR/MISCA) which later changed to MINUSCA (EUFOR RCA, n.d.-a) due to real-world developments in the meantime – within four to six months of reaching FOC, with a special focus on the area of the capital city, Bangui (EUFOR RCA, n.d.-b).

Having a closer look at the 348-day-long mission, we can conclude that it can be considered a success, though mostly on a tactical level, given its very limited mandate and its area of responsibility being only the capital city. The first soldiers set foot on the

⁵ On the other hand, to have the full picture, we need to mention that five years earlier there was another EU peace operation involving CAR as well, the EU Military Operation in Eastern Chad and Northeastern Central African Republic (EUFOR Tchad/RCA) between 15 March 2008 and 15 March 2009. According to its mandate the mission was deployed to contribute to protecting civilians (particularly refugees and internally displaced persons), to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and the freedom of movement of humanitarian personnel and to contribute to protecting UN personnel, facilities, installations and equipment in northeastern CAR (and eastern Chad) only, due to the refugee crisis along the Darfur border. (EU Military Operation, 2008; Balogh et al., 2016).

⁶ AFISM-CAR/MISCA was established by UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2127 on 5 December 2013 and formally ended on 15 September 2014, when authority was transferred to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) (MISCA establishment, 2014).

soil of the Central African Republic on 9 April 2014 (First EU peacekeeping, 2014), and only three weeks later, on 30 April, the international force took over security responsibilities for the Bangui M'Poko International Airport, a crucial lifeline for the landlocked country in general and especially for the humanitarian operations. EUFOR RCA managed to mitigate the threat of escalating ethnic violence in Bangui carried out by the forces of the Muslim Séléka ('coalition' in Sango) and the rival, predominantly Christian-animist Anti-Balaka militias. Elements of rebel militias were cleared out of Bangui neighbourhoods of Boy-Rabé, PK12, as well as the 3rd and the 5th districts (EU Military Operation, 2014). When the operation was officially closed on 23 March 2015, it accounted for only one casualty, a French corporal who died from a severe form of malaria (Closing ceremony of EUFOR RCA, 2015).

The downside of the mission on the other hand was its limited scope, both geographically and in terms of mandate, which restricted EUFOR RCA's ability to address the broader instability beyond Bangui and left large parts of the country outside its reach vulnerable to continued violence and lawlessness. Despite all its efforts, hundreds of civilians in Bangui were hospitalised or lost their lives during this period. Having a very limited force with approximately 700 soldiers and limited means – acting more of a tactical stabilization force and not a full-scale peace operation – it was unable to address the root causes of the conflict, nor could it play a role in disarmament or reconciliation. Nonetheless, through EUFOR RCA, the European Union demonstrated its capacity for rapid force deployment. While the mission was logistically weak and heavily dependent on France, the EU fulfilled the tasks set by the mandate, gained valuable time ahead of MINUSCA's deployment, and reinforced its credibility as a crisis-response actor committed to African security.

The UN's peacekeeping operation MINUSCA was authorised by UN Security Council Resolution 2149 (2014) one day after the first boots from EUFOR RCA touched ground in CAR. The robust mandate provided significantly stronger manpower with an initial 10,000 military personnel and 1,800 police personnel, though parallel to this, the area of responsibility grew exponentially as well. Less than half a year later, on 15 September 2014, MINUSCA officially took command from MISCA, becoming the primary peace operation in the country. Having a capable international peacekeeping force with a Chapter VII authorization, EU was not inclined to pursue traditional military peacekeeping, instead it decided to complement MINUSCA's mandate and to contribute to CAR's stabilization and post-conflict state-building.

On 15 December 2014, the Council approved the concept for crisis management in form of a military advisory mission, based in Bangui, for a one-year period, with the intention to "*contribute to providing the CAR Government with expert advice on reforming the FACA [Forces armées centrafricaines] to make them into a multi-ethnic, professional, republican armed force,*" and with the possibility of providing "*the CAR army with specific, limited, non-operational training*" (Press Release, 2014). The official invitation letter dated 16 January 2015 from Catherine Samba-Panza, the Transitional President of the Central African Republic sped up the EU process. It was quickly followed



by Council Decision on 19 January 2015 on establishing the mission (Council Decision (CFSP), 2015a), then its amendment, on 16 March 2015 (Council Decision (CFSP), 2015b) about launching the European Union CSDP Military Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (EUMAM RCA), appointing Brigadier General Dominique Laugel of France to be the Mission Commander of EUMAM RCA, exercising both the functions of EU Operation Commander and EU Force Commander.

Since the military mission had a non-executive mandate, its main objective was not to engage in direct operations, but to provide high-level, strategic military advice to the FACA, more particularly to personnel at ministerial, general staff, and operational levels. The idea was – in close cooperation with MINUSCA to insure synergy – to help rebuild the national defence institutions and in this regard contribute to capacity building, to play a key supporting role in the Security Sector Reform (SSR), to help develop the military education system, to promote ethical and accountable leadership structures in the armed forces, and to contribute to the formation of a professional, democratically controlled and ethnically representative FACA (Mission description, n.d.). As Federica Mogherini, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, concluded: “*EU experts will now support preparations for security sector reform. This will help the Central Africa Republic turn the corner after this security crisis*” (Central African Republic, 2015).

As part of EU’s comprehensive approach, in addition to this, EUMAM RCA was also authorised to organize, support and conduct limited and targeted non-operational training for the FACA, the first of such courses already took place in Q3 of 2015 (EUMAM RCA, 2015). The personnel of around 60-70 military professionals with France as the lead nation, were contributed by nine countries (seven EU-members (Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Spain) plus Serbia and Moldova) (EUMAM RCA, n.d.), with 52% being advisors, 25% in Rear Logistic Support and 23% in Force Protection and in the medical field (Beech, 2015).

As the end of the mission was originally outlined in the Council decision about the mandate of EUMAM RCA – no later than 12 months after having reached FOC – the operation was terminated on 16 July 2016 (Council Decision (CFSP), 2016). Though not a high-impact, game-changing mission, EUMAM RCA can be considered a success: it delivered on the tasks given by its mandate, as well as keeping the EU flag flying in the Central African Republic, and even more importantly, it laid the groundwork for the next phase of EU peace efforts in the country.

The aspiration for continuity was mutual. On 8 October 2015, Transitional President Samba-Panza invited the European Union to remain engaged in supporting the FACA through a reinforced operational training structure in a continued cooperation with MINUSCA (EUTM RCA, n.d.-a). Less than half a year later, on 14 March 2016, the Council approved the Crisis Management Concept for a possible EU military training mission in CAR, outlining the transformation of the military advisory mission into a mission providing strategic advice and operational training (Press Release, 2016-a). The decision was followed by a repeated invitation, this time by President Faustin-Archange

Touadéra – the first elected president after the coup d'état on 24 March 2013 – who sent a letter on the day of his inauguration, 30 March 2016. Less than three weeks later, on 19 April 2016 the Council formally decided (Council Decision (CFSP), 2016) to establish the EU Military Training Mission (the third in Africa after Somalia and Mali) in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA) with July 2016 for the date of its launch (EUTM RCA, n.d.-b).

Analysing the original mandates of EUMAM RCA and EUTM RCA there are only very few points where they differ. EUTM RCA's mandate authorizes the non-executive mission to provide operational training to FACA, education to FACA's commissioned and non-commissioned officers, as well as support the CAR Government not only in the preparation but in the implementation of the Security Sector Reform during the 24-month mandated period (These areas are often referred to as the three pillars: 1) strategic advice, 2) education, and 3) operational training). The initially 170-strong mission (Press Release, 2016-b) started its work under Mission Commander Brigadier General Eric Hauteclouque-Raysz of France (acting both as Operation Commander and Force Commander) symbolising France's de facto lead nation role (Council Decision (CFSP), 2016).

The original mission mandate was extended three times by 24 months (Council Decision (CFSP), 2018) and twice by 12 months (Council Decision (CFSP), 2024b; Council Decision (CFSP), 2025), so altogether, for 8 years. Besides the extensions and the budget allocations, mandates have transformed the training mission throughout the years. In Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/1082, the target group for the strategic advice was extended to include the "President's cabinet, and advice on civil-military cooperation including to the Ministry of the Interior and the Gendarmerie" (Council Decision (CFSP), 2018). While two years later, Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/1133 made no substantive changes, it noted the need for coordination with the other EU CSDP mission in the country, the EU Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (EUAM RCA), that was formally established 8 months earlier (Council Decision (CFSP), 2020). The last time the mandate made significant changes to the EUTM RCA mission was Council Decision 2022/1334⁷: in 2022, the Council decided that EUTM RCA should continue providing strategic advice to CAR's Ministry of Defence and to the General Staff of the FACA and education to FACA in non-operational domains, but this time it was highlighted that this contribution should focus on the respect of human rights, international humanitarian law and international standards regarding gender issues, the protection of civilians, the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and the Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) agenda as well as training establishments for commissioned and non-commissioned officers of the FACA. The continuation of FACA's training – that was suspended by the EU Political and Security Committee in November 2021 – was up to the PSC's decision if conditions (on safety and effectiveness) are met. A new point

⁷ Council Decision 2022/1334, 2024/2396 and 2025/1341 only changed the end of mission dates and the budgets.



was also added: the support for the strategic communication efforts to foster the values of the European Union and to expose violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law by foreign forces in the Central African Republic.

As an important addition, the mandate reflected on the international developments in CAR: the support for the strategic communication efforts to foster the values of the European Union and to expose violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law by foreign forces in the CAR (Council Decision (CFSP), 2022), referring to the grave human rights violations allegedly committed by Wagner Group elements (Dincă, 2024) that have been operating in the country since the second half of 2017, with direct links to the country's presidency. These alarming events included extrajudicial killings, torture, sexual violence, and forced displacement of civilians.

The number of personnel deployed has been changing over the years – as of July 2025, it is 94 persons (plus 11 more in Brussels) – not reaching the authorized 365 persons who so far have been deployed by 10 EU member states (Belgium, France, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden) and five partner states (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Georgia, North Macedonia and Serbia) under the command of nine mission force commanders (besides France (3) from Belgium (2), Portugal (2), Spain and Romania⁸). On the other hand, another significant change was not mentioned in any of the Council Decisions, the territorial expansion of the mandate: from 2018 onward the next years with Bouar, N'Délé and Bangassou (L'EUTM-RCA participe, 2020).

During the nine years since the mission was launched – as of 8 July 2025 –, it has trained almost 9,500 FACA personnel (Central African Republic, 2025), in total, six battalions: five deployable infantry battalions (the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 7th (Bataillon d'Infanterie Territoriale), and one Amphibious Battalion. Besides the training, it launched more than 100 specialization courses for at least 3,598 students, including officers, NCOs and recruits. EUTM RCA also contributed through strategic advice in the development of key documents such as the National Defence Plan (2017), the Military Programming Law (2019-2023), the Recruitments Plan (2018), besides 69 texts (decrees, laws, ministerial orders), and 45 texts approved by steering committees. The mission has also contributed to infrastructural projects such as the assembly of the military bridges Sapéke and Zinga (EUTM RCA, n.d.-a). A unique contribution needs to be mentioned as well: Cultural Heritage Protection (CHP). It is mentioned only in a very limited number of EU military mission plans, but EUTM RCA is one of them (besides EUMAM Ukraine Special Training Command (EUMAM UA STC) and the EU Training Mission in Somalia (EUTM Somalia). Since 2023, EUTM RCA has been monitoring threats for cultural heritage and raised awareness through its Strategic Advice Pillar (Foradori & Rosa, 2025).

⁸ The current Mission Commander – as of 12 July 2025 – Brigadier General Nicolae-Gabriel Oros of Romania, on 4 March 2025, was appointed to be Advisor on National Defence and Army Reconstruction to the Presidency of the CAR (Mission Force Commander, 2025).

The mission's mandate has been extended until 19 September 2026, which prevents a final assessment of its overall accomplishments. However, after nine years of activity, certain conclusions can already be drawn. Based on the results mentioned above, on the one hand, EUTM RCA can be considered both a tactical and operational success: it trained and provided education for thousands, ranging from recruits to senior leadership, delivered advice on multiple levels of military and ministerial leadership, contributed to the development of key defence documents and was able to step out of the limited area of previous missions, and left Bangui to reach important locations on the countryside. On the other hand, when examining the greater picture, the impact remains somewhat modest. The road to a lasting Security Sector Reform is far from complete. The training – that has started to focus on EU (Western) values such as human rights or gender issues – was forced to be paused because of the direct links between the CAR government and Russia's Wagner Group, whose actions are widely considered incompatible with EU principles (as well as interests) (Lijn et al., 2022). Further concerns remain about training soldiers who may defect or engage outside the supposedly democratic FACA structures.

The EUTM RCA just passed the three-year mark after its launching, when on 12 July 2019, President Touadéra sent a letter to the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, formally inviting the EU to establish a civilian mission to support the already ongoing Security Sector Reform and to contribute to the reorganisation and deployment of the country's Internal Security Forces. On 21 November 2019, the Council approved a possible civilian advisory mission, less than a month later, on 9 December 2019, the European Union Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (EUAM RCA) was established by Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/2110. Its strategic objectives were largely like those of the previously launched missions with the difference that they were targeting actors outside the structures of the Ministry of Defence and the FACA. Namely, to strengthen governance and administrative capacity within the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security; to contribute to the sustainable transformation, capacity building and effectiveness of the Internal Security Forces; and to establish an integrated situational awareness framework supported by a specialized analytical capacity, with a special focus on the areas of strategic communication and political-security developments. EUAM RCA was tasked by the mandate to provide advice at strategic level to the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security and to the Internal Security Forces in close coordination with, most importantly among others, EUTM RCA, MINUSCA, UN Police (UNPOL), and the African Union. Promoting the implementation of international humanitarian law and human rights, protecting civilians, gender equality and prohibiting discrimination (with a special focus on ethnic- and belief-based discrimination) were also mentioned by the decision, similar to EUTM RCA. Being a civilian mission, EUAM RCA was put under the command and control of the Head of Mission, with Paulo Soares – in fact a colonel of the Portuguese National Republican Guard (GNR) – being named as the first person to fill in this position. The

initial end date of the mission was set to be 8 August 2022 (Council Decision (CFSP), 2019).⁹

The first members of EUAM RCA arrived at the end of July 2020, and the mission was launched soon after, on 9 August 2020, based on the Operation Plan adopted by the PSC on 18 June 2020 (First steps, 2020). As the mission has not completed its tasks, Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/1333 renewed the operation for another period of two years, until 9 August 2024, but not amending the original Council Decision (Council Decision (CFSP), 2022), as was the case with Council Decision (CFSP) 2024/2003 (Council Decision (CFSP), 2024a), and following the completion of the strategic assessment of both EU missions in CAR, Council Decision (CFSP) 2024/2723 that extended the mission until 7 August 2026 (Council Decision (CFSP), 2024c). In the meantime, the mandate of Colonel Soares has reached its end, and the Political and Security Committee appointed José Manuel Marques Dias, also a colonel of Portugal's national gendarmerie force, the GNR by PSC Decision (CFSP) 2022/1436 (25 August 2022) from 1 September 2022.¹⁰

Similarly to the other ongoing EU mission in CAR, EUAM RCA remains active, with its mandate set to expire in over a year. EUAM RCA as of July 2025 has 69 personnel in the field, contributed mostly by Belgium, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, and Spain. While a final assessment is premature, several achievements and shortcomings have already become apparent. The mission has successfully delivered strategic advising to the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security and the Internal Security Forces (National Police, National Gendarmerie) and even managed to extend this circle to include the Presidential Office, the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Water, Forests, Hunting and Fisheries, the Customs Office and the Prison Administration, and the Ministry of Justice, even reaching out to civil society organisations (About EU Advisory Mission, 2021). It enlarged the EU's contribution to the Security Sector Reform, to include structures outside of the Ministry of Defence and the FACA, helped the wording of the Internal Security Forces Programming Law (as did EUTM RCA with the military version), advised the means of building interoperability between the National Police and the National Gendarmerie and contributed to capacity building, especially in the areas of situational awareness and planning. While doing so, EUAM RCA has also been flying the EU flag, illustrating the importance of Africa to the European Union, as well promoting EU values (such as human rights, gender equality, and accountability) to various areas and levels of government, government agencies and the internal security forces.

With that said, as an advisory mission, EUAM RCA's scope has remained inherently limited. The institutions of the Central African Republic continue to be under-resourced,

⁹ During this period, Colonel Soares was named Head of Mission three times (Political and Security Committee (PSC) Decision (CFSP) 2019/2189 (17 December 2019), 2020/1774 (24 November 2020) and 2021/2099 (25 November 2021).

¹⁰ This mandate was renewed several times by PSC Decision (CFSP) 2023/1512 (19 July 2023), 2024/2021 (17 July 2024), and 2024/2796 (22 October 2024) until 9 August 2026.

chronically underfinanced with deep-rooted political connections – some of which are influenced by foreign actors – to the highest levels of the country's government. As a result, the real outcomes of the reforms remain modest and precarious. Any meaningful and lasting change will likely materialize only in the long run, and only if international support is sustained.

To draw the conclusions, we might want to zoom out a bit and look at the bigger picture. From this perspective, even the core existence of EUAM RCA can be considered a success. During the last decade, since 2015, EU has established only two new advisory missions besides EUAM RCA (EUAM Iraq and European Union Partnership Mission in Moldova), while not being able to end one since the closure of the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan in 2016 (Smit, 2024). The CSDP budget is running low and EU member states are less than excited to get involved in more missions,¹¹ but despite this, EUAM RCA was established, and its mandate has been extended ever since.

#	Mission	Type	Duration	Number of personnel	Lead nation(s)	Objectives
1	EUFOR RCA	Military mission, executive (combat capable stabilization mission)	Apr 2014 – Mar 2015	app. 700 troops	France	Short-term stabilization of Bangui, protection of civilians, supporting humanitarian aid
2	EUMAM RCA	Military, non-executive (advisory mission composed of military and police officials)	Mar 2015 – Jul 2016	app. 60-70 personnel	France	Military advisory to FACA-reform strategy and structure
3	EUTM RCA	Military mission, executive (training mission)	Jul 2016 – present	app. 248-365 personnel	France → Belgium	Training and capacity building for FACA
4	EUAM RCA	Civilian advisory mission	Dec 2019 – present	app. 202 personnel	Portugal	Civilian security sector reform (police, justice, gendarmerie)

Figure 5: Main indicators of the European Union's peacekeeping operations in the Central African Republic as of 7 July 2025. (Civilian mission / Military mission).

¹¹ To have the full picture, we need to mention that EU civilian missions are relatively smaller than similar ones of the United Nations, and they are running on a more modest budget as well (Fiott, 2020).

Conclusion

Africa's political and economic weakness has been capitalized on by stronger outside states, who have colonized Africa and even though overt colonisation has ended generations ago, neocolonialism is still being pursued to divest Africa of what is left of its raw materials and energy sources. In other words, Africa is the most violent continent on the planet for reasons of geography and history, and the present politics that has not made a clean break with the past. This change cannot be expected from outside powers, however well-intentioned they may be, this is what Africa must achieve for itself. It is in this context that the EU's strategy towards Africa and peace support operations in Africa must be analysed.

The European Union is only one of the actors having its own complex interest in Africa. Several countries, coalitions, international organisations and even transnational companies – often with stronger financial means than African countries themselves – have their own agendas when dealing with Africa. “Traditional” players such as former colonial powers, France, the UK, Portugal, Spain, Belgium but even Italy and Germany to a certain extent, during the Cold War years, followed by the United States and Russia (Soviet Union at the time) and post-WW2 institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund, were lately joined by China, Brazil, as well as the BRICS, India (on its own terms, too), Türkiye, and NATO in some limited ways, and just recently countries like the Gulf States (notably the UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia) as well as Iran or Indonesia made significant moves either economically, militarily, politically or culturally (religiously). In a geopolitical environment marked by the mayhem of confliotions and collusions, engaging with even a single country in a long-term effort toward sustainable stability and development remains a formidable challenge. This is clearly shown by the efforts and the outcomes of the European Union's peace operations in the Central African Republic.

Since 2014, the EU has launched several missions in the Central African Republic under its Common Security and Defence Policy to support the country in facing its security challenges and to contribute to its democratic and sustainable reforms. As part of EU's comprehensive approach, these missions include both military and civilian operations, with executive or non-executive mandates, focusing on stabilization, capacity building (training, education) and institutional reforms. The above mentioned four missions have been smaller in size (and budget) than missions of the United Nations, but their outcomes have proved that they were important contributions, and necessary stepping stones in the way forward for a democratically functioning, stable Central African Republic. These missions have been showing for more than a decade that the European Union is dedicated to a strong and well-functioning Central African Republic, and with similar missions continent-wide, to a strong and well-functioning Greater Sahel Region, and Africa. This last decade in question, on the other hand, has witnessed several significant changes in the region and in CAR as well. If we consider the current developments with numerous coups d'état in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, just to name a few, the rise of a strong anti-West sentiment, the mere existence of mission like EUTM

RCA or EUAM RCA can be considered miracles, meaning that these small but important steps, fostered by the European Union, cannot be taken for granted, and not only the EU, but outside actors, partners, the entire international community are needed to keep this process going in order to achieve stability and prosperity for the Central African Republic, the goals laid down by the resolutions of the United Nations and the European Union.

Conflict of Interest

The authors hereby declare that they have no financial interest in this manuscript.

Notes on Contributors

David Vogel, PhD, is Deputy Head of the Africa Research Institute at Óbuda University, Hungary, and leads its Global South Research Group. A former military officer and senior intelligence analyst with MINUSCA in the Central African Republic, he previously held roles at the HDF General Staff and CIMIC/PSYOPS Centre. He founded a Sahel regional office for a humanitarian NGO and now coordinates the Humanitarian Response Manager postgraduate course. Holding degrees in security policy, IR, and political science, his PhD is in military science. He frequently publishes and provides media analysis on African and Latin American security and defence issues.

Katalin Horvath is a defence policy, defence planning and defence industry expert currently working in the Ministry of Economy of Hungary. She has worked for a long time in the Hungarian MoD and completed tours of duties at both the Hungarian permanent representations to the EU and NATO. Recently, she has chaired the Working Party on Defence Industry of the EU during the Hungarian Presidency in 2024. She is a PhD student at Óbuda University in Budapest, where she is working on her thesis on European defence, with a strong focus on comparisons with the African integration process.

References

- About EU Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (EUAM RCA)*. (October 6, 2021). European External Action Service (EEAS). Retrieved June 10, 2025 from https://www.eeas.europa.eu/euam-rca/about-eu-advisory-mission-central-african-republic-euam-rca_en
- Balogh, A., Besenyő, J., Miletics, P., & Vogel, D. (2016). *La République centrafricaine*. Centre Universitaire Francophone.
- Beech, B. (May 13, 2015). *EUMAM RCA – Military Advisory Mission*. *European Parliament*. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from



https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/documents/sede/dv/sede210915eumamrca_/sede210915eumamrca_en.pdf

Besenyő, J. (2019). *Participation of Hungary in African Operations between 1989-2019*. Óbuda University.

Central African Republic: Council extends EU Military training mission until 19 September 2026. (July 8, 2025). European Council of the European Union - Press release. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/07/08/rca-council-extends-eu-military-training-mission-until-19-september-2026>

Central African Republic: EU military advisory mission gets green light. (2015, March 16). European Council of the European Union - Press release. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/03/16/central-african-republic-eu-military-advisory-mission-gets-green-light/>

Closing ceremony of EUFOR RCA. (2015, March 23). European Union - EEAS (European External Action Service). Retrieved June 10, 2025 from https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/csdp/missions-and-operations/eufor-rca/news/archives/20150323_en.htm

Council Decision 2014/73/CFSP of 10 February on a European Union military operation in the Central African Republic (EUFOR RCA). (2014, February 11). Official Journal of the European Union. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2014:040:0059:0062:EN:PDF>

Council Decision (CFSP) 2015/78 of 19 January 2015 on a European Union CSDP Military Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (EUMAM RCA) (Council Decision (CFSP), 2015a). (2015a, January 20). Official Journal of the European Union. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2015/78/oj>

Council Decision (CFSP) 2015/442 of 16 March 2015 launching the European Union CSDP Military Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (EUMAM RCA) and amending Decision 2015/78/CFSP (Council Decision (CFSP), 2015b). (2015b, March 17). Official Journal of the European Union. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32015D0442&from=EN>

Council Decision (CFSP) 2016/610 of 19 April 2016 on a European Union CSDP Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA). (2016, April 20). Official Journal of the European Union. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX%3A32016D0610>

Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/1082 of 30 July 2018 amending Decision (CFSP) 2016/610 on a European Union military training mission in the Central African Republic.

- (2018, July 31). Official Journal of the European Union. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2018/1082/oj>;
- Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/2110 of 9 December 2019 on the European Union CSDP Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (EUAM RCA)*. (2019, December 10). Official Journal of the European Union. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2019/2110/oj>
- Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/1133 of 30 July 2020 amending Decision (CFSP) 2016/610 on a European Union CSDP Military Training mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA)*. (2020, July 31). Official Journal of the European Union. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2020/1133/oj/eng>;
- Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/1334 of 28 July 2022 amending Decision (CFSP) 2016/610 on a European Union CSDP Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA)*. (2022, July 29). Official Journal of the European Union. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2022/1334/oj/eng>
- Council Decision (CFSP) 2024/2003 of 22 July 2024 amending Decision (CFSP) 2019/2110 on the European Union CSDP Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (EUAM RCA) (Council Decision (CFSP), 2024a)*. (2024, July 23). Official Journal of the European Union. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX%3A32024D2003&>
- Council Decision (CFSP) 2024/2396 of 6 September 2024 amending Decision (CFSP) 2016/610 on a European Union CSDP Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA) (Council Decision (CFSP), 2024b)*. (2024, September 6). Official Journal of the European Union. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202402396
- Council Decision (CFSP) 2024/2723 of 21 October 2024 amending Decision (CFSP) 2019/2110 on the European Union CSDP Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (EUAM RCA) (Council Decision (CFSP), 2024c)*. (2024a, October 22). Official Journal of the European Union. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2024/2723/oj/eng>
- Council Decision (CFSP) 2025/1341 of 8 July 2025 amending Decision (CFSP) 2016/610 on a European Union CSDP Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA)*. (2025, July 9). Official Journal of the European Union. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2025/1341/oj/eng>.
- Dincă, A. (2024). EU-Africa Partnership on Peace and Security: A quest for a strategic culture? *Strategic Impact*, 91(2), 66–86. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.53477/1842-9904-24-9>



- EU-AU ministerial meeting joint communique.* (2025). Retrieved June 10, 2025 from https://north-africa-middle-east-gulf.ec.europa.eu/news/joint-communique-3rd-eu-au-ministerial-meeting-21-may-2025-2025-05-22_en
- EU Global Strategy.* (2016). Retrieved June 10, 2025 from https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf
- EU Military Operation in Eastern Chad and North Eastern Central African Republic (EUFOR Tchad/RCA) (EU Military Operation, 2008).* (2008, September). europa.eu. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/sede230108factsheetesdpoperatins_/SEDE230108FactsheetESDPOperatins_en.pdf
- EU military operation in the Central African Republic (EUFOR CAR) (EU Military Operation, 2014).* (2014, October 15). parliament.uk. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmeuleg/219-xiii/21947.htm>
- EU missions and operations.* (2025). Retrieved June 10, 2025 from https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2025/EU-mission-and-operation_2025.pdf
- EU Sahel Strategy.* (2021). Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7723-2021-INIT/en/pdf>
- EU Strategic Compass.* (2022). Retrieved June 10, 2025 from https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic_compass_en_3_web.pdf
- EU White Paper on Defence.* (2025). Retrieved June 10, 2025 from https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6d5db69-e0ab-4bec-9dc0-3867b4373019_en?filename=White%20paper%20for%20European%20defence%20%E2%80%93%20Readiness%202030.pdf
- EUFOR RCA (EUFOR RCA, n.d.-a).* (n.d.). EL EU OHQ - Hellenic European Union Operational Headquarters. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://eleuohq.mil.gr/eufor-rca/>
- EUFOR RCA (EUFOR RCA, n.d.-b).* (n.d.). European Union - EEAS (European External Action Service) | EUFOR RCA. (n.d.-b). Retrieved June 10, 2025 from https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/csdp/missions-and-operations/eufor-rca/index_en.htm
- EUMAM RCA (República Centroafricana).* (n.d.). Ministerio de Defensa de España. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from https://www.defensa.gob.es/misiones/en_exterior/historico/listado/umam-rca.html
- EUMAM RCA delivers first non-operational training courses for the FACA.* (2015, August 19). European Union - EEAS (European External Action Service). Retrieved June 10, 2025 from https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/csdp/missions-and-operations/eumam-rca/news/20150819_en.htm

- European Union Institute for Security, S., & Fiott, D. (2020). *The CSDP in 2020 – The EU's legacy and ambition in security and defence*. Publications Office. <https://doi.org/doi/10.2815/22734>
- EUTM RCA. (n.d.). Eurocorps. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://www.eurocorps.org/operations/european-union/eutm-rca>
- EUTM RCA - Misión militar de adiestramiento en la República Centroafricana. (n.d.). Ministerio de Defensa - Estado Mayor de la Defensa. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://emad.defensa.gob.es/en/operaciones/operaciones-en-el-exterior/45-EUTM-RCA>
- First EU peacekeeping troops arrive in CAR. (2014, April 9). France 24. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://www.france24.com/en/20140409-eu-eufor-peacekeeping-troops-arrive-bangui-car-france>
- First steps of the civilian CSDP Advisory Mission in Bangui: Head of Mission and advance team deploy to the Central African Republic. (2020, July 30). International Association of Gendarmeries and Police Forces with Military Status. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://www.fiep.org/member-news/euam-rca-interview-with-paulo-soares-head-of-mission-and-senior-officer-of-the-portuguese-gendarmerie-guarda-nacional-republicana>
- Foradori, P., & Rosa, P. Guardian of culture: the European Union's quest for actorness in the protection of cultural heritage in conflicts and crises. *European Security*, 1-22. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2025.2479470>
- Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force: Closed Consultations. (2024). Security Council Report. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2024/05/group-of-five-for-the-sahel-joint-force-closed-consultations-2.php>
- Hansen, P. (2025). The Return of the Repressed: The Colonial History of the EU's Geopolitical Turn. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, n/a(n/a). DOI: <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13757>
- Hayes, B. (2002). Computing Science: Statistics of Deadly Quarrels. *American Scientist*, 90(1), 10-15. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27857587>
- Hellmüller, S., Lobjoy, M., & Tan, X.-Y. R. (2022). Beyond Generations: An Alternative Approach to Categorizing Peace Missions. *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, 28(4), 509-533. DOI: <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1163/19426720-02804003>
- Ilorah, R. (2009). Ethnic bias, favouritism and development in Africa. *Development Southern Africa*, 26(5), 695-707. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03768350903303209>
- Kenkel, K. M. (2013). Five generations of peace operations: from a thin blue line to painting a country blue. *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, 56(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0034-73292013000100007>



- Kleynhans, E., & Wyss, M. (2025). *The Handbook of African Defence and Armed Forces*. Oxford University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/9780191993688.001.0001>
- L'EUTM-RCA participe à la formation des nouvelles recrues centrafricaines*. (2020, October 8). Ministère des Armées. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://archives.defense.gouv.fr/operations/afrique/afrique-centrale/centrafrique/eutm-rca/l-eutm-rca-participe-a-la-formation-des-nouvelles-recrues-centrafricaines.html>
- Lijn, J. v. d., Williams, P. D., Acko, I., Maïga, S., Ali, H. Y., Baudais, V., & Hickendorff, A. (2022). *EU Military Training Missions: A Synthesis Report* DOI: <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.55163/LFLE9658>
- MISCA establishment*. (2014, September 1). MISCA - African Union mission in the Central African Republic. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <http://misca.peaceau.org/en/page/110-about-misca>
- Mission description*. (n.d.). European Union - EEAS (European External Action Service). Retrieved June 10, 2025 from https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/csdp/missions-and-operations/eumam-rca/mission-description/index_en.htm
- Mission Force Commander EUTM RCA appointed as official advisor to President CAR*. (2025, March 24). European Union Training Mission in Central African Republic. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/mission-force-commander-eutm-rca-appointed-official-advisor-president-car_en?s=334
- Molnár, A., & Vecsey, M. (2022). The EU's Missions and Operations from the Central Mediterranean to West Africa in the Context of the Migration Crisis. *International Journal of Euro-Mediterranean Studies*, 55-82.
- Nimark, A. (2014). *EUFOR RCA: EU force or farce? Opinión CIDOB (230)*. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/eufor-rca-eu-force-or-farce>
- Palik, J., Obermeier, A. M., & Rustad, S. A. (2022). *Conflict Trends in Africa, 1989–2021*. PRIO Paper.
- Press Release – 3361st Council meeting Foreign Affairs Brussels, 15 December 2014*. (2014, December 15). Council of the European Union. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-16928-2014-INIT/en/pdf>
- Press Release – 3457th Council meeting Foreign Affairs Brussels, 14 March 2016 (Press Release, 2016-a)*. (2016-a, March 14). Council of the European Union. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/22914/st07042en16.pdf>
- Press release – EUTM RCA launched in Central African Republic (Press Release, 2016-b)*. (2016-b, July 16). European Union External Action. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/20160716_press_release_en.pdf

- Smit, T. (2024). Towards a more strategic civilian CSDP: Strengthening EU Civilian Crisis Management in a new era of geopolitics and risk. *SIPRI Research Policy Paper*, 1-20. DOI: <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.55163/pqci8618>
- Tardy, T. (2019). The European Union and UN Peace Operations: What Global–Regional Peace and Security Partnership? In C. de Coning & M. Peter (Eds.), *United Nations Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order* (pp. 231-251). Springer International Publishing. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-99106-1_12
- Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa*. (2020). Retrieved June 10, 2025 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020JC0004>
- UN Missions Summary of Military and Police*. (2015, April 15). United Nations Peacekeeping. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/apr15_6.pdf
- United Nations Security Council Resolution 2134 (2014)*. (2014, January 28). United Nations. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from [https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2134%20\(2014\)](https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2134%20(2014))
- Yuksel, S. (2020). CSDP partnership in EUFOR RCA. *Horizon Insights*, 3(2), 30-43. DOI: <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31175/hi.2020.02.03>

This article is open access and licensed under Creative Commons 4.0 BY standards. Upon publication, articles are immediately accessible for free reading, downloading, copying, and distribution. This license is permanent and irrevocable.