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HUNGARY'S MILITARY PRESENCE AND INTERESTS IN THE SAHEL

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ABSTRACT: In the introduction, the main African migration routes and their impact on Europe, including Hungary, will be presented. This is followed by the activities of the European Union and Hungary in the region to curb migration. In the next section, the current location of Hungarian troops in the Sahel, the tasks of the Hungarian Defence Forces, the reason why they are there, and Hungarian interests in the region will be presented. The local allies and other powers in the region will be described. Finally, possible countries where the Hungarian Defence Forces could be present in the future will be outlined. The thesis will be concluded with a coherent summary where lessons learned will be drawn.

KEYWORDS: migration routes, Sahel region, activities of the Hungarian Defence Forces abroad

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INTRODUCTION

Today, the situation in Africa is extremely heterogeneous. There are many problems, such as environmental degradation, the rise of jihadist organisations, shrinking economic opportunities, and the increasingly rapid and dangerous escalation of religious and ethnic conflicts.¹ While there are a few countries, such as Nigeria, South Africa, and Morocco, that are experiencing significant economic growth,² the same cannot be said for a good part of the continent. Inflation, desertification leading to rising food prices, foreign currency shortages, and mines and other resources falling into the hands of local armed groups do not help the situation.³

The Sahel region is no different. It is one of the most unique ecological regions in the world. It is about 5,400 kilometres long and stretches from Senegal to Eritrea in Central Africa, between the Sahara Desert in the north and the more fertile savannahs in the south.⁴ There is more than one violent criminal and political movement going on in the region,

¹ Mant et al. 2024.

² List of African countries by GDP 2025.

³ Mant et al. 2024.

⁴ Sahel Region: Location, Countries, Significance & Issues – UPSC Notes 2025.

often in areas inaccessible to the state. The Sahel region also suffers from ethnic religious tensions, political instability, poverty, and natural disasters.⁵

Violent cross-border criminal organisations and political movements are gaining ground. Everything from ethno-religious tensions and political instability to poverty and natural disasters can be found in the region. In recent years, the region has also been home to religious terrorism, anti-state insurgencies, and trafficking in arms, drugs, and human beings.⁶ Its stability is very important for regional and international security, mainly because of the emergence of extremist groups, but it is also very rich in raw materials such as uranium, gold, and oil.⁷

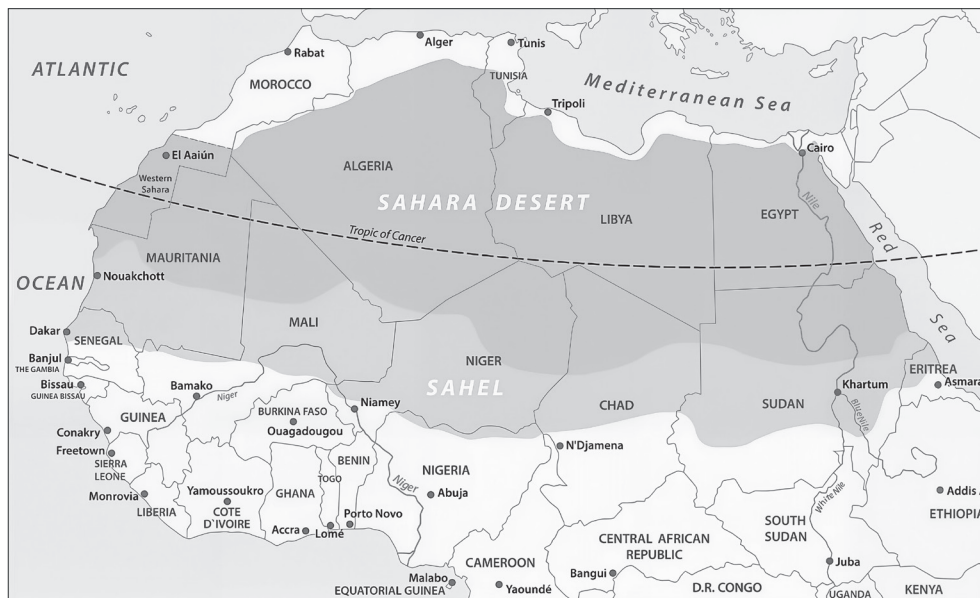


Figure 1 *Sahel region*

Source: <https://www.worldatlas.com/regions/sahel-of-africa.html>

AFRICA'S MAIN MIGRATION ROUTES AND THEIR IMPACT ON EUROPE

The destination for migrants in search of a better life is clearly Europe. They have made the Sahel states, especially Niger and Chad, both countries of origin and transit. Many people are leaving the region for economic, environmental, and political reasons, while these countries have also become important transit points for migration towards North Africa and Europe. EU migration policy, especially in Niger, has been aimed at reducing migration, which has diverted former open routes to underground and more dangerous des-

⁵ Suleiman 2017.

⁶ Muhammad 2017.

⁷ Sahel Region: Location, Countries, Significance & Issues – UPSC Notes 2025.

tinations, partly towards Chad. This has increased the risks for migrants and destabilised local economies that were heavily dependent on migration-related activities.⁸

There are four main routes from Africa to Europe: the Western Mediterranean or Atlantic route, the Central Mediterranean, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Eastern European route.⁹

Western Mediterranean/Atlantic route

Spain is one of the European countries through which most migrants and refugees fleeing from war, famine, epidemics, or for other reasons enter Europe illegally. Migrants can try to reach Spain in two ways, via the Western Mediterranean and the Canary Islands. Smaller numbers have tried to reach Spain by land in Ceuta and Melilla, two Spanish enclaves in Morocco.¹⁰

In 2023, the number of arrivals tripled. The largest numbers of arrivals were from Senegal, Morocco, and Mali. As some countries in the region have experienced increasing instability, such as military takeovers and socio-economic insecurity, further growth was expected on this route, which has not yet materialised.¹¹

Central Mediterranean route

The Central Mediterranean route runs across the Mediterranean from North Africa to Italy and Malta. It is a major migration route to Europe. In the year 2023, the number of arrivals in the Central Mediterranean increased, and there were almost 158,000 irregular border crossings in total.¹² In 2024, the number of arrivals through the Central Mediterranean decreased significantly, by 59%. Despite the decrease, this route still accounted for around 67,000 crossings, the second highest of all routes. Bangladeshis, Syrians, and Tunisians were the most common nationalities to use this route.¹³

⁸ Molenaar et al. 2018.

⁹ MacGregor 2019.

¹⁰ The main migration routes to the European Union 2021.

¹¹ Western African Route 2024.

¹² Central Mediterranean 2024.

¹³ Migratory Routes 2024.



Figure 2 *The Central Mediterranean route to Europe (2018)*

Source: MAP grafix <https://www.clingendael.org/pub/2018/caught-in-the-middle/introduction/>

Eastern Mediterranean route

This migration route includes Cyprus, the Greek maritime borders, and the Bulgarian land border with Türkiye. Most people come from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Türkiye, and Palestine, but Africans also use the route.¹⁴ This route was the largest in 2015, when 885,000 refugees arrived in Europe, according to Frontex. Most of them were Syrians who had been forced to flee their country because of the civil war. Today, this route is much less frequented.¹⁵ Just over 15,000 have arrived since the beginning of 2021. The dramatic drop in arrivals by this route is probably partly due to the controversial EU–Türkiye agreement, which has been heavily criticised by NGOs and has effectively closed the Aegean coast.¹⁶

¹⁴ Eastern Mediterranean 2023.

¹⁵ The main migration routes to the European Union 2021.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Eastern European route

This route is a 6,000-kilometre land border between Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, the Russian Federation, and EU Member States: Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, and Romania.¹⁷

The Russian Federation and its ally, Belarus, use illegal migration as a means of exerting pressure in view of the increasingly tense relations on the European Union's eastern border.¹⁸ More than half of migrants and refugees were Iraqi, followed by Afghans, Syrians, and Congolese.¹⁹

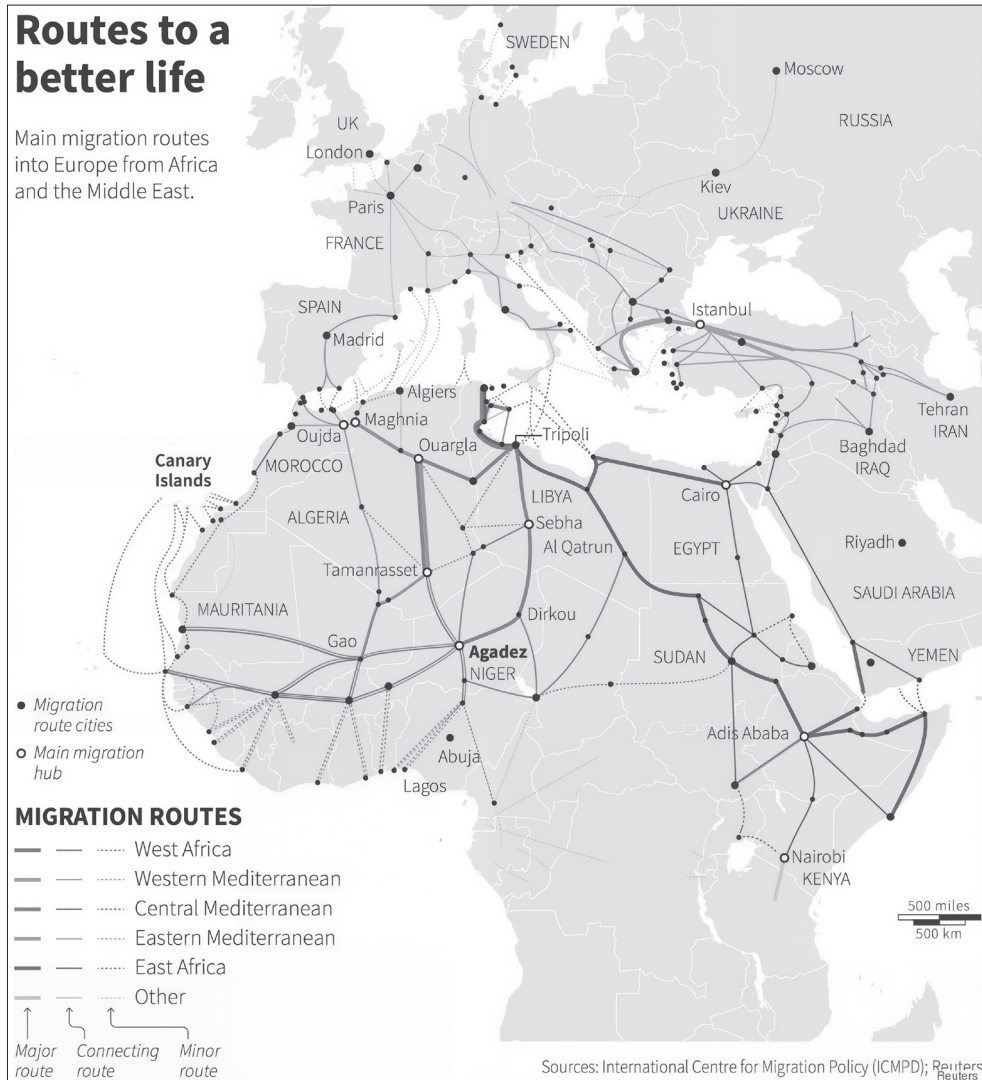


Figure 3 Migration routes to Europe (11/01/2016)

Source: <https://vividmaps.com/main-migration-routes-into-europe-fro/>

¹⁷ Eastern Borders 2023.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ The main migration routes to the European Union 2021.

IMPACTS ON EUROPE

With high unemployment, low wages, poor living conditions, political instability, armed conflicts, and climate change, it is no wonder that Africans want to leave their countries and come to Europe in search of a better life. Most African migrants are young men, most of whom arrive in Europe with low skills and in vulnerable situations that make it difficult for them to find work.²⁰

They tend to settle in impoverished areas, abandoned industrial towns and their outskirts, where they can maintain family and tribal ties. Migrants bring their habits and way of life with them and therefore form closed communities. The Islamic religion has grown in proportion to the number of immigrants, which has led to further problems in a Europe that is far from being Muslim. More and more Islamic schools and mosques have been built, and Islamic clothing has gained ground. They often focus on nationality, are politically loyal to their country of origin, and bring tensions and conflicts to their new home countries, which exacerbate the situation.²¹

The challenges of social inclusion create tensions with the local population. This is why migration is a divisive issue in European societies, which easily fuels populist and anti-immigrant political movements.²² The main role of immigrants is to alleviate labour shortages, especially in ageing societies. Demographic change in many EU countries is leading to a decline in the working-age population, which is a particular problem for developed economies.²³

Less skilled migrants are mainly employed in sectors where the local labour force is not very willing to work. Examples include the construction, agriculture, and hospitality sectors. This also brings benefits for the state, as lower wages can reduce production costs and increase the competitiveness of the sector.²⁴

Table 1 *In terms of occupations, non-EU citizens were over-represented in the above fields (28/05/2025)*

Source: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/statistics-migration-europe_en?utm_source=chatgpt.com#employment-of-immigrants

| Occupational group | Employment of non-EU citizens (%) | Employment of EU citizens (%) |
|--|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Cleaners and helpers | 11.4 | 2.9 |
| Personal services workers | 7.3 | 4.1 |
| Personal care workers | 5.5 | 3.0 |
| Construction workers, excluding electricians | 6.1 | 3.7 |
| Workers in mining, construction, manufacturing and transport | 6.0 | 2.5 |
| Food preparation assistants | 2.6 | 0.6 |
| Agricultural, forestry and fishery workers | 2.4 | 0.7 |

²⁰ Prof. Idemudia – Prof. Dr. Boehnke 2020.

²¹ Ez lett a migráció eredménye Európában 2024.

²² Prof. Idemudia – Prof. Dr. Boehnke 2020.

²³ Kancs – Lecca 2017.

²⁴ Ibid.

Curbing migration

Some states have increasingly seen migration from Africa to Europe as a security threat. As a result, stricter border controls and visa policies were introduced. These efforts have resulted in fewer African migrants reaching Europe, but have also had a number of unintended negative consequences.²⁵

The European Parliament has adopted the Pact on Migration and Asylum, a comprehensive reform of the EU's border and migration rules. The main elements of the pact include a fast-track procedure, meaning border countries, such as Italy and Greece, are given more power to quickly remove those who are unlikely to be eligible for asylum, and a solidarity mechanism, which saw member states given the choice of accepting asylum seekers or providing financial contributions to countries that do so.²⁶

The European Union then set up the African Emergency Fund, whose main aim was to reduce illegal migration from Africa to Europe. A total of €5 billion has been allocated to 27 African countries to create jobs, strengthen the resilience of local communities, improve migration management, and promote good governance and conflict prevention.²⁷

According to the European Court of Auditors, the money has been spent in too many directions, with too many different objectives, and has not been effective enough in tackling the real causes of migration. Also, projects in Libya provided tools that inadvertently facilitated the transfer of migrants to detention camps, where human rights abuses took place.²⁸

However, there was also a successful action by the African Emergency Fund, when the EU decided to focus on Agadez, a key route among West Africa, the Sahel, and the Maghreb regions, through which a large proportion of people travelling to Europe passed. The intervention resulted in a 75% reduction in the number of migrants flowing through Agadez in 2017, with 116,647 arrivals reported in 2018, 89% fewer than in 2015.²⁹

Europe has, in turn, contributed to increasing regional destabilisation and the continued spread of smuggling. The livelihoods of its inhabitants have only become more difficult as destabilisation has also begun in the Sahel. Many young men turned to banditry to meet their needs. Worse still, some ended up with al-Qaeda. Europe's short-term migration priorities could thus undermine Africa's longer-term development goals. Yet, Sub-Saharan African migrants make up only 12.9% of Europe's migrant population. However, the EU remains committed to curbing migration from Africa and seeks broader cooperation with African countries on returning irregular immigrants and improving border control.³⁰

HUNGARY AND THE SAHEL

Where Hungarian soldiers are located inside the Sahel

Earlier, in 2021, the National Assembly approved the participation of Hungarian soldiers in the French-initiated Takuba combat unit in Mali and Niger, where they mostly provided

²⁵ Abebe 2020.

²⁶ Usherwood 2024.

²⁷ Grün 2022.

²⁸ Gianna 2022.

²⁹ Abebe 2020.

³⁰ Ibid.

advisory and support services. However, Operation Takuba ended in 2022, and Hungarian soldiers withdrew from Mali and Niger.³¹

According to the latest information, the Hungarian Defence Forces should only be in Chad within the Sahel. In response to the “letter of invitation” of the President of the Republic of Chad of 19 September 2023, the Hungarian government decided to launch an independent military mission of up to 200 troops to Chad,³² but this has been delayed for a year, as the Hungarian Defence Forces planned to deploy the military contingent to Chad in Central Africa in spring 2024, which has apparently not happened until today. There are several reasons for this, which will be explained in more detail later. At present, therefore, the Hungarian military presence in the Sahel would be limited to Chad.³³

The aims and local tasks of the Hungarian Defence Forces

Africa is by no means unknown territory for the army. Over the past thirty years, Hungarian soldiers have participated in a relatively small number of missions and operations on the continent. Initially, these were within the UN framework, but soon EU involvement was added. Since the change of regime, Hungary has been steadily increasing its involvement in Africa, which is of growing importance in the global economic and political arena.³⁴

Hungary’s engagement in Chad is likely to be the most important task undertaken by the Hungarian Defence Forces in the 2020s, and perhaps in recent decades. Although Hungarian soldiers have been involved in a large number of other operations, both in the Western Balkans and Afghanistan, the big difference between the two is that in the latter cases, we needed our allies, for example, in logistics or intelligence, but this is different. Now we can talk about a completely independent Hungarian action. What this means in practice is that the Hungarian Defence Forces have to provide the entire backbone of the operation, its logistics, and other essential capabilities. All this is a major qualitative leap compared to our previous involvements.³⁵

The mission of the Hungarian Defence Forces in Chad is a complex task, which aims not only to promote regional stability, but also to directly protect Hungary’s national security interests. In particular, the Sahel region lies in an area of strategic importance for Chad, as it links North Africa with Central Africa and plays a key role in local illegal migration routes.³⁶

Therefore, the primary task of our soldiers is to advise and mentor the Chadian armed forces. They also provide training to Chadian soldiers, focusing in particular on counter-terrorism, border protection, and operational tactics. Hungarian officers provide tactical and strategic advice to local commands, helping them to plan operations more effectively. Mentoring in the field does not involve direct combat participation, but rather includes preparation, assessment, and assistance in force coordination of operations.³⁷

³¹ Magyar katonai szerepvállalás a Száhel-övezetben 2021.

³² Wilén 2024, 4.

³³ Lengyel 2023.

³⁴ Marsai 2024.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Csuhaj 2023.

³⁷ Magyarország átfogó stratégiai együttműködést épít fel Csáddal 2024.

The Sahel region is home to a number of Islamist terrorist organisations, such as local branches of Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. The Hungarian contingent plays a supporting role in counter-terrorism operations by providing intelligence, logistical, and operational support to local forces.³⁸

For Hungary, the Sahel region is a key transit area for migration. Therefore, during their presence, Hungarian soldiers contribute to the mapping and control of migration routes, the dismantling of human trafficking and smuggling routes, the improvement of local border protection capacities, and the management of the root causes of migration.³⁹

One of the secondary tasks is to protect the Hungary Helps humanitarian mission, which is already operating outside. In more detail, this should be understood to mean creating a safe environment for aid workers and, if necessary, escorting and protecting the Hungarian civilians, or participating in the provision and protection of aid supplies.⁴⁰

Under the mission, Hungarian soldiers are also entitled to evacuate Hungarian citizens in crisis situations, and may even act in neighbouring countries for such purposes if the legal and political conditions are right. The ultimate goal of our soldiers is to increase the Hungarian military experience and enhance recognition on the international stage.⁴¹

The mission of the Hungarian Defence Forces in Chad is not only military. It also has significant political, diplomatic, and humanitarian components. The aim is clear: to reduce the migration and security risks that could sooner or later affect Europe and Hungary, by providing assistance on the ground. The mission would have lasted until the end of 2025 and could have served as a model for future Hungarian military presence abroad.⁴²

The specific environmental, logistical, and social conditions of the region can cause significant difficulties for the presence of Hungarian soldiers in Chad. The region has a very poor infrastructure: most of the roads are dirt roads, which can be difficult to negotiate, especially during the rainy season, and this can seriously hamper the movement of military units and the provision of supplies. In addition, supply chains are vulnerable to armed attacks and robberies, so their protection requires constant attention, and the situation is further complicated by the fact that logistics to Chad come from Hungary, where it is difficult to find safe, secure routes, as neither of its neighbours is a fully stable state. The extreme climate of the Sahel region exacerbates the situation. The heat, dust storms, and water shortages pose serious challenges for soldiers, both physically and health-wise. Communicable diseases such as malaria and cholera are common in the region.⁴³

Hungarian interests in the region

The Hungarian Defence Forces' mission in Chad, announced in 2023, and the humanitarian and development activities that started at the same time, seem to have come as a surprise to the Hungarian public. However, as I have written before, our engagement in the Sahel

³⁸ Sarkadi 2023.

³⁹ Magyarország széles körű együttműködést indít Csáddal a régiós stabilitás erősítése céljából 2024.

⁴⁰ László 2024.

⁴¹ Csuhaj 2023.

⁴² László 2024.

⁴³ Improvements to Infrastructure in Chad Countering Extremism 2017.

region is by no means new; we have been present in the region for a decade, and this mission is also linked to Hungarian foreign, security, and defence policy in many ways.¹

We have a security interest in stabilising the region and reducing migratory pressures from there. Jihadist groups' activities in the region contribute to migration and global instability, which is why the fight against terrorism is also important to us. It is also in our interest to increase Hungary's visibility on the global security map through our military engagement. According to the Ministry of Defence, the main objective of the mission is "to protect Hungarian interests on the ground". What is meant by this is a matter of conjecture. In the foreign press, there is a widespread theory that Hungary has entered into the Chad mission specifically for business interests, such as the hope of extracting raw materials. According to security analyst Fidel Amakye Owusu of Deutsche Welle, Hungary is interested in the raw materials found in the Sahel.²

"First, we need to look at what the possible factors are that could attract Budapest to the Sahel or Chad. In particular, these could include the abundant oil, uranium, gold, and other resources in the Sahel. Like all European countries, Hungary is becoming increasingly influential and would like to get its fair share of Africa's resources. Gold, cobalt, lithium, and other resources are important pull factors that could attract Budapest to the Sahel."³

Local allies

Our most important ally in the region was France. It had around 1,000 troops stationed in Chad, but in November 2024, the Chadian government announced the termination of the defence cooperation agreement, leading to the gradual withdrawal of French troops.⁴ Sadly, the US military presence in Chad has also ended, but their experience in counter-terrorism operations can provide us with valuable backup.⁵

Following the French withdrawal, Türkiye has further increased its military presence, providing drone technology and advisory assistance to the Chadian forces. Ankara's strategic interest coincides with Budapest's goals of stabilising the region and strengthening relations with Africa.⁶

Several EU countries, in particular Italy⁷ and Germany, are involved in various security missions in Africa. Coordination with these member states helps Hungary to integrate into common European defence and security mechanisms. If our interests are already aligned and there are many NATO allies in the area, it is not excluded that we can also carry out tasks together.⁸

¹ Marsai 2024.

² Magyarország széles körű együttműködést indít Csáddal a régiós stabilitás erősítése céljából 2024.

³ Marton 2024.

⁴ Egbejule 2024.

⁵ Reuters: Chad air force chief orders US to halt activities at army base, letter shows 2024.

⁶ Turkey Expands Military Presence in Chad Following French Withdrawal 2025.

⁷ Renoult 2024.

⁸ Reuters: Germany to keep military base in Niger open under temporary deal, Berlin says 2024.

The presence of major powers in the region

Russia has gradually increased its influence in Africa in recent years, particularly in the Sahel region. The Kremlin aims to increase its geopolitical weight on the continent, especially where the presence of Western powers such as France and the United States is weakening. For Russia, Africa is not only a source of raw materials, but also a source of political allies within the EU and the UN.⁹

Russia's main asset in the region is the private military company known as the Wagner Group, which has been active in several countries since 2023. Although there is no formal Russian military presence in Chad, Russian mercenaries and military advisors have been present in neighbouring countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and the Central African Republic for several years. These forces are often used to reinforce internal repressive regimes or to protect resources.¹⁰

China's presence in Africa is not small. Beijing has a long-term economic and diplomatic strategy. China aims to secure the supply of raw materials to the African continent and to increase its geopolitical weight in the global space.¹¹

China's main instruments are loans, infrastructure investments, and trade partnerships. In 2017, the country opened its first overseas military base in Djibouti, strategically important for its access to the Red Sea, and although geographically distant from Chad, it is a sign of Beijing's security interests in the region. China is mainly active in water, transport, and energy investments in and around Chad, in Sudan, Ethiopia, and Nigeria. It is a great power in Africa that tries its best to avoid overt military or political interventions.¹²

In summary, the current geopolitical realignment in the Sahel region has opened the way for other major powers to enter the region with the departure of French and US troops. Russia is exploiting this space more and more aggressively, which is not necessarily in line with Hungary's objectives and is making them more difficult, while China is deepening its presence in the region through economic and diplomatic means. All this is creating a competition for influence that is indirectly affecting Chad and could have an impact on future regional stability.

Where could the Hungarian Defence Forces appear in the future?

The future role of the Hungarian Defence Forces in Africa could be focused primarily on those countries where security challenges, alliance opportunities, and Hungarian national interests are present at the same time. The Sahel region is of particular importance in this respect, especially, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali. In these countries, political instability and the jihadist threat are also present. The gradual withdrawal of France has created a security vacuum that Russia, mainly through the Wagner Group, is trying to fill.¹³ However, the EU and NATO are also reassessing their presence in the region, and if new missions are established, Hungary could play a role in them. Participation offers opportunities to broaden military experience, deepen alliance cooperation, and address migration and security challenges.

⁹ Terren et al. 2025.

¹⁰ Terren et al. 2025.

¹¹ Etyang – Panyako 2020, 338–339.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Newly restructured, the Islamic State in the Sahel aims for regional expansion 2024.

Djibouti could also become an important destination in the Horn of Africa. Because of Djibouti's strategic location, with its access to the Red Sea, the armed forces of the United States, China, France, Japan, and other countries are already present.¹⁴ A Hungarian contingent for logistics, observation, or training could join NATO partners to provide a diplomatic footprint in the region, while providing valuable experience in an international, complex theatre of operations.

Important actors for stability in East Africa, such as Uganda and its region, could also be considered. These countries are not only relatively stable politically, but are also actively involved in the continent's security and peacekeeping processes.¹⁵ For Hungary, these would offer the opportunity to join EU or UN missions, either for peace support or training purposes, while opening new channels of cooperation in the region.

Overall, there are several strategic objectives behind the expansion of the Hungarian Defence Forces' presence in Africa: to broaden international military experience, strengthen cooperation with NATO and EU partners, address migration and terrorist threats at their origin, and increase the global military and diplomatic presence. Africa is one of the rare regions where military, economic, and diplomatic interests meet, and therefore, a Hungarian role there is not only possible but may also be strategically justified in the long term.

SUMMARY

It is clear from the above that Africa, and in particular the Sahel region, faces significant migration, security, and geopolitical challenges. Hungary is trying to address them as a priority, because they all have a major impact on Europe, including our small country.¹⁶ The main lesson of the paper is that migration and security issues are not at all separable, especially when the starting point is linked to unstable regions affected by economic poverty, climate change, weak state institutions, and the rise of extremist groups. The European Union, including Hungary, sees increasing migration primarily as a security threat and is seeking to address it locally in the countries of origin.¹⁷

The document also highlights that external interventions to curb migration, while reducing migratory pressures on Europe in the short term, may destabilise the regions concerned in the long term. This is demonstrated in the Sahel, where European measures to restrict migration have indirectly contributed to a significant increase in violence and extremist organisations.¹⁸

Hungary's military engagement in the Sahel represents a new level. The planned independent Hungarian mission in Chad not only serves to stabilise the region, but also creates an opportunity for Hungary to strengthen its place on the international security map. The Hungarian presence is not only aimed at fighting terrorism, but also at easing migration pressure and training local armed forces, while serving political, diplomatic, and economic objectives.¹⁹ The region's natural resources, such as uranium, gold, and oil, make it economically attractive and are likely to play a role in protecting Hungarian interests.²⁰

¹⁴ Pronk – Van der Graaf 2020.

¹⁵ Nagar – Nganje 2016.

¹⁶ Marton 2024.

¹⁷ Usherwood 2024.

¹⁸ Abebe 2020.

¹⁹ Marsai 2024.

²⁰ Magyarország széles körű együttműködést indít Csáddal a régiós stabilitás erősítése céljából 2024.

On the other hand, there are a couple of factors that make it look like we will not go to Chad, or at least not now, in 2025. It is because local allies like France²¹ and the United States of America have pulled out of the country and even the region in the last few months.²² This would further complicate the task of the Hungarian Defence Forces, but it should also be mentioned that Hungary would also like to be completely self-sufficient in supplying the mission members, which is aggravated by the unstable situation in the surrounding countries, the lack of allied forces and bases, the expensive procurement of Hungarian equipment, and the difficulty of replacing it.²³ The main reason we did not go is that Mahamat Idriss Déby, the president of Chad, is currently blocking the launch of the Hungarian military mission, even though he himself had previously requested Hungary's participation in the African country.²⁴ The mission would require a bilateral status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), but this has not yet been ratified by the Chadian side. Déby had previously sent a letter of invitation to Budapest, but its contents were never made public, and it is unclear what it contained exactly. According to the Hungarian Ministry of Defence, the soldiers are already undergoing training, but the launch of the mission is "on hold for the time being", at the request of the Chadian side. Hungarian-Chadian military cooperation is therefore in limbo for the time being, as the Chadian president has not approved the legal and diplomatic conditions of the mission, meaning that the Hungarian contingent has still not been able to depart, even though we should have been there since the beginning of 2025.²⁵

Last but not least, the lesson to be drawn from the paper is that Hungarian foreign and security policy is gradually moving away from a regional framework and towards a more global perspective. Africa, especially the Sahel, is a region where military, economic, and diplomatic interests are at stake simultaneously. The Hungarian military presence here will not only mark a new foreign policy direction, but also the coming of age of Hungarian defence policy, if it really successfully implements an independent mission with a complex remit and long-term strategic objectives. This intervention can strengthen Hungary's international role in a world where migration, terrorism, and geopolitical competition are redefining the role of states in the global space.²⁶

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²¹ Egbejule 2024.

²² Reuters: Chad air force chief orders US to halt activities at army base, letter shows 2024.

²³ Marsai 2024.

²⁴ N'Djamena puts the brakes on Hungarian military deployment 2025.

²⁵ Lengyel 2025.

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