

**DARFUR PEACEKEEPERS  
THE AFRICAN UNION PEACEKEEPING  
MISSION IN DARFUR (AMIS) FROM THE  
PERSPECTIVE OF A HUNGARIAN  
MILITARY ADVISOR**

**DARFURI BÉKEFENNTARTÓK  
AZ AFRIKAI UNIÓ BÉKEFENNTARTÓ  
MISSZIÓJA DARFURBAN (AMIS) EGY  
MAGYAR KATONAI TANÁCSADÓ  
SZEMSZÖGÉBŐL**

---

SZABÓ László András<sup>1</sup>

---

## INTRODUCTION

János Besenyő, an established acquaintance of the African region, visited the Hungarian Armed Forces with the rank of colonel several times during his missions, and his academic research activities are also closely related to this region. Because of the fortunate meeting of personal experience and research curiosity, a unique personality and career emerged, which makes János Besenyő unique in the academic world as well. The career of János Besenyő is unique but not without precedent, as Árpád Markó [1], a scholar of Hungarian historiography, was also a soldier and scientist with the rank of colonel, fighting during World War I and World War II. Colonel Zoltán Jobbágy [2], who is involved in the operations of NATO Command, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and ISAF Northern Region Command, Mazar-e Sharif, is also a scientist and Deputy Dean of the International Faculty of Military Sciences and Officer Training at University of Public Service. Zoltán Rajnai [3] the National Cyber Coordinator of Hungary, Professor of the University of Óbuda, since 2015 Dean of the Faculty of Mechanical and Safety Engineering of Donát Bánki University. He is the founder, a leader and a supervisor of the research field of cybersecurity, information security, information communication, and the operation of telecommunication systems in the Doctoral School of Security Sciences. He previously (1981–2013) served as a colonel in the Hungarian Armed Forces, between 1993 and 2013 he taught at Miklós Zrínyi University of National Defense, his main fields were the organization of information, communication, and telecommunication systems and their security. The career of János Besenyő is not without precedent, but it is not at all general.

## THE AUTHOR

It is not usual to start a book review with the words of the author, but this is how János Besenyő formulated this special situation and the purpose of writing the book. „*It is very unusual for a book to portray a peace support operation in a scholarly manner and, at the same time, based on personal experience, on the one hand, and to give the history of an exceptionally difficult operation of a unique era, i.e., the history of the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), on the other hand.*” The book is not unprecedented in its authorial scholarly work, this is well represented in his earlier works, for example in La République Centrafricaine (2016 [4], Central African Republic (2015) [5], Western Sahara (2009) [6], Morocco (2017) [7], Darfur (2016) [8], Egypt (2014) [9], Mali (2013) [10], Somalia (2014)

---

<sup>1</sup> szabolandras.kmo@gmail.com | ORCID: 0000-0001-7957-0724 | PhD candidate, Doctoral School on Safety and Security Sciences Óbuda University | doktorandusz, Óbudai Egyetem Biztonságtudományi Doktori Iskola

[11]. In addition to country briefings, his work on the Islamic State (2016) [12] and the crisis in Hungary and Western Sahara (2020) [13] are important. The author's work '*Darfur Peacekeepers*' describes the perspective of a Hungarian military advisor. The fact that he also wrote a textbook on Hungarian military and police peace operations is a good example of his consulting activities. [14]

The book can be divided into five major parts, in the first one, the author presents the geographical and historical background, then the African Union Peacekeeping Mission in Darfur (AMIS) missions: AMIS I, AMIS II, AMIS III, finally the role of the European Union in the missions. The next chapter should be highlighted and is present in all János Besenyő's scientific work in order to highlight the Hungarian experience, and finally to summarize and analyse the whole mission in the *Conclusion* chapter. A very important part of the volume is the *Timeline* because whoever wants to deal with this area gets a detailed guide.

### GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY OF DARFUR

In the chapter *Geography and history of Darfur*, the region is analysed by the author. The readers can learn about Darfur's geographical features, the borders of neighbouring countries, and the topographic features of the major cities. The climate, more precisely the tropical savanna climate becomes drier heading to the north, transforming into desert climate on the way. Several climate zones can be distinguished in Darfur and these are reflected in the difference of rainfall-intensity as well. Darfur's natural vegetation is in line with the north-south climate belts. In the southern borderland we find rainforests in a narrow band, up north there are savannah forests whose characteristic trees are the Acacia, Combretum and Adansonia digitata types. After the tree zone comes the savannah, composed of the true grasses (Poaceae), the height of which can reach up to 2-3 meters. One of them is the thatching grass (Hyparrhenia). The capital of the Masalit tribe is El-Fasher. It was built at the request of Abdel Rahman El Rashid sultan and served as the capital of Darfur State. Currently it is the administrative and trade center of North Darfur. The city of Nyala is the capital of South Darfur and one of the stations on the railway lining the cities of Khartoum, El Obeid, Rahad, Abuzabad and Ed Daein. Darfur's economy relies mostly on agriculture, which includes crop production, animal husbandry, forestry and other activities. Darfur's infrastructure is notably underdeveloped. Even the most of the major roads are dirty and they are almost impassable during the rainy season. Darfur has a population of 7.4 million people. Several languages are used, for example Arabic, Beigo, Daju, Erenga, Fongoro, Fulbe, Fur, Kujargé, Masalit, Sinyar, Tama and Zaghawa.[15] The Fur people are the largest ethnic group in Darfur. The Mashalits live on both sides of the borderline of Chad and Sudan, but mostly in the latter, and they speak their own language The Zaghawa people first appeared in the centre of Sudan in the 9th century. The Zaghawa and the Bideyats people refer to themselves as the Beri. Religion Islam has permeated Darfur since the 16th century by priest families from West-Africa, the Nile Valley and North-Africa. Islam in Darfur is based on the Maliki School. It was mostly a rural phenomenon, which was nothing like the traditions of Timbuktu or Northern Nigeria. Formerly Darfur was a state mechanism fundamentally connected to similar socio-political and economic structures like the empires of Kanem/Bornu, Wadai and Baguirmi, located in the western part of Darfur and in the area of Lake Chad to the east. It is important to know about these states that even though they

had been founded by one specific ethnic group (Kanuri, Maba or Fur), eventually they all became multiethnic societies inspired by the sacral African kingdoms. The Arabs did not play any role in the foundation of these states. The aspects nicely frame the development of the area, the environment as the author has done in-depth research work, the writings of János Besenyő also follow the traditions of exciting and authentic travel descriptions, all with a well-founded scientific accuracy.

The next section presents the African Union Peacekeeping Mission within Darfur (AMIS) missions, starting with the AMISI mission and then the African Union intervention. The author draws attention to the problems that have arisen as a result of the cooperation or non-cooperation of different organizations. The *AMIS II – history, structure and operation* *AMIS IIE (enhanced)* or *AMIS III* is a separate but cohesive chapter. János Besenyő illustrates his work with precise data and figures by combining the precise exploratory work of a historian and the mission-focused approach of a soldier.

### THE SUPPORT MISSION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The next chapter is *The support mission of the European Union*, and its subsections are *Beginnings EU/NATO airlift*, *Logistics Advisors of the EU supporting operation in Darfur*. Not only did the chain of command and unexplained requirements constitute a problem, but also that no European observer was trained to the conditions in Darfur. The EU believed that – like in other missions – the AMIS personnel would be trained in the area of operations, while the AMIS leadership believed that the EU would send perfectly prepared people. These are the problems in African missions that are always present, and the author always emphasizes this in his previous works as well. At the end of the chapter, János Besenyő introduces the Hungarian role in the mission. Although, Hungary took part in the AMIS operation from the beginning, due to the conditions mentioned before, our participation was not so significant. Due to the plans, an observer would be sent to replace Major Kajári, but the EU would deploy one (or more) logistics expert(s).

### HUNGARIAN EXPERIENCE

The chapter of *Hungarian experience* deals with the Hungarian role in three subchapters. These subchapters are: *Transformation of Hungary's participation*, *The Field Support Service and Situation of food supply*. For me – maybe because of my qualification – the last one was the most important area. The food supply system was carried out in a doubled system, as – due to the recent international trends – the AU put the soldiers' food supply out to a competition. This was won by the American PAE company, which was involved in the planning and operating of camps as well. [16] Providing drinking water to the area of operations was a cardinal issue, therefore, special attention was paid to this segment. The PAE was responsible for the mission's water supply. The company used a water specialist who checked the wells, their technical condition and conducted basic tests. Expensive laboratory tests were carried out only then if complaints or sick people turned up the camp. As the author writes: „*For me, this area was the biggest challenge, as at home, logistics professionals for accommodation carry out similar work. Somehow, I managed to get the hang of it. When I arrived, only 24 camps operated at a slightly larger area than France, when I left the operational area, the mission operated 33 camps, which, however,*

*were significantly overcrowded”*. [17] He continues with the following lines: *“During my assignment, fire lightened up many times in the camps, in which fortunately only slight injuries occurred and we even managed to stop spreading in time. Most of the fires occurred because some of the African officers and soldiers cooked in their tents. Fortunately, we were able to localize and eliminate fires quickly, but it mostly really just depended on luck and not on the preparedness of officers or crew”*. [18]

The problems related to hygiene caused constant headaches for the camp supply department, as it belonged to both everyone and no one. Health care was carried out by Medical Support Solutions (MSS), a South African company, but apart from the classic medical work, they did not engage in other activities. Through the Hungarian role, János Besenyő presented how important these tasks are in the success of military operations and what their pitfalls can be, and he did all this based on his own experience.

### CONCLUSION

In the *Conclusion* part of the book, the words of the author should be followed, as the book cannot be summed up better. *“In this book, the reader could gain insight into the conflicts in Darfur and also the African Union operation in which Hungary has been involved since the beginning. In this book, I presented the operation in Darfur, its course and challenges, often through my personal observations, as more than six months on the field gave me such experience that most academics do not have. In this concluding chapter, I will briefly summarize the findings and suggestions that can be drawn from my book.”* [19]

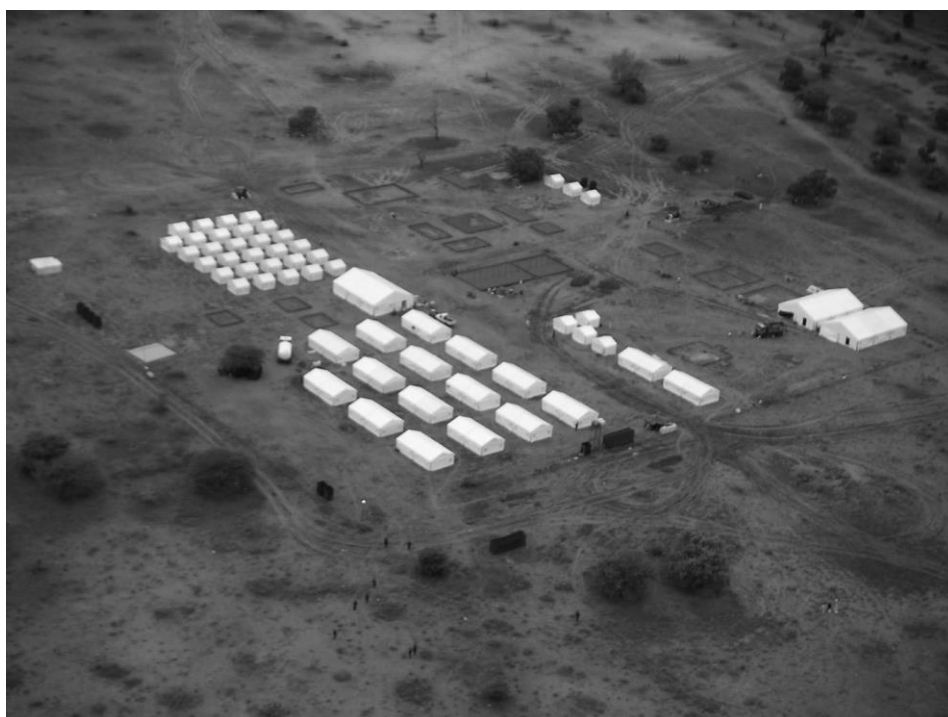
### RECOMMENDATION

I recommend this book to those readers who are interested in the subject because it is easy to read and exciting, to soldiers who want to increase their experience as it is based on the author's personal military experience, to scientists who research this field, because the book was written with scientific thoroughness and objectivity. I also recommend the book to those ones who love history, the background of military operations, or those ones who just want to read a meaningful good book. To the question of why János Besenyő wrote this book, he answered himself at the end of the *Conclusion* chapter of the book: *„Because of the above, I find it substantial for the experience of peace operations on the African continent to be processed and published as broadly as possible. That is why I wrote this book from a less-investigated perspective - that of a soldier actively involved in peace operations. I hope this writing will inspire other researchers to make further work and analyses.”* [20] The UN mission is facing the same problems and the situation in Darfur has not really consolidated. More and more conflicts and peace operations can be expected on the African continent, where Hungary also plans to send more and more soldiers. Therefore, all Hungarian experiences there, including János Besenyő's book, are important, especially if we look at the possible future Hungarian roles in an international context.

## ANNEXES



*1. figure Edited by the author based on [21]*



*2. figure Edited by the author based on [22]*



*3 figure Edited by the author based on [23]*

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

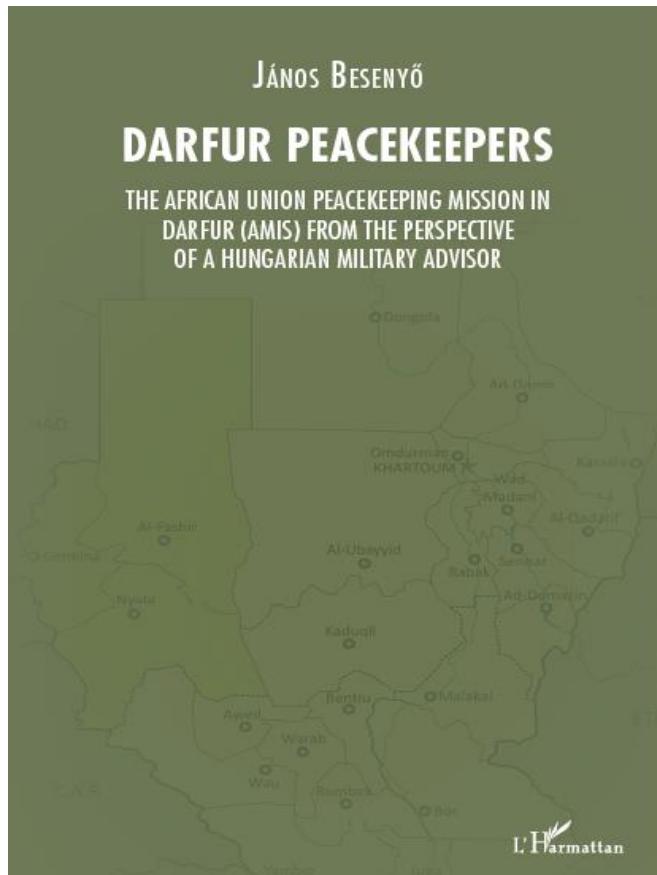
- [1] SCIENTIST AND SOLDIER The recollections of Árpád Markó organized under the 1st Press Kincses Katalin Mária <http://real.mtak.hu/123805/1/Marko%20I.pdf>
- [2] Zoltán Jobbágy cv [https://hhk.uni-nke.hu/document/hhk-uni-nke-hu/2021\\_NKE\\_%C3%B6n%C3%A9letrajz\\_magyar\\_Dr%20Jobb%C3%A1gy%20Zolt%C3%A1n%20jav%C3%ADtott.pdf](https://hhk.uni-nke.hu/document/hhk-uni-nke-hu/2021_NKE_%C3%B6n%C3%A9letrajz_magyar_Dr%20Jobb%C3%A1gy%20Zolt%C3%A1n%20jav%C3%ADtott.pdf)
- [3] Zoltán Rajnai cv <https://kiadvany.magyarhonvedseg.hu/wp/2020/08/06/dr-rajnai-zoltan/>
- [4] Balogh, Andrea; Besenyő, János; Miletics, Peter; Vogel, David; Szász, Géza (Translator); Tóth, Sára (Translator) La République Centrafricaine Szeged, Hungary: Center Universitaire Francophone (2016), 326 p.
- [5] Balogh, Andrea; Besenyő, János; Miletics, Peter; Vogel, David; Szász, Géza (Translator); Tóth, Sára (Translator) La République Centrafricaine Szeged, Hungary: Center Universitaire Francophone (2016), 221 p.
- [6] Besenyő, János Western Sahara Pécs, Hungary: IDRResearch Kft., Publikon (2009), 197 p.
- [7] Besenyő, János; Miletics, Péter Country Profile - Morocco and Western Sahara Budapest, Hungary: Military National Security Service, Honvéd General Staff Scientific Research Center (HVK TKH), Hungarian Army Geoinformation Service (2017), 401 p.

- [8] Besenyő, János: Darfur the Flaming Province - History of the African Union Mission in Sudan Pécs, Hungary: IDRResearch Kft., Publikon (2016), 249 p.
- [9] Besenyő, János; Miletics, Peter; Hosszú, István (ed.) Egypt: Country Profile Budapest, Hungary: MH Geoinformation Service (since 2007) (2014), 294 p.
- [10] Besenyő, János; Miletics, Peter; Hosszu, István (ed.) Mali: country profile Budapest, Hungary: MH Geoinformation Service (since 2007) (2013), 206 p.
- [11] Kiss, Péter Álmos; Besenyő, János; Resperger, István Somalia: country profile: Somalia Budapest, Hungary: Honvéd Vezérkar (2014), 189 p.
- [12] Besenyő, János; Prantner, Zoltán; Speidl, Bianka; Vogel, David; Nádori, Attila (ed.) The Islamic State, Terrorism 2.0 - History, ideology, propaganda, Budapest, Hungary: Honvéd General Staff Scientific Research Center (HVK TKH) (2016), 254 p.
- [13] Besenyő, János Hungary and the Crisis in Western Sahara Budapest, Hungary: Óbuda University, Doctoral School of Security Sciences, Monarchia Publishing House (2020), 460 p.
- [14] Besenyő, János Participation of Hungary in African Operations between 1989-2019, Óbudai Egyetem Biztonságtudományi Doktori Iskola, Budapest, 2019, 134 p, ISBN: 978-963-449-121-7
- [15] Mohammed H. Fadlalla, The Problem of Dar Fur, 2005. 23-28.; Paul Clammer, 5. Sudan. pp. 214.-215.
- [16] Besenyő, János: Darfur Peacekeepers THE AFRICAN UNION PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN DARFUR (AMIS) FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A HUNGARIAN MILITARY ADVISOR Paris (2021) L'Harmattan France 5-7 rue de l'Ecole Polytechnique 75005 Paris ISBN 978-2-343-23696-4 p.157.
- [17] Besenyő, János: Darfur Peacekeepers THE AFRICAN UNION PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN DARFUR (AMIS) FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A HUNGARIAN MILITARY ADVISOR Paris (2021) L'Harmattan France 5-7 rue de l'Ecole Polytechnique 75005 Paris ISBN 978-2-343-23696-4 p.166.
- [18] Besenyő, János: Darfur Peacekeepers THE AFRICAN UNION PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN DARFUR (AMIS) FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A HUNGARIAN MILITARY ADVISOR Paris (2021) L'Harmattan France 5-7 rue de l'Ecole Polytechnique 75005 Paris ISBN 978-2-343-23696-4 p.169.
- [19] Besenyő, János: Darfur Peacekeepers THE AFRICAN UNION PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN DARFUR (AMIS) FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A HUNGARIAN MILITARY ADVISOR Paris (2021) L'Harmattan France 5-7 rue de l'Ecole Polytechnique 75005 Paris ISBN 978-2-343-23696-4 p.172.
- [20] Besenyő, János: Darfur Peacekeepers THE AFRICAN UNION PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN DARFUR (AMIS) FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A HUNGARIAN MILITARY ADVISOR Paris (2021) L'Harmattan France 5-7 rue de l'Ecole Polytechnique 75005 Paris ISBN 978-2-343-23696-4 p.187.
- [21] Besenyő, János: Darfur Peacekeepers THE AFRICAN UNION PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN DARFUR (AMIS) FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A HUNGARIAN MILITARY ADVISOR Paris (2021) L'Harmattan France 5-7 rue de l'Ecole Polytechnique 75005 Paris ISBN 978-2-343-23696-4 p.213.

- [22] Besenyő, János: Darfur Peacekeepers THE AFRICAN UNION PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN DARFUR (AMIS) FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A HUNGARIAN MILITARY ADVISOR Paris (2021) L'Harmattan France 5-7 rue de l'Ecole Polytechnique 75005 Paris ISBN 978-2-343-23696-4 p.214.
- [23] Besenyő, János: Darfur Peacekeepers THE AFRICAN UNION PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN DARFUR (AMIS) FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A HUNGARIAN MILITARY ADVISOR Paris (2021) L'Harmattan France 5-7 rue de l'Ecole Polytechnique 75005 Paris ISBN 978-2-343-23696-4 p.221.

### REFERENCES

Besenyő, János: Darfur Peacekeepers THE AFRICAN UNION PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN DARFUR (AMIS) FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A HUNGARIAN MILITARY ADVISOR Paris (2021) L'Harmattan France 5-7 rue de l'Ecole Polytechnique 75005 Paris ISBN 978-2-343-23696-4



1. Figure: János Besenyő's DARFUR PEACEKEEPERS THE AFRICAN UNION PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN DARFUR (AMIS) FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A HUNGARIAN MILITARY ADVISOR. Book cover by János Besenyő