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## UN Peacekeeping in Africa: Nature, Scope and Development

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**Abstract.** The hybrid nature and scope of contemporary conflicts, the terrorism threat, and the dramatic increase in competition for resources, global militarization and security challenges in Africa do not only carry the risk of state collapse, but have conditioned concerted efforts by national, regional and international actors to protect human rights and remedy the humanitarian situation. In many ways, the African continent with its unique and diverse nature of conflicts has become a platform for the renewal of the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping through the development of new operational and normative practices and strategies that, as a distinctive feature of the UN missions in the African continent, have gradually moved from the status of innovations to the category of quite commonplace global practice. This article attempts to assess UN peacekeeping in Africa from the 1960s till 2022. The authors examine the characteristics, nature and scope of peacekeeping operations (PKOs) as well as strategies for transforming peacekeeping mandates. Using a problem-chronological approach, comparative analysis and quantitative assessments of the UN peacekeeping missions, the formats of cooperation with regional organizations (the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)), gender composition of the UN missions, in particular, the authors come to the natural conclusion that the number of the UN peacekeeping operations and political missions in Africa remains high and their mandates have expanded and become more complex with increased activity of the leading world powers. The authors conclude that stabilization and conflict resolution in Africa will greatly depend on effective cooperation between the UN and regional organizations, as well as on the UN reforms and its ability to adapt rapidly to changing conflict scenarios in each African state.

**Key words:** peacekeeping, UN, Africa, peacebuilding, conflicts, peacekeeping operations, PKO, African Union, AU, intervention, mandate

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## Миротворчество ООН в Африке: характер, масштабы и развитие

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**Аннотация.** Гибридный характер и масштабность современных конфликтов, угроза терроризма, резкое усиление конкуренции за ресурсы, глобальная милитаризация и проблемы обеспечения безопасности в Африке не только порождают опасность распада государственности, но и обуславливают необходимость согласованных усилий национальных, региональных и международных участников по защите прав человека и выправлению гуманитарной ситуации. Во многих отношениях Африканский континент с его уникальным и разнообразным характером конфликтов стал платформой для обновления миротворческой деятельности Организации Объединенных Наций (ООН) путем внедрения новых оперативных и нормативных практик и стратегий, которые, будучи отличительной чертой миссий ООН в Африке, постепенно переходят из статуса нововведений в категорию вполне обыденной мировой практики. Авторы оценивают миротворческую деятельность ООН в Африке с 1960-х гг. до 2022 г., рассматривая особенности, характер и масштабы проведения операций по поддержанию мира (ОПМ), а также стратегии трансформации миротворческих мандатов. На основании использования проблемно-хронологического подхода, сравнительного анализа и количественных оценок миротворческих миссий ООН, форматов сотрудничества с региональными организациями (в частности с Африканским союзом (АС) и Экономическим сообществом стран Западной Африки (ЭКОВАС)), а также гендерного состава миссий ООН авторы приходят к закономерному выводу, что количество миротворческих операций и политических миссий ООН в Африке остается значительным, их мандаты расширяются и усложняются на фоне повышенной активности ведущих мировых держав, заинтересованных в реализации своих геополитических планов. Как представляется, стабилизация конфликтной ситуации в Африке во многом будет зависеть от эффективности сотрудничества ООН с региональными организациями, а также от реформирования и способности Организации Объединенных Наций оперативно адаптироваться к быстро меняющимся сценариям развития конфликта в каждом африканском государстве.

**Ключевые слова:** миротворчество, ООН, Африка, миростроительство, конфликты, операции по поддержанию мира, ОПМ, Африканский союз, АС, вмешательство, мандат

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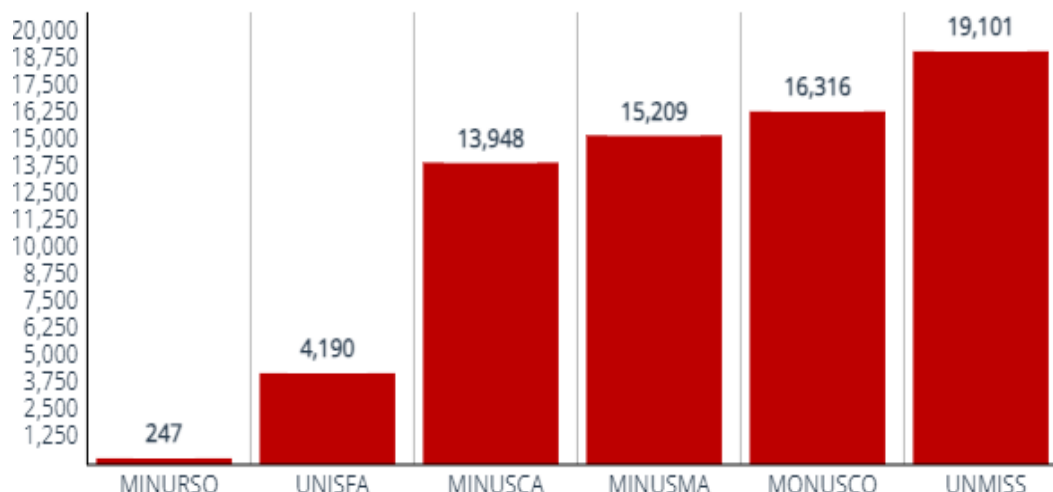
### Introduction

Given the persistence of high conflict potential in Africa and the growing importance of the security-development nexus, the development of conflict resolution strategies for African conflicts remains a key issue on the UN agenda. The relevance of the UN peacekeeping in Africa stems from the fact that six of the 12 peacekeeping operations (PKOs) are currently deployed in Africa,<sup>1</sup> with a total of

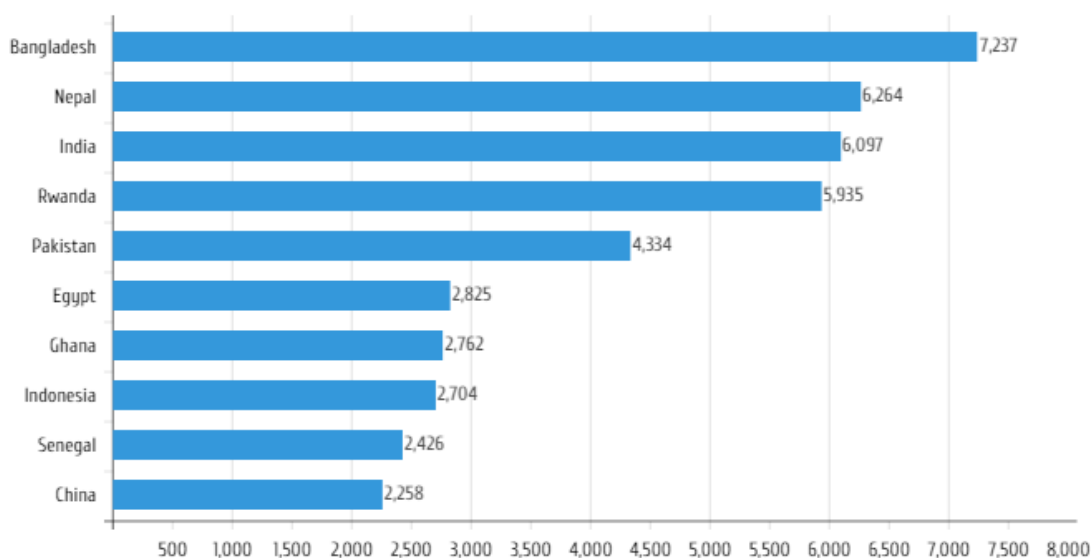
247 (UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara) to 19,101 (UN Mission in South Sudan) personnel (Figure 1). Some 76,000 peacekeepers (military, police and the UN volunteers) are deployed on African continent, representing about 85% of the total number of peacekeeping personnel (approximately 89,000).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Where We Operate // United Nations Peacekeeping. URL: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/where-we-operate> (accessed: 06.06.2023).

<sup>2</sup> UN Peacekeeping Operations Fact Sheet // UN Peacekeeping. March 31, 2023. URL: [https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/peacekeeping\\_fact\\_sheet\\_march\\_2023.pdf](https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/peacekeeping_fact_sheet_march_2023.pdf) (accessed: 08.06.2023).



**Figure 1. Police and Military Strength of Current UN Peacekeeping Operations in Africa as of February 2023**  
*Source:* compiled by the authors based on data from the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations website: Peacekeeping Operations // United Nations. URL: <https://www.unmissions.org/> (accessed: 10.03.2023).



**Figure 2. Top 10 Countries with the Largest Number of Peacekeepers as of May 31, 2023**  
*Source:* Uniformed Personnel Contributing Countries by Ranking // UN Peacekeeping. URL: [https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/02\\_country\\_ranking\\_61\\_april\\_2023\\_0.pdf](https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/02_country_ranking_61_april_2023_0.pdf) (accessed: 01.06.2023).

As of March 31, 2023, the total number of peacekeepers was 88,686, of which approximately 80% were African.<sup>3</sup> In addition, Africa has become the largest contributor of police and soldiers to the UN peacekeeping operations, providing some 51% of all UN blue

helmets.<sup>4</sup> This is clearly illustrated by the ranking of countries contributing the largest number of peacekeepers. Figure 2 shows that Rwanda, Egypt, Ghana and Senegal are among the top 10 contributors of peacekeeping troops from Africa (Figure 2). Although Africans make

<sup>3</sup> UN Peacekeeping Operations Fact Sheet // UN Peacekeeping. March 31, 2023. URL: [https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/peacekeeping\\_fact\\_sheet\\_march\\_2023.pdf](https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/peacekeeping_fact_sheet_march_2023.pdf) (accessed: 08.06.2023).

<sup>4</sup> Klobucista C., Renwick D. The Role of Peacekeeping in Africa // Council on Foreign Relations. October 5, 2021. URL: <https://www.cfr.org/background/role-peacekeeping-africa> (accessed: 20.05.2023).

up the majority of police and military UN peacekeepers, they are under-represented in leadership positions (Amara, Degterev & Egamov, 2022).

Currently, three African countries — Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique — represent Africa among the 10 non-permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC). Two of the nine UN Secretaries-General — Boutros Boutros-Ghali of Egypt and Kofi Annan of Ghana were elected from Africa.<sup>5</sup>

Africa's increased peacekeeping capacity is linked not only to active African participation in the UN missions, but also to the establishment of its own regional missions. The Constitutive Act<sup>6</sup> allows the African Union (AU) to intervene in a member state in the event of serious circumstances such as war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. Under Article 13 of the Protocol relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, the AU is based on stand-by arrangements with five African sub-regions.<sup>7</sup>

The organization established a peace and security architecture called the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), which includes structures to promote peace and security on the continent, as well as norms and mechanisms to effectively address the causes and consequences of conflict.

Research on the UN peacekeeping in Africa can be divided into three main areas. The first is represented by works of Russian scholars on the conceptual and doctrinal approaches to peacekeeping, the preparation and implementation of the UN peacekeeping operations (Nikitin, 2016; Shamarov, 2020; Zagorsky, 2015; Sidorova, 2011; Larionova,

2020; Bokeriya, 2022; Khudaykulova, 2016; 2019; Lutovinov & Morozov, 2001; Zaemsky, 2004; Tishkov, 2011) and foreign authors (Tull, 2018; Williams & Bellamy, 2021; Chopra, 1998; Hegre, Hultman & Nygård, 2019).

The second strand of research relates to the theoretical understanding of gender issues of peacekeeping, which is mainly revealed in the works of foreign researchers (Kreft, 2017; Berg & Bjarnegård, 2016; Tidblad-Lundholm, 2020; Bokeriya, 2021).

The third strand includes studies of state, international and regional organizations' approaches to peacekeeping (Forti & Singh, 2019; De Coning, 2019), as well as the writings of African scholars (Olonisakin, 1996; Oniore, 2008; Sanda & Akinterinwa, 2005; Adebayo, 2002).

Within this group of studies, it is also worth mentioning the scientific works of leading Russian and African researchers: T.S. Denisova (2022), S.V. Kostelyanets, T.L. Deych (Kostelyanets et al., 2017; Deych, 2005), which explore the problems of socio-economic and political development, regional security, as well as peacekeeping and peacebuilding on the African continent.

Directly, the initiatives on African peacekeeping and on improving the effectiveness of peacekeeping are presented in the relevant UN reports published in 2000—2018.<sup>8</sup> Certain aspects of peacekeeping are

<sup>5</sup> Isaenko A. I. Peacekeeping in Africa // Russian International Affairs Council. October 11, 2019. URL: <https://russiancouncil.ru/blogs/ravunpm/mirotvorchestvo-v-afrike/> (accessed: 08.06.2023).

<sup>6</sup> Constitutive Act of the African Union // African Union. URL: [https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/34873-file-constitutiveact\\_en.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/34873-file-constitutiveact_en.pdf) (accessed: 28.05.2023).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> See: Report of the Secretary-General A/59/695–S/2005/72. Adopted by the UN General Assembly at its 59th session, on 9 February 2005 // The UN Digital Library. February 9, 2005. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/541177?ln=ru> (accessed: 21.05.2023); Report of the Secretary-General A/70/357–S/2015/682. Adopted by the UN General Assembly at its 70th session, on 2 September 2015 // Security Council Report. September 2, 2015. URL: [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_2015\\_682.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2015_682.pdf) (accessed: 21.05.2023); Report of the Secretary-General S/2017/454 on options for authorization and support for African Union peace support operations. Adopted by the UN Security Council on 26 May 2017 // Security Council Report. May 26, 2017. URL: [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_2017\\_454.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2017_454.pdf)

covered in the SIPRI Yearbook (2019—2022).<sup>9</sup> These works present critical perspectives of leading experts on the UN peacekeeping in Africa.

The authors found that most research focuses either on the UN peacekeeping in Africa as a whole, or on a specific peacekeeping mission(s) in a particular African country. There are few conceptual studies of the UN peacekeeping that include the analysis of quantitative data. This research aims to fill this gap.

### UN Peacekeeping in Africa in the 1960s—1980s

During the Cold War, the UN had only three large-scale peacekeeping operations on the African continent, which reflected many of the characteristics and parameters of future conflict resolution.

The first UN peacekeeping operation in sub-Saharan Africa was deployed in 1960 in the Congo (*United Nations Operation in the Congo*, ONUC) under UN Security Council Resolution 143.<sup>10</sup> This was not the first UN peacekeeping operation, but it was the first large-scale mission with a peak strength of nearly 20,000 troops. Referring to the threat of

widespread civil war and bloodshed, the UNSC mandated the ONUC to use all possible means to prevent war on the territory of the Congo, including the use of force as a last resort.<sup>11</sup> It was in the Congo that the problems and dangers that will accompany the work of peacekeepers in the future first became apparent. Thus, during the operation, 250 UN peacekeepers lost their lives,<sup>12</sup> including Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld.

The second operation was *the UN Angola Verification Mission* (UNAVEM), established at the end of 1988 under UNSC Resolution 626<sup>13</sup> of December 20, 1988, to verify the redeployment of Cuban troops to the north and their gradual and complete withdrawal from the territory of Angola in accordance with the schedule agreed between Angola and Cuba. The withdrawal of troops was completed more than a month before the previously agreed date. On June 6, 1991, the Secretary General reported to the UNSC that the UNAVEM I had fully and effectively accomplished its mandate.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, the third mission is *the United Nations Transition Assistance Group* (UNTAG), which operated in 1989—1990<sup>15</sup> to

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(accessed: 21.05.2023); Report of the Secretary-General S/2018/1183. Adopted by the UN Security Council on 31 December 2018 // Security Council Report. December 31, 2018. URL: [https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_2018\\_1183.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2018_1183.pdf) (accessed: 21.05.2023).

<sup>9</sup> See: SIPRI Yearbook 2019. Armaments, Disarmament and International Security. London : Oxford University Press, 2019; SIPRI Yearbook 2020. Armaments, Disarmament and International Security. London : Oxford University Press, 2020; SIPRI Yearbook 2021. Armaments, Disarmament and International Security. London : Oxford University Press, 2021; SIPRI Yearbook 2022. Armaments, Disarmament and International Security. London : Oxford University Press, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Resolution 143 (1960) Adopted by the Security Council at its 873rd meeting, on 14 July 1960 // UN Security Council. July 14, 1960. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/112108> (accessed: 25.04.2023).

<sup>11</sup> Resolution 161 (1961) Adopted by the Security Council at its 942nd meeting, on 21 February 1961 // The UN Digital Library. February 21, 1961. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/112132?ln=ru> (accessed: 25.04.2023).

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC). (In Russian). URL: <https://www.un.org/ru/events/missions/past/congo.htm> (accessed: 10.05.2023).

<sup>13</sup> Resolution 626 (1988) Adopted by the Security Council at its 2834th meeting, on 20 December 1988 // The UN Digital Library. December 20, 1988. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/52988> (accessed: 15.05.2023).

<sup>14</sup> Subsidiary Organs of the Security Council. Peacekeeping Missions // The United Nations. (In Russian). URL: [https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sites/www.un.org/securitycouncil/files/ru/sc/repertoire/89-92/89-92\\_5.pdf#page=6](https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sites/www.un.org/securitycouncil/files/ru/sc/repertoire/89-92/89-92_5.pdf#page=6) (accessed: 15.05.2023).

<sup>15</sup> Resolution 629 (1989) Adopted by the Security Council at its 2842nd meeting, on 16 January 1989 // The UN Digital Library. January 16, 1989. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/54308?ln=ru> (accessed: 10.05.2023).

ensure the smoothest possible transition of Namibia from South African sovereignty to full independence by holding free elections under the UN supervision and monitoring. This mission, more ambitious and complex in terms of the breadth of its mandate, is important for understanding the specifics of the transitional phase of the UN peacekeeping practice. It is often cited as the first example of post-conflict peacebuilding.<sup>16</sup>

The results of the operation in Namibia can be considered a success. UNTAG ceased its activities following the independence of Namibia on March 21, 1990, which became a member of the UN in April of the same year.<sup>17</sup> Right from the start, however, the mission was threatened by a sudden invasion from Angolan territory into northern Namibia by armed units of the West African People's Organization. This clear violation of the ceasefire took place at a time when UNTAG was not yet fully deployed in the country. The prospect of renewed fighting in Namibia led UN Special Envoy Marty Ahtisaari to make the controversial decision to temporarily release South African security forces from the ceasefire and allow them to redeploy to the Angola — Namibia border area. This decision was only approved by the UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuellar after much deliberation. In this case, the use of force, albeit not by UNTAG, which lacked the capacity to do so, prevented the mission from failing before it had actually started. The events in Namibia in 1989 demonstrated not only the potential for expanding the mandates of subsequent UN peacekeeping missions, but also the serious limitations that PKOs can face when at least one

party to a conflict de facto withdraws its consent to the deployment of a mission and the political settlement.

Overall, the operations in Angola and Namibia ushered in a new era of integrated peacekeeping and became known as “second generation” or hybrid peacekeeping operations, which were multifunctional, drawing on the broader military mandates of peacekeeping contingents. These are essentially paramilitary peacekeeping operations based on a set of new principles: monitoring ceasefire agreements, regrouping and demobilizing armed forces, destroying weapons handed in during disarmament, reintegrating ex-combatants into civilian life, planning and implementing demining programs, helping refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes, providing humanitarian aid, etc.

### **New Dimension of UN Peacekeeping in the 1990s — early 2000s**

African conflicts in the post-bipolar period have led to a rapid increase in the number of peacekeeping operations in war-torn countries. Most of the operations were carried out in response to military conflicts that have erupted in sub-Saharan Africa since the early 1990s, where the UNSC has authorized large and complex peacekeeping operations:

- *the UN Operation in Burundi* (ONUB);
- *the Mission in the Central African Republic (CAR) and Chad* (MINURCAT);
- *the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire* (UNOCI);
- *the Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)* (MONUC) and *the DRC Stabilization Mission* (MONUSCO);
- *the Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea* (UNMEE);
- *the Mission in Liberia* (UNMIL);
- *the Mission in Sierra Leone* (UNAMSIL);
- *the Mission in Sudan* (UNMIS) in the southern part of the country;

<sup>16</sup> Peacebuilding is the intervention of a third party to prevent the risk of a return to conflict. Peacebuilding missions include working with governments to reorganize and train law enforcement and judiciary forces, organize elections and strengthen civil society, and repatriate refugees.

<sup>17</sup> Namibia // UN Sustainable Development Group. URL: <https://unsdg.un.org/un-in-action/namibia> (accessed: 10.05.2023).

— mixed *the AU — UN Operation in Darfur* (UNAMID);

— *the Interim Security Force for Abyei* (UNISFA);

— *the Mission in South Sudan* (UNMISS).

The vast majority of new peacekeeping missions were deployed in intra-state conflicts. The only exception was the United Nations Ceasefire Monitoring Mission between Eritrea and Ethiopia (UNMEE), launched in July 2000 after a short but bloody war between the two states. In other cases, the UNSC conducted operations in the context of civil wars of varying intensity, which were complicated by violent ethnic and religious clashes.

Despite the success of the UN peacekeeping in Africa, there are examples of both ineffective peacekeeping and undue delay. In 1997, for example, the UN failed to provide either a mandate or the means to help end the devastating civil war in the Republic of Congo.

The decrease of the total number of operations in Africa to about 50% by 2004 was due to the multilateral participation in military missions of both regional and subregional organizations. In addition, the wars in Ethiopia (1991), Mozambique (1992) and Liberia (1996) came to an end.

In many ways, the African continent, with its ongoing and specific conflicts, influenced the updating of the UN peacekeeping practice, offering some innovations that soon became quite ordinary parameters of peacekeeping operations.

For the first time in Africa civilian police forces were used in peacekeeping missions. Initially they were limited to monitoring the local police to ensure impartiality. The first experience of a Ghanaian and Nigerian police unit providing police support was in the context of ONUC. In 1989—1990, the scale of police involvement in the UNTAG in Namibia was already practically comparable to other peacekeepers — 1,500 police observers from 25 countries in addition to the 4,500 military

personnel and 2,000 civilians<sup>18</sup> deployed in 49 police stations in six (later seven) police districts.

However, the first experience of such a large-scale police involvement in a peacekeeping operation revealed many difficulties in fully integrating them into the peacekeeping ranks. In addition to the classic logistical problems, the operation was hampered by widely varying training standards, a lack of foreign language skills, and a rather unclear international police functions. The UN police observers mainly monitored local police investigations and their actions during political rallies. But they soon began conducting their own patrols and investigating complaints against the local police. Notably, most police officers remained in Namibia after the elections until the country's formal independence.

In *the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara* (MINURSO), established by UNSC Resolution 690,<sup>19</sup> of April 29, 1991, the role of the police officers was not only to monitor the work of the Moroccan police, but also to assist with voter registration for the elections. Subsequently, the monitoring function of the UN international police evolved into a broader set of tasks, including training, restructuring and monitoring of local police forces, such as *the UN Observer Mission in South Africa* (UNOMSA) in 1992—1995, both operations in Somalia (UNOSOM I and II) in 1992—1993 and 1993—1995, *the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda* (UNAMIR) in 1994, and *the UN Operation in Mozambique* (ONUMOZ) in 1992—1995. It was also in Africa that the first female police peacekeepers

<sup>18</sup> United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) // The United Nations. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.un.org/ru/events/missions/past/namibia.htm> (accessed: 02.05.2023).

<sup>19</sup> Resolution 690 (1991) Adopted by the Security Council at its 2984th meeting, on 29 April 1991 // UN Digital Library. April 29, 1991. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/112199> (accessed: 02.05.2023).

(140 from India) were deployed as part of *the UN Mission in Liberia* (UNMIL).<sup>20</sup>

First, some operations in Africa had a significant civilian component, which reduced the emphasis on the military nature of peacekeeping and led to a broader range of tasks that military peacekeepers had to perform in cooperation with civilian observers, such as protection and electoral assistance. This was the case in missions to Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, Somalia and Western Sahara. In the UN Transition Assistance Group in Namibia, for example, six of the seven components were civilian.

Second, there was a shift from traditional observer missions to multi-component and even hybrid operations, such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Mozambique (UNMOZ), Mali (*United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali*, MINUSMA), CAR (MINURCA), South Sudan (UNMISS) and the Abyei region (UNISFA), whose mandates have steadily expanded over the years. They are all characterized by their breadth and complexity, ranging from the restoration of ceasefires, the promotion of political dialogue and the rule of law, the disarmament and elimination of illegal armed groups, the protection of populations and civilian authorities, to the provision of humanitarian assistance, the promotion of economic development, the monitoring of human rights, and post-conflict peacebuilding. Sometimes peacekeepers have to carry out rather “atypical” tasks — organizing and holding elections (CAR, Burundi); ensuring the right to self-determination (Namibia, Western Sahara); “preservation of the people” (Rwanda); securing oil facilities in the disputed territory (UN Interim Security Force in Abyei); disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, repatriation and

resettlement of combatants, border patrols (Côte d’Ivoire); establishment of justice courts, training of police units and other measures to assist the state in exercising control over its own territories (Sierra Leone).

With few exceptions, the UN peacekeeping operations initiated after 2000 have had very long mandates, often running over a dozen pages. As a result, they have become unofficially known as “Christmas tree mandates” due to the variety of tasks involved. In 2018, UN Secretary-General António Guterres told the UN Security Council that the UN Mission in South Sudan “is unable to fulfill the 209 mandated tasks.”<sup>21</sup>

Notably, some of these missions were designated as stabilization missions. Although the first such operation was *the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti* (MINUSTAH) from 2004 to 2017, the next three stabilization missions were organized specifically in Africa — in the DRC (MONUSCO), Mali (MINUSMA) and the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

Third, not all operations in Africa comply with the so-called “unwritten” principles of classical peacekeeping: the consent of all parties to the conflict to deploy an operation, the neutrality and impartiality of peacekeepers, and the use of force only in self-defense.

Some missions were implemented without the necessary approval of the parties to the conflict for the deployment of a peacekeeping contingent. Examples include the UN operation in Burundi (2004—2006), where the Palipehutu-FNL rebel group refused to participate in the peace process; in the DRC (2010 — present), where militias have long resisted UN intervention; in Sudan (2005—2011), which was not prepared to compromise on a hybrid AU — UN mission.

A deviation from the principle of impartiality occurred during the operation in

<sup>20</sup> The Story of UNMIL [Book]: Women’s Police Contingent: Role Models for a Decade // United Nations Peacekeeping. April 9, 2018. URL: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/story-of-unmil-book-womens-police-contingent-role-models-decade> (accessed: 02.05.2023).

<sup>21</sup> UN Secretary-General: Peacekeepers Serve in More Dangerous Conditions than Before // UN News. March 28, 2018. (In Russian). URL: <https://news.un.org/ru/story/2018/03/1326831> (accessed: 13.06.2023).



Côte d'Ivoire, where the UN peacekeepers and the French Unicorn contingent openly opposed one side of the conflict and supported the other — Alassane Ouattara (representing the Muslim north), who had declared himself the winner of the presidential race. On the night of April 5, 2011, they launched rocket attacks on the presidential residence, military bases (in Agban and Akuedo) and positions of government troops loyal to the incumbent president Laurent Gbagbo (supported by the Christian areas of the south). The decision was taken personally by the then Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon, who justified his decision by reasons of self-defense and the protection of the civilians in the face of the use of tanks and heavy weapons by the forces loyal to L. Gbagbo.<sup>22</sup>

In some operations, so-called “enhanced” or “strong” mandates were used (Sierra Leone, the DRC, Mali), which give peacekeepers the right to use force as a preventive measure. Previously, the UN military had the right to shoot to kill solely in self-defense, now soldiers are allowed to open fire to protect civilians.

In addition, for the first time in Africa, the UN Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) was deployed, also a departure from the traditional principle of neutrality. This was largely a coercive measure in response to the abandonment of the town of Goma in the eastern DRC by 1,500 troops of MONUSCO after its capture on November 20, 2012, by militants of the March 23 Movement, formed to protect the interests of Congolese Tutsis.<sup>23</sup> The peacekeepers were unable to repel the militants, who were significantly outnumbered the blue

helmets stationed in the city, and to ensure the protection of the civilian population, which served as the basis for revising the mandate. The FIB, formed within MONUSCO and comprising three infantry battalions, an artillery unit and a special forces and reconnaissance company, became the first and so far only unit authorized to conduct “targeted offensive operations” to neutralize and disarm illegal armed groups.

Significantly, the UN initiative took up the agreed concept of deploying a new brigade within MONUSCO, made up of troops from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) states, with an “enhanced mandate.” In addition, most of the units that made up the 3,000-strong FIB brigade were made up of peacekeepers from South Africa, Tanzania and Malawi. The neutralization of the 23 March Movement rebels and the weakening of the Islamist Alliance of Democratic Forces/National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF/NALU) was followed by a multiplication of other armed groups and rebel militias, including the March 23 Movement, which resumed fighting in late 2021. The unrest in the east of the country continued, culminating in the storming of the UN mission headquarters in Goma.

Another innovation was the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), which were first tested as part of a stabilization mission in the DRC to collect data for a proactive response to emerging threats. The introduction of UAVs into the peacekeeping toolkit was initiated by former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who believed they could be used to ensure the safety of peacekeepers and compensate for the lack of helicopters.

Fourth, the specifics of African conflicts and the complexity of conflict resolution led in some cases to the overlapping of several peacekeeping missions under the auspices of different organizations. These are so-called UN-recognized missions, i.e. operations without direct UN Security Council approval, but supported by relevant UNSC resolutions or

<sup>22</sup> Aboa A., Coulibaly L. U.N., French Attack Gbagbo Heavy Weapons in Ivory Coast // Reuters. April 10, 2011. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ivorycoast-id-USTRE73014Z20110410> (accessed: 13.06.2023).

<sup>23</sup> M23 Rebel Fighters Enter the City of Goma in Eastern DR Congo — UN Spokesperson // Reliefweb. November 20, 2012. URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/m23-rebel-fighters-enter-city-goma-eastern-dr-congo-%E2%80%93-un> (accessed: 13.06.2023).

chairman statements. This is one of the most common types of mission.

The UN has never had a monopoly on peacekeeping operations, which can be broadly divided into the following types:

- UN-led;
- UN-mandated;
- UN-recognized;
- non-UN operations.

Between 2000 and 2020, the UN conducted between 13 and 18 active peacekeeping operations per year. In total, there were 35 UN-led peacekeeping operations, 20 UN-mandated operations and 50 non-UN peacekeeping operations during this period (Williams & Bellamy, 2021).

This was due to the fact that, since the Cold War, a number of regional organizations in Africa, such as ECOWAS, had not always seen the UN as an effective partner in resolving conflicts on the continent and had therefore been forced to take on a peacekeeping role themselves, as in the case of Liberia, which survived two civil wars in 14 years (1989—2003). Following the signing of the peace agreement in Cotonou, Benin, brokered by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in September 1993, the UNSC established the Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL)<sup>24</sup> to support the Military Observer Group (ECOMOG) in ensuring compliance and impartial implementation of the agreement by all parties. This was the first time that the blue helmets had collaborated with a mission from another organization, although UNMIL was formally positioned as a separate and parallel mission to ECOMOG. Significantly, the numerical “weight” of the missions varied, and not in favor of the UN. However, this situation began to change in the late 1990s, when the UN moved from a strategy of nominally limited presence and parallel action to broader and more decisive operations.

<sup>24</sup> United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) // The United Nations. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.un.org/ru/events/missions/past/liberia.htm> (accessed: 13.06.2023).

In cooperation with regional organizations, the UN managed to de facto establish the “division of labor” mechanism, which had previously developed spontaneously and been applied *ad hoc*. Because of their direct interest in the settlement process at the stage of managing bloodshed, the regional organizations are the first to be involved and in fact ensure the achievement of a peace agreement. Then comes the turn of the UN, which has a much greater capacity and base to maintain the ceasefire. Local contingents are usually placed under the auspices of the UN at a later stage.

In relations with ECOWAS, the deployment of the UN forces began after the necessary conditions for this had been created. Despite a considerable amount of “initial” work on ceasefires and peace agreements in a situation of heavy bloodshed, ECOWAS was unable to sustain large-scale long-term missions on its own due to weak peacekeeping capabilities, lack of expertise and problems common to most regional organizations — funding gaps, internal leadership contradictions, lack of contingent training and logistical problems. A similar “division of labor” model was applied in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in 1999, Liberia (UNMIL) in 2003 and Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) in 2004.

Since the establishment of the African Union in 2002, the number of UN-recognized missions has been reduced and replaced by those of the AU and other sub-regional organizations, which are authorized by the UN Security Council.

Fifth, the UN has occasionally delegated its authority to third parties to deploy military units on its behalf to establish peace and security, such as the UK and France in peacekeeping missions in Sierra Leone and the DRC. France has also participated in the peacekeeping mission in Côte d’Ivoire since 2004 with the support of the UN Security Council. As a result, the UN not only lifted restrictions on the use of force by its own troops, but also engaged major states to use weapons on its behalf.

Sixth, an important feature of the UN peacekeeping in Africa is the desire to increase the proportion of women participating in PKOs. This is believed to improve the operational effectiveness of peacekeeping missions. This objective was enshrined in the UNSC's Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, which was unanimously endorsed by resolution 1325 in 2000.<sup>25</sup>

Achieving this goal provided a solid basis for strengthening the UN — AU partnership, as both organizations promoted the inclusion of the provisions outlined in the WPS agenda in resolutions, debates and communiqués. Under the auspices of the UN alone, 10 resolutions were adopted on the issue.<sup>26</sup> In 2014, the AU

<sup>25</sup> Resolution 1325 (2000) Adopted by the Security Council at its 4213th meeting, on 31 October 2000 // United Nations. URL: [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1325\(2000\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1325(2000)) (accessed: 10.06.2023).

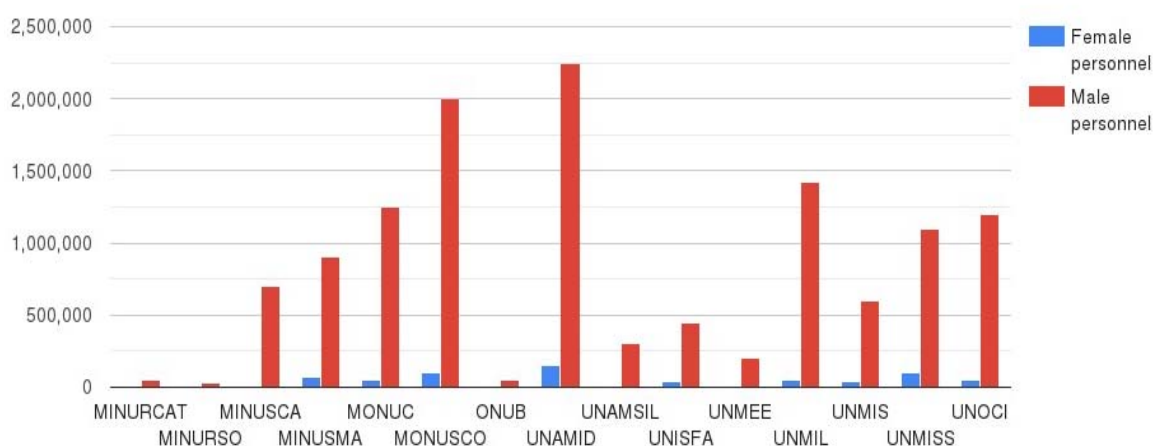
<sup>26</sup> See: Resolution 1325 (2000) Adopted by the Security Council at its 4213th meeting, on 31 October 2000 // The United Nations. October 31, 2000. URL: [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/S\\_C\\_ResolutionWomenPeaceSecurity\\_SRES1325%282000%29%28english\\_0.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/S_C_ResolutionWomenPeaceSecurity_SRES1325%282000%29%28english_0.pdf) (accessed: 03.05.2023); Resolution 1820 (2008) Adopted by the Security Council at its 5916th meeting, on 19 June 2008 // The United Nations. June 19, 2008. URL: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N08/391/44/PDF/N0839144.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed: 03.05.2023); Resolution 1888 (2009) Adopted by the Security Council at its 6195th meeting, on 30 September 2009 // The United Nations. September 30, 2009. URL: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/534/46/PDF/N0953446.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed: 03.05.2023); Resolution 1889 (2009) Adopted by the Security Council at its 6196th meeting, on 5 October 2009 // The United Nations. October 5, 2009. URL: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/542/55/PDF/N0954255.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed: 03.05.2023); Resolution 1960 (2010) Adopted by the Security Council at its 6453rd meeting, on 16 December 2010 // The United Nations. December 16, 2010. URL: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N10/698/34/PDF/N1069834.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed: 03.05.2023); Resolution 2106 (2013) Adopted by the Security Council at its 6984th meeting, on 24 June 2013 // The United Nations. June 24, 2013. URL: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N13/372/15/PDF/N1337215.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed: 03.05.2023); Resolution 2122 (2013) Adopted by the Security Council at its 7044th meeting, on 18 October

appointed a Special Envoy on WPS, and a year later, UNSC Resolution 2242<sup>27</sup> called on the Secretary-General, in collaboration with member states, to review strategies that call for doubling the number of women in military and police contingents in the UN peacekeeping operations by 2020 (Bokeriya, 2022).

According to an analysis of the number of women and men involved in 15 peacekeeping missions in Africa between 2003 and 2023, the total number of men involved in each of the operations mentioned significantly exceeds the number of women (Figure 3). The highest number of male personnel was 2,214,778 (UNAMID), while the highest number of women in this mission did not exceed 99,517. In addition, some missions, such as ONUB (Burundi), UNAMSIL (Sierra Leone) and UNMEE (Ethiopia and Eritrea), have no women at all. Thus, the UN missions from 2003 to 2023 can be divided into two types: mixed, where both men and women are represented, and male, in which women are absent (Bokeriya, 2021).

2013 // The United Nations. October 18, 2013. URL: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N13/523/44/PDF/N1352344.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed: 03.05.2023); Resolution 2242 (2015) Adopted by the Security Council at its 7533rd meeting, on 13 October 2015 // The United Nations. October 13, 2015. URL: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/311/09/PDF/N1531109.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed: 03.05.2023); Resolution 2272 (2016) Adopted by the Security Council at its 7643rd meeting, on 11 March 2016 // The United Nations. March 11, 2016. URL: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N16/069/25/PDF/N1606925.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed: 03.05.2023); Resolution 2467 (2019) Adopted by the Security Council at its 8514th meeting, on 23 April 2019 // The United Nations. April 23, 2019. URL: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N19/118/28/PDF/N1911828.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed: 03.05.2023).

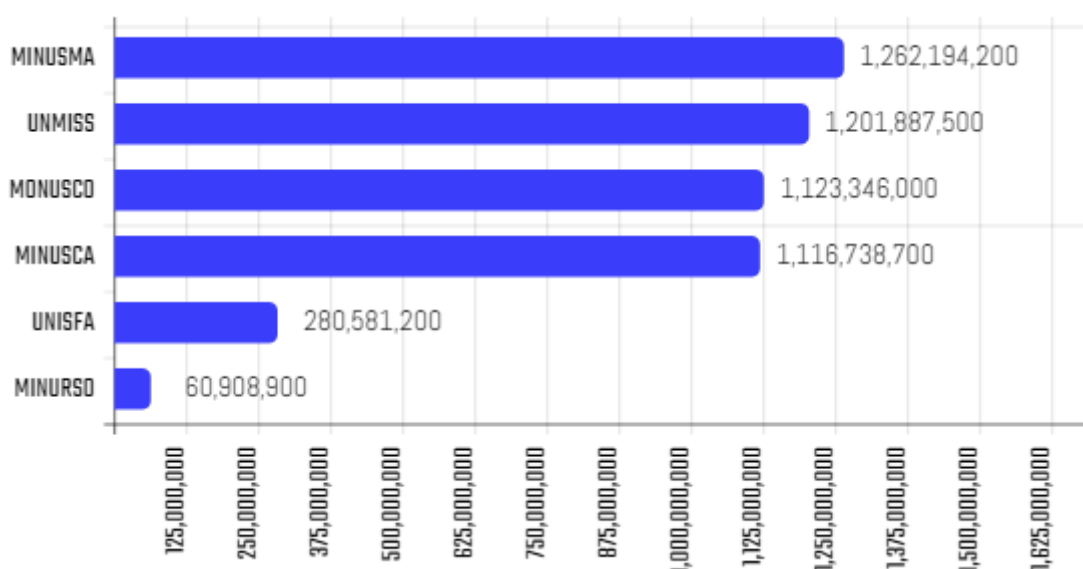
<sup>27</sup> Resolution 2242 (2015) Adopted by the Security Council at its 7533rd meeting, on 13 October 2015 // The United Nations. October 13, 2015. URL: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/311/09/PDF/N1531109.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed: 03.05.2023).



**Figure 3. Total Number of Male and Female Personnel in the UN Peacekeeping Operations from 2003 to 2023**

*Source:* compiled by the authors based on data from the UN Peacekeeping Operation’s website:

Troop and Police Contributors // UN Peacekeeping. URL: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors> (accessed: 12.06.2023).



**Figure 4. Funding for Current UN Missions in Africa in US Dollars, July 2021 — June 2022**

*Source:* compiled by the authors based on data from the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations website: Peacekeeping Operations // United Nations. URL: <https://www.unmissions.org/> (accessed: 10.06.2023).

Finally, the UN peacekeeping operations in Africa have the largest number of deployed peacekeepers, are the most expensive in terms of financial resources, and are characterized by high casualty rates. The most expensive operation is the mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). Established in 2010, the initial cost of the mission was estimated at 1.369 billion USD.

From July 2021 to June 2022, the budget for this operation was 1.123 billion USD (Figure 4). The financial cost of the mission ranged from a high of 1.489 billion USD to a low of 1.018 billion USD.<sup>28</sup> These fluctuations

<sup>28</sup> Budget Performance for the Period from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 and Proposed Budget for the Period from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 for the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic

are explained by changes in the number of peacekeepers.

As of June 2023, a total of 4,314 peacekeepers have died in peacekeeping operations.<sup>29</sup> Although *the UN Interim Force in Lebanon* (UNIFIL) recorded the highest number of fatalities (330), the fatality rate in African UN peacekeeping operations is almost comparable to that of UNIFIL: MINUSMA — 309, UNAMID — 295, MONUSCO — 263, ONUC — 249.<sup>30</sup> As of May 2023, India (178), Pakistan (169) and Bangladesh (166) had the highest number of peacekeepers killed, followed by three African countries: Nigeria — 159, Ghana — 150, Ethiopia — 140.<sup>31</sup>

Most peacekeeping operations face similar problems: overstretch, unclear and unrealistic mandates, instability of the internal political situation in the states themselves, the presence of asymmetric threats that threaten the security of the blue helmets, etc. (Khudaykulova, 2019). In some operations (e.g. in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali), the most serious problem was the lack of trust of the local population in the UN peacekeepers, who, despite their long presence, were unable to protect citizens from the brutality of both illegal armed groups and their own authorities. At the same time, protests periodically break out here against the presence of international UN troops and attacks on the UN peacekeeping missions.

Peacekeeping operations in Africa do not always lead to the establishment of a sustainable and stable peace and usually end in a ceasefire and a reduction of tensions. The resolution of

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Republic of the Congo: Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions // UN Digital Library. 2023. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4010453?ln=en> (accessed: 13.06.2023).

<sup>29</sup> Fatalities // UN Peacekeeping. URL: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/fatalities> (accessed: 30.04.2023).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Fatalities by Nationality and Mission up to 5/31/2023 // UN Peacekeeping. URL: [https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/stats\\_by\\_nationality\\_mission\\_2\\_87\\_may\\_2023.pdf](https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/stats_by_nationality_mission_2_87_may_2023.pdf) (accessed: 13.06.2023).

deep contradictions in African society is a priori beyond the control of third parties. The conclusion of peace still remains the prerogative of the warring parties, and peacekeepers can only contribute to this.

Contrary to prevailing stereotypes, however, there are examples of peacekeepers successfully fulfilling their roles and thus ending operations. These are usually small missions that have achieved a certain degree of stability in their work in conflict zones, which can be measured by the absence of civil war and the holding of democratic elections.

In 2014, for example, *the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone* (UNIPSIL), which has been in place since October 1, 2008 and consists of 70 civilian staff, completed its mandate to assist the authorities in advancing the constitutional review process, ensuring the rule of law and protecting human rights.<sup>32</sup> Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has hailed the Sierra Leone mission as one of the most successful post-conflict reconstruction, peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes.

The UN presence in Sierra Leone has helped to disarm 75,000 ex-combatants, destroy more than 42,000 weapons and 1.2 million rounds of ammunition,<sup>33</sup> intensify the fight against illegal diamond mining, establish control of affected areas, organize and hold the first free and fair elections in the country's history, and provide assistance to more than 500,000 refugees and internally displaced persons. It is indicative that it was in Sierra Leone that the UN launched many new initiatives and appointments — the first multi-faceted UN peacekeeping operation with

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<sup>32</sup> Closure of UNIPSIL // The UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone. URL: <https://unipsil.unmissions.org/> (accessed: 13.06.2023).

<sup>33</sup> Secretary-General Celebrates Peacebuilding 'Triumph' in Sierra Leone at Closing Ceremony of United Nations Integrated Office // Department of Public Information. March 5, 2014. URL: <https://press.un.org/en/2014/sgsm15686.doc.htm> (accessed: 02.06.2023).

mandates in politics, security, humanitarian assistance and national reconstruction, the first UN Deputy Special Representative, the first visit of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (Bokeriya & Tijani, 2018).

In June 2017, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), which had been in place since 2003 and whose mandate had been extended, refined and expanded several times, came to an end. The results of the operation were highly appreciated by Secretary-General António Guterres. However, throughout the entire period of the mission's work, its effectiveness was assessed ambiguously, especially during the 2010—2011 crisis, which saw serious unrest and numerous civilian casualties. It was only after the next presidential elections in 2015 that a positive dynamic began to emerge in the country. In March 2018, following presidential elections and the first peaceful transfer of power in 70 years, the UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia, deployed in 2003, ended. The country's new leader, George Weah, who replaced the first female president in African history, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, praised the UN's role in running the elections.

### Conclusion

Identifying the specifics of the UN peacekeeping activities in Africa (1960—2022) shows that the UN peacekeeping has evolved from traditional observer missions to multicomponent and hybrid PKOs, with a tendency to expand mandates and include “atypical” peacekeeping tasks in their list. The

practice of departing from the principles of classical peacekeeping in a number of African missions, the cooperation with regional organizations in conducting peacekeeping operations in Africa (in particular with the AU and ECOWAS), the delegation of authority to third parties, the desire to double the number of women peacekeepers reflect not only the UN's goals and objectives in developing an effective conflict resolution strategy in Africa, but also its willingness to adapt to the rapidly changing dynamics of African crises.

Despite the UN's successes in African peacekeeping, most missions continue to face similar problems — overstretch, unclear and unrealistic mandates, unstable internal political situations in the states themselves, the presence of asymmetric threats to the security of the blue helmets, sexual violence in conflict, etc.

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of peacekeeping missions conducted not by the UN, but by the AU, ECOWAS and other organizations. The UN is delegating large-scale peacekeeping functions to regional organizations and mechanisms. Where regional organizations and alliances are more active in “peacekeeping,” the UN missions are deployed to monitor “peacekeepers” as well as belligerents. Modern UN observer missions also tend to specialize, especially in the areas of policing and counter-terrorism.

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