

5. Peace operations and conflict management

Overview

Many of the trends related to peace operations and conflict management in 2013 continued in 2014: the number of peace operations further increased, while the total number of personnel deployed again decreased. There were 62 peace operations in 2014, a rise of 3 over the previous year. The number of deployed personnel in all peace operations, including the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, fell by 20 per cent to 162 052. However, excluding ISAF, the total number of deployed personnel increased further, by 4 per cent to 148 716 (see sections I and IV in this chapter). The closure of ISAF was a defining moment for 2014 and influenced many of the year's peace operation figures (see section III in this chapter).

As a consequence of ISAF's drawdown, Africa became (even more than before) the main focus of peace operations as the continent with the largest number of such operations on its soil and hosting more personnel than all the other regions combined. Seven new peace operations were launched in 2014 and four of them were in Africa: the European Union (EU) Military Operation in the Central African Republic (CAR) (EUFOR RCA), the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR (MINUSCA), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (MVM) for South Sudan, and the African Union (AU) Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL).

The three new missions outside Africa were all established in response to the conflict in Ukraine: the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine; the OSCE Observer Mission (OM) at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk; and the EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine) (see section II in this chapter).

The non-traditional challenges faced by peace operations became increasingly prominent during the year. The AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and ISAF continued to face asymmetric threats from non-state actors, while the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan Heights and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) became targets of jihadist groups. Another challenge was the Ebola epidemic, which affected the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), with four mission personnel contracting the disease, two of whom died. AMISOM was also indirectly affected as the deployment of a new Sierra Leonean contingent was cancelled due to fears of spreading the virus. A third non-trad-

itional challenge was that several UN missions faced popular demonstrations, some of which even resulted in the death of protestors at the hands of mission personnel.

Peace operations also continued to operate in contexts of more traditional challenges, among them the rising tensions related to larger geopolitical changes and struggles. Such conflicts arose in Ukraine, for example, where Russia and the West struggled over geopolitical influence in the country.

Peace operations seemed to become more robust, with a number of UN missions actively involved in combat: MINUSCA, MINUSMA and the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). At the same time, the UN and its troop contributors came under closer scrutiny. For example, a troop contributor was, for the first time, held liable for the death of civilians as a Dutch court ruled that the Dutch contingent operating in Srebrenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995 could have done more to protect the lives of more than 300 Bosniaks.

Despite these challenges and the frequent criticism of operations and their effectiveness, the international community and conflict parties continue to view peace operations as a useful conflict management tool. When looking at some of 2014's proposals for new operations, the most difficult situations remained the focus of attention. Ukrainian Parliamentarians and certain UN Security Council members hoped to deploy a UN peace operation to Ukraine, while pro-Russian groups wanted a Russian peacekeeping force. President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority proposed a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) operation to patrol a future Palestinian state and, towards the end of the 2014 Gaza war, the EU repeated its offer to reactivate its Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point (EU BAM Rafah). Further, the Syrian opposition called for a UN mission to observe a future ceasefire, while some hoped that the UN would send a rescue mission to liberate schoolgirls kidnapped from Chibok, Nigeria, by Boko Haram.

In light of increasingly demanding missions, high expectations and a changing geopolitical environment, the UN Secretary-General announced a comprehensive review process for UN peace operations. For this purpose, he appointed a High-Level Panel on Peace Operations to assess the state of peace operations today and coming needs in the future. Hopefully the Panel will find ways for peace operations to balance challenging circumstances with limited resources. At the same time, many of the core recommendations of the Brahimi Report compiled by the UN in 2000 are still valid today. If the Panel's efforts were to contribute to the implementation of at least some of these recommendations, it would already mark a great leap forward.