

**REVIEW ABOUT THE BOOK
CONFLICT AND PEACE IN
WESTERN SAHARA
BY JÁNOS BESENYŐ**

**RECENZÍÓ BESENYŐ JÁNOS:
KONFLIKTUS ÉS BÉKE A
NYUGAT-SZAHARÁBAN
CÍMŰ KÖNYVÉRŐL**

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INTRODUCTION

The MINURSO is a UN Peacekeeping mission, which dates back to 24 April 1991, the abbreviation comes from the Spanish “*Misión de las Naciones Unidas para la Organización de un Referéndum en el Sáhara Occidental*”. The more than three decades old mission was originally planned for to verify the reduction of Moroccan troops in the Western Sahara.

THE EDITORS BRIEF CAREER PATH

János Besenyő is professor at the Doctoral School on Safety and Security Sciences and Director of the Africa Research Institute at Óbuda University, Hungary. Between 1987 and 2018, he served as a professional soldier and served in several peace operations in Africa and Afghanistan. He received a PhD in military science from Zrínyi Miklós National Defense University (Hungary) and a Habilitation doctorate at Eötvös Loránd University (Hungary). In 2014, he established the Scientific Research Centre of the Hungarian Defence Forces General Staff, and he was its first leader from 2014 to 2018. His most recent publication is *Darfur Peacekeepers: The African Union Peacekeeping Mission in Darfur (AMIS) from the Perspective of a Hungarian Military Advisor*.

R. Joseph Huddleston is an assistant professor in the School of Diplomacy and International Relations at Seton Hall University. He studies diplomacy by self-determination and secessionist groups, international responses to intrastate conflict, and war economies in protracted social conflicts.

Yahia H. Zoubir is a professor of International Studies and Director of Research in Geopolitics at KEDGE Business School, France. He has published works on the Western Sahara conflict for nearly 35 years, including articles in the *Middle East Journal*, *Middle East Policy*, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, *California Western International Law Journal*, and others.

THE MAIN EDITOR'S RECENT PUBLICATION ACTIVITY

- Besenyő János: *Darfur Peacekeepers - The African Union peacekeeping mission in darfur (AMIS) from the perspective of a Hungarian military advisor*, L'Harmattan (Paris)
- Besenyő János: *Another Showdown in Western Sahara?*, *TERRORISM AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE* 33: (3) pp. 649-656.

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- Besenyő János: A visegrádi országok Afrika-politikája és részvételük az afrikai békefenntartó műveletekben, KÜLÜGYI SZEMLE 2020/1: pp. 51-79.
- Besenyő János: Magyarország és a nyugat-szaharai válság, Óbudai Egyetem, Biztonságtudományi Doktori iskola; Monarchia Kiadó
- Besenyő János: The Africa Policy of Russia, TERRORISM AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE 31: (1) pp. 132-153.

ABOUT THE CONTENT

Marco Balboni, professor of European Union (EU) and International Law at the University of Bologna, where he is also Coordinator of the Degree in International Relations and Diplomatic Affairs addresses the intro section: *“Introduction: Peacekeeping Operations in Situations of Conflict: The Case of MINURSO”* where he describes the basis of the mission. The main reason for the conflict in the region was the status of the POLISARIO, what Morocco refused to acknowledge.

In the first chapter – *“An Overview of MINURSO: Legal History, Framework, Missions, Structure: A Balance”* – Carlos Ruiz Miguel, professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Santiago de Compostela, starts with a historical background, where the author highlights a few key events which eventually led to the MINURSO. In the following, there is a brief showcase of the legal framework, after that there is a section about the missions (such as the case of the Referendum and the Case-fire between the two belligerent parties, etc.) and the MINURSO structure.

In the second chapter – *“Relevant Events in the MINURSO History”* – Yolanda Blanco Souto, PhD student at the University of Santiago de Compostela, writes about the Mission’s history, where starting from the “Obstructionism” goes through “The Aborted Human Rights Component” section, where in last the author describes how human rights have been systematically abused since the first moment of the occupation until nowadays.

In the third chapter – *“The End of the Western Sahara Peace Process and the Collapse of the UN Ceasefire”* – Jacob Mundy, associate professor of Peace and Conflict Studies and Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at Colgate University, writes about the road that led to the end of the approximately three decades UN ceasefire between Morocco and the Sahrawi nationalist movement.

In the fourth chapter – *“The Legal Aspects of the Functioning of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara”* – Meriem Naïli, PhD candidate in Security, Conflict and Human Rights at the University of Exeter, writes about the political and legal obstacles that affected the mission and about the loopholes in the international human rights law, that has been abused throughout the recent decades.

In the fifth chapter *“Human Rights: MINURSO between a Rock and a Hard Place”* – Toby Shelley, journalist, and author of several books, including *Endgame in the Western Sahara*, writes about how the Sahrawi people lived under Moroccan control and how the MINURSO should have had a role in mediation between the Polisario and the Rabat.

In the sixth chapter – *Participation of Women in the MINURSO: Scope, Evolution, and Factors for the Contribution to the Mission* – María López Belloso, postdoctoral researcher at the University of Deusto, writes a detailed analysis about the role of women in peacekeeping operations, making oppositions with other missions.

In the seventh chapter – “*MINURSO and the Saharawi Archaeological Heritage*” – Elia Quesada, specialist in prehistoric rock paintings, based at the University of Córdoba, and Nick Brooks, co-director of the Western Sahara Archeological Project and visiting research fellow at the School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia, Norwich, are writing about how the 40 years of conflict in the Western Sahara threatens the archeological heritage in the region. These are important in the understanding of past human migration and climate change causes in the Sahara.

In the eighth chapter – “*Building Sandcastles in the Desert? MINURSO Military-Component: Tasks, Duties, and Their Fulfillment*” – Cyprian Aleksander Kozera, expert at the Interdisciplinary Research Centre of the University of Warsaw and Blażej Popławski, researcher at the Polish Africanist Society, have made qualitative research about the military component, a survey done in the Autumn of 2020.

In the ninth chapter – “*The MINURSO Police Contingent*” – János Besenyő, mentioned in editors brief and Marcell György Pintér, researcher at the African Research Institute of the Doctoral School for Safety and Security Sciences of the University of Óbuda, are writing about the police contingent’s role, duties, and challenges through the Mission, as a middle ground between military forces and civilians.

In the tenth chapter – “*Integrated Logistics Support and Financial Issues of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO)*” – Mirela Atanasiu, senior researcher at the Center for Defense and Security Studies at Carol I National Defence University, writes about the financial and logistical background of the Mission. To provide successful support for the operations, these supply chains must be secure and mobile in order to enhance durability and self-reliance in solving tasks.

In the eleventh chapter – “*Military and Police Experiences from Western Sahara: The Case of Hungary*” – János Besenyő, mentioned in editor’s brief, writes about military and police experiences based on both international and national experiences towards peace-keeping missions supplemented with a comparative analysis conducted by the author.

In the twelfth chapter – “*The United States and MINURSO: 31 Years*” – R. Joseph Huddleston mentioned in editors brief and Edder A. Zarate holds an MA at the School of Diplomacy and International Relations, Seton Hall University, are writing about the historical ties of the US within the region and its role that led to the ceasefire in 1991, furthermore, the relationship of US administrations with Mission throughout its history.

In the thirteenth chapter – “*China and the MINURSO: Eyes on Peak Phosphorus?*” – Csaba Barnabás Horváth, writes about China’s interest in the Mission, its foreign policy focused on the exploit of business opportunities and gaining political influence in the region, mostly over Morocco due to the rock phosphate reserves, which could play a key role in food production in the future.

In the fourteenth chapter – “*Russia and MINURSO: This Is Not Our Conflict*” – Sergey Nikonov, professor and research fellow at St. Petersburg State University and a member of the International Political Research Association (IPSA), writes about Russia’s perspective as an observer, who recognizes the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic based on Algeria’s official recognition. On the other hand, the author describes the “Language Barriers” throughout the Mission.

In the fifteenth chapter – “*France and MINURSO*” – Éva Fábíán, an independent researcher focusing on the security and defense policy of France, especially in the European

and African regions, writes about France's role in the Mission also its ties with the Maghreb states and human right issues regarding to the conflict.

In the sixteenth chapter – *“The Approach of the African States towards MINURSO”* – Dávid Vogel, senior researcher of Doctoral School for Safety and Security Sciences at Óbuda University, Africa Research Institute, , writes about how UN peacekeeping operations are affecting Africa as a whole, moreover the continent's support towards peacekeeping, what describes through the example of the MINURSO.

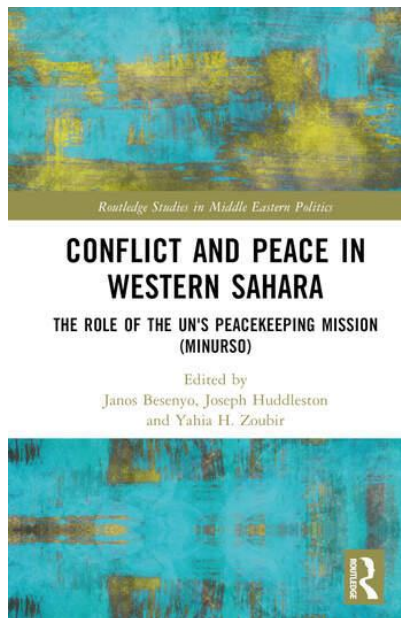
In the seventeenth chapter – *“MINURSO: A Mission for Maintaining the Status Quo?”* – Souadou Lagdaf, associate professor of the History of Islamic countries at the University of Catania and Yahia H. Zoubir, mentioned in editor's brief, are writing about how the MINURSO was a testing ground for UN resolutions, furthermore the conflict between Morocco and the Saharawi people, who seek independence opposing a former colonial power.

In summary, I recommend this book to anyone, who interested in the Western Sahara, African studies, and geopolitics. It is a gap filling volume on its respected field, it discusses nowadays and the defining processes for the future.

THE BOOK'S BIBLIOGRAPHY

János Besenyő (Eds.), R. Joseph Huddleston and Yahia H. Zoubir: *Conflict and Peace in Western Sahara - The Role of the UN's Peacekeeping Mission (MINURSO)* – USA, New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Publishing, 2023. - 333 p. ISBN: 978-1-032-25762-4 (hardcover);

THE VOLUME'S COVER



1. ábra: „*Conflict and Peace in Western Sahara*”
 Edited By János Besenyő, R. Joseph Huddleston, Yahia H. Zoubir című könyv borítója.