

3. Peace operations and conflict management

Overview

With the launch of 8 multilateral peace operations, and with only 4 closing, the number of operations reached 57 in 2013 (see sections I and III in this chapter). France, which conducted two of these new operations, placed itself at the centre stage of peace operations in 2013 and determined much of the agenda.

The increase in the number of operations was accompanied by a dramatic decrease in the total number of personnel deployed on peace operations—from 233 642 in 2012 to 201 239 in 2013—due to the drawdown of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. Excluding ISAF, there was a continuation in 2013 of the increase of personnel first seen in 2012, which had broken a declining trend since 2009. Nevertheless, it is likely that total personnel figures will fall further due to the withdrawal of ISAF in 2015. While some personnel will remain in a new mission in Afghanistan and other European countries may follow France to Africa or start contributing to United Nations operations, this is unlikely to make up for personnel withdrawn.

International attention appears to be moving from Afghanistan to Africa and in particular to the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mali, Somalia and South Sudan (see section II). While Africa has been the host of the greatest number of peace operations since 2010, in 2013 the drawdown of ISAF meant that it also hosted the greatest number of personnel, for the first time since 2008. The eight new peace operations in 2013 were all deployed in Africa, and each formed part of the complex constellations of operations, organizations and actors currently engaged there. In fact, four of the eight new operations were deployed to Mali, three to the CAR and one to Somalia. Two of the operations were African-led: the International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA), jointly led by the Economic Community of the West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU), and the AU-led International Support Mission to the CAR (MISCA). With Africa increasingly taking care of its own affairs through the deployment of these missions, the question of whether Africa is ready for this task became more important.

Developments in Africa in 2013 may suggest more robustness in peace operations, with an increase in the peace enforcement character and intrusiveness of certain missions. The new Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) was mandated to ‘prevent the expansion of all armed groups, neutralize the groups, and to

disarm them'. Although not using such counterinsurgency language, the mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was also more robust than is usual. Furthermore, in an unprecedented step, the UN expanded its logistical support packages for the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to the frontline units of the Somali National Army in their joint fight against the Islamist group al-Shabab. In another controversial step, MONUSCO became the first UN operation to deploy unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs, or drones) for surveillance.

Alongside these changes, there was also a great deal of continuity in 2013. The UN Security Council's first special resolution on peacekeeping since 2001 was not groundbreaking but merely recognized that peacekeeping and peace-building activities are interrelated aspects of multidimensional peace operations. Moreover, because of the increasing robustness of some operations, the Security Council felt it needed to reaffirm its respect for the basic principles of peacekeeping, including consent of the parties, impartiality, and the non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate. In addition, in order to prevent the creation of a precedent, the increased robustness of both the FIB and MINUSMA was said to be 'exceptional', without 'any prejudice to the agreed principles of peacekeeping'.

The protection of civilians remained high on the agenda of multilateral peace operations, despite difficulties in implementation. MONUSCO showed a renewed determination to protect civilians and was generally hailed as a success. However, by the end of 2013 the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was protecting tens of thousands civilians on its bases and comparisons with safe areas of the mid-1990s in Bosnia and Herzegovina were being made. In addition to protection of civilians, the UN Security Council requested that operations pay more attention to a number of other issues that had already appeared on the agenda, although not prominently, including transnational organized crime, cooperation between UN peace operations, and improving mission transitions and exit strategies with UN country teams (which bring together the UN agencies, programmes and funds active in a country).

Consensus in the Security Council on controversial issues such as the use of force and the use of UAVs was found on an ad hoc basis. More structurally, the so-called Hollande doctrine—named after French President François Hollande—of short and limited humanitarian interventions mandated by the Security Council in cooperation with forces deployed by a regional organization, and at the invitation of the host state, appears to be similar to China's view on interventions. However, as tensions increased between the AU, the UN and African subregional organizations over the transitions in Mali and the CAR, it may be questioned whether deploying missions in complex constellations is really the way forward and whether these two countries will become blueprints for future peace operations.