

II. Global and regional trends and developments in multilateral peace operations

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A key trend in 2021 was the continued decrease in the number of personnel deployed in multilateral peace operations globally. To a large extent this reflects the termination of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan and the establishment (or continuation) of smaller peace operations that have had relatively stable deployments. The discussions on exit strategies for some of the largest multilateral peace operations, such as the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), are also indications of this trend. Moreover, peace operations continue to be concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa, with two out of the three new operations launched in the region. These two peace operations, both in Mozambique, also illustrate the increasing involvement of regional organizations—in this case, the European Union and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). In addition, complex constellations of peace operations, concentrated in a handful of host countries, continue to face coordination challenges. The involvement of private military companies in conflict-management efforts in crowded fields, such as the Central African Republic (CAR) and Mali, has also increased the complexity of these environments. Finally, disagreements between organizations, personnel contributors and funders of multilateral peace operations have continued across many operations, and combined with increasing geopolitical rivalries—particularly between Western countries and Russia and China—this often leads to discussions about mission mandates, closures and restructuring.

Multilateral peace operations in 2021

In 2021 the UN, regional organizations and alliances, and ad hoc coalitions of states carried out 63 multilateral peace operations in 38 countries/territories across the world (see figure 2.2)¹—one more operation than in 2020. In fact, the

¹ See also table 2.6, this chapter, section III. The quantitative analysis draws on data collected by SIPRI to examine trends in peace operations. According to SIPRI's definition, a multilateral peace operation must have the stated intention of: (a) serving as an instrument to facilitate the implementation of peace agreements already in place; (b) supporting a peace process; or (c) assisting conflict prevention or peacebuilding efforts. Good offices, fact-finding or electoral assistance missions, and missions comprising non-resident individuals or teams of negotiators are not included. Since all SIPRI data is reviewed on a continual basis and adjusted when more accurate information becomes available, the statistics in this chapter may not fully correspond with data found in previous editions of the SIPRI Yearbook or other SIPRI publications.

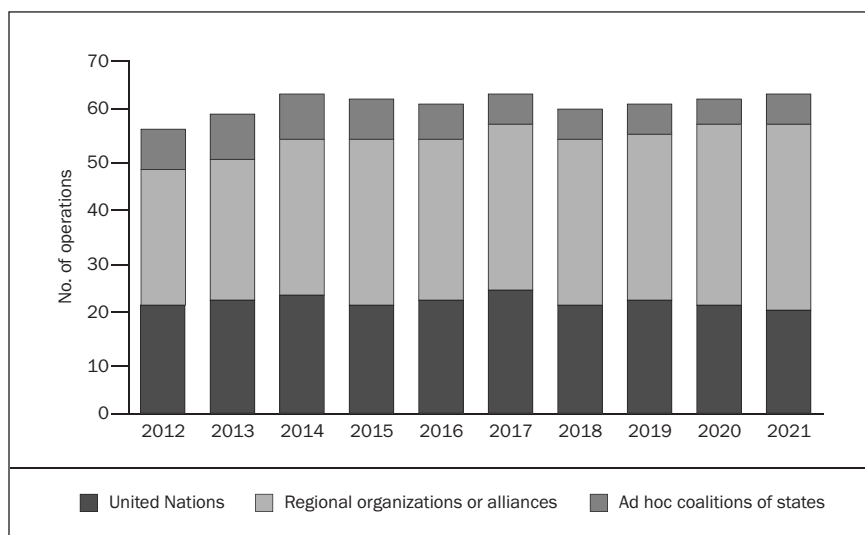


Figure 2.2. Number of multilateral peace operations, by type of conducting organization, 2012–21

number of active multilateral peace operations has remained relatively stable since 2013, when CAR and Mali became hotspots (see figure 2.3). In 2021 CAR hosted five operations, deploying a combined average of 15 000 personnel, while Mali hosted four operations, deploying approximately 16 000 personnel. Along with Somalia and South Sudan, these were the countries/territories with the largest number of deployments in 2021. In accordance with the general trend, the largest number of operations—22—took place in sub-Saharan Africa, with 19 taking place in Europe, 14 in the Middle East and North Africa, 5 in Asia and 3 in the Americas (see table 2.5).

New multilateral peace operations

Four multilateral peace operations started in 2021: the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS); the Russian–Turkish Joint Monitoring Centre in Azerbaijan (RTJMC); the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM); and the EU Military Training Mission in Mozambique (EUTM Mozambique).

UNITAMS was established on 3 June 2020 by UN Security Council Resolution 2524 with the objective of supporting the Sudanese democratic transition. Despite UNITAMS' deployment beginning in October 2020, the mission only started delivering its mandated objectives in January 2021. Though the mission's mandate—to support the transition process in Sudan—was extended for another year on 3 June 2021,² it was later called

² UN Security Council Resolution 2579, 3 June 2021.

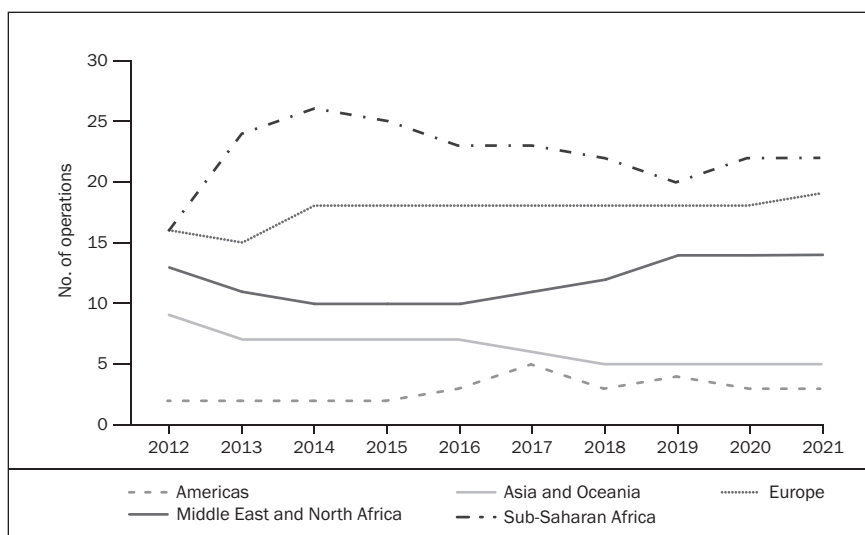


Figure 2.3. Number of multilateral peace operations, by region, 2012–21

into question by the October military coup in Sudan and the stalling of the democratic transition.³

The RTJMC in Aghdam district in Azerbaijan became operational on 30 January 2021. Established by a memorandum of understanding between Russia and Turkey, it monitors implementation of the ceasefire agreement between the Armenian and Azerbaijani forces signed on 10 November 2020 in the Nagorno-Karabakh war. As of 31 December 2021 the RTJMC was estimated at 60 personnel members from Russia and 60 from Turkey. Monitoring of the ceasefire has been carried out using uncrewed aerial vehicles (UAVs) and the evaluation of other sources—although the centre did not specify which sources.⁴ It is the first time UAVs have been used as the primary platform to monitor a ceasefire.

On 23 June 2021 the Extraordinary SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Maputo established SAMIM in response to escalating violent extremism in the northern Mozambiquan province of Cabo Delgado.⁵ Less than a month later, on 15 July 2021, the mission was deployed in the region. SAMIM's mandate includes supporting Mozambique to combat terrorism and acts of violent extremism in Cabo Delgado; strengthening and maintaining peace and security, as well as restoring law and order, in affected

³ United Nations, Security Council, 'Security Council briefing on the Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS)', 11 Dec. 2021.

⁴ 'Russia and Turkey Open Monitoring Centre for Nagorno-Karabakh', Reuters, 30 Jan. 2021. On the armed conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh see chapter 5, section I, in this volume.

⁵ Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), Communiqué of the Extraordinary Summit of the SADC Heads of State and Government, 23 June 2021. On the armed conflict in Mozambique see chapter 7, section IV, in this volume.

Table 2.5. Number of multilateral peace operations and personnel deployed by region and type of organization, 2021

Conducting organization	Americas	Asia and Oceania	Europe	Middle East and North Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	World
Operations	3	5	19	14	22	63
United Nations	2	2	2	7	7	20
Regional organization or alliance	1	1	14	6	15	37
Ad hoc coalition	–	2	3	1	–	6
Personnel	301	337	8 108	14 289	88 823	111 858
United Nations	277	301	1 015	12 459	65 291	79 343
Regional organization or alliance	24	–	5 942	676	23 532	30 174
Ad hoc coalition	–	36	1 151	1 154	–	2 341

– = not applicable.

Note: Numbers of active operations cover the year 2021, including operations closed during the year; personnel figures are as of 31 Dec. 2021.

Source: SIPRI Multilateral Peace Operations Database, accessed 1 Apr. 2022.

areas of Cabo Delgado; and supporting Mozambique, in collaboration with humanitarian agencies, to continue providing humanitarian relief to populations affected by terrorist activities. Although the mission's duration was foreseen as lasting for three months, continued instability in the area led to it being extended for an additional three months on 5 October 2021. Both SADC and Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi did not reject the possibility of a further extension of the mission.

As of the end of 2021 SAMIM comprised military personnel from eight SADC member states: Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Though the mission's authorized level of personnel is 2916, as of 31 December 2021 it is estimated to consist of 1077 personnel, of which the largest contingent is South African.⁶ SAMIM has worked in collaboration with the Mozambique Armed Defence Forces (Forças Armadas de Defesa de Moçambique, FADM) and other troops deployed to Cabo Delgado, such as the 1000-personnel strong Joint Force of the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) and the Rwanda National Police (RNP). This Joint Force is not a multilateral peace operation, but a single-country contingent deployed at the request of

⁶ International Crisis Group, 'Winning peace in Mozambique's embattled north', Africa Briefing no. 178, 10 Feb. 2022.

the Mozambique government, and has worked closely with the FADM and SAMIM.⁷

EUTM Mozambique was established by the Council of the EU on 12 July 2021 and launched on 15 October 2021.⁸ The mission is mandated to build the capacity of FADM units that will eventually become part of a military quick reaction force, the rationale being that this will provide the Mozambique government with a more sustainable and effective military capability to combat armed groups in Cabo Delgado province. EUTM Mozambique will provide these units with training and non-lethal equipment, which is a novelty for EU military training missions. This equipment (which includes vehicles and a field hospital) is financed under the European Peace Facility, a new EU funding instrument that became operational in 2021.⁹

EUTM Mozambique's mandate will end two years after the mission has achieved full operational capability, which is expected in the spring of 2022. As of 31 December 2021 the missions consisted of 70 military personnel (out of an authorized strength of 118), with most troops from Portugal, the former colonial power in Mozambique. Unlike SAMIM and the Rwandese forces in Mozambique, the EU mission will conduct its training activities at locations in the south of the country, close to the capital Maputo, rather than operating in Cabo Delgado itself.¹⁰

These newly established missions follow the overall trend of smaller operations with small deployments. Although relatively speaking SAMIM is larger, it cannot be considered a large-scale operation along the lines of AMISOM or multidimensional UN operations such as the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

Closed multilateral peace operations

Three multilateral peace operations ended in 2021: the NATO-led RSM in Afghanistan; the AU Human Rights Observers (HROs) and Military Experts (MEs) Mission in Burundi; and the Organization for Security

⁷ Rwandan Ministry of Defence, 'Rwanda deploys joint force to Mozambique', 10 July 2021.

⁸ Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/1143 of 12 July 2021 on a European Union Military Training Mission in Mozambique (EUTM Mozambique), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L247, 13 July 2021; and Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/1818 of 15 Oct. 2021 launching the European Union Military Training Mission in Mozambique (EUTM Mozambique), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L368, 18 Oct. 2021.

⁹ Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/2032 of 19 Nov. 2021 on an assistance measure under the European Peace Facility to support military units trained by the EU Training Mission in Mozambique, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L415, 22 Nov. 2021.

¹⁰ European Parliament, Subcommittee on Security Defence, An update on the state of play with EU Training Mission in Mozambique with Vice-Admiral Hervé Bléjean, Director General of the EU Military Staff (EUMS), 26 Jan. 2022.

and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk.

The RSM was launched at the beginning of 2015 by NATO at the invitation of the Afghan government and in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2189.¹¹ The mission was established as a non-combat successor operation to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), its objective being to train, advise and assist Afghan security forces and institutions to develop their capacities.

Though the mission was terminated in early September 2021, its draw-down had already started the previous year following an agreement signed in February 2020 between the United States and the Taliban. In accordance with the agreement, the USA was to withdraw all its forces from Afghanistan by May 2021. One of the main arguments for the US withdrawal was that given increasing geopolitical rivalries it needed to undertake a strategic turn towards the Asia Pacific region, and towards China in particular.¹² Given that the withdrawal was progressive and relatively fast, it is difficult to estimate the number of personnel deployed immediately before the RSM's date of termination. Nevertheless, in February 2021 9592 troops from 36 contributing countries were deployed by the RSM.

The AU HROs and MEs Mission in Burundi was established on 13 June 2015 and deployed the following month in response to rising political violence surrounding President Pierre Nkurunziza's pursuance of a third term and a failed coup attempt.¹³ The mission was designed to monitor, document and report on the country's human rights and security situation, and to strengthen protection and access to justice for victims of human rights violations. Although the original plan was to deploy 100 HROs and 100 MEs by March 2017, the maximum strength reached by the mission was only 45 HROs and 26 MEs, in July 2016. This was due to lack of funds, a perception that the situation in the country had undergone relative improvement, and resistance from the host government towards maintaining the mission.

On 20 May 2020, despite the recent death of Pierre Nkurunziza, Burundi held relatively peaceful elections. Although the country has been politically stable since the elections, human rights violations, particularly arrests and forced disappearances of political opposition, remain a concern. The AU Peace and Security Council decided to end the HROs and MEs Mission in Burundi on 31 May 2021 given the progress and positive developments

¹¹ UN Security Council Resolution 2189, 12 Dec. 2014.

¹² White House, 'Remarks by President Biden on the way forward in Afghanistan', 14 Apr. 2021.

¹³ African Union, Communiqué of the 515th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union at the Level of Heads of State and Government on Burundi, 13 June 2015.

witnessed in the country.¹⁴ At the time the mission was terminated, it was composed of eight HROs and two MEs.¹⁵

The OSCE Observer Mission became operational on 24 July 2014 to monitor cross-border movements between Russia and Ukraine at the checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk. The mission was established at the request of Russia given the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine, and was based on the 2014 Minsk Protocol, in which Russia and Ukraine committed to an immediate ceasefire in the region. The protocol envisaged permanent OSCE monitoring and verification of the Russia–Ukraine border. The mission was discontinued on 30 September 2021 following Russia’s objection to a further mandate extension, despite other OSCE countries—such as the United Kingdom and the USA—having advocated for expansion of the mission’s scope.¹⁶ Ukraine criticized the decision, considering it an attestation of Russia’s plans to provide material support to separatists in Ukraine’s Donetsk and Luhansk regions.¹⁷ At the time of its discontinuation, the mission was operating with 21 permanent international personnel.

Personnel deployments

Over the past decade there has been a general trend towards a declining number of personnel deployed globally in multilateral peace operations.¹⁸ In fact, December 2021 saw the lowest number of personnel deployed in multilateral peace operations during the period 2012–21 (see figure 2.4). Over 2021 the number of personnel deployed decreased from 127 124 to 111 858—a decline of approximately 12 per cent. Combined with the slight increase in the number of operations deployed in 2021, the trend continues towards more but smaller operations. Since MINUSCA’s establishment in 2014, no large-scale mission has been launched.¹⁹

¹⁴ AU, Communiqué of the 993rd Meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union at the Level of Heads of State and Government on the AU Human Rights Observers and Military Experts Mission in Burundi, 27 Apr. 2021.

¹⁵ Amani Africa, ‘Discussion on the AU human rights observers and military experts to the Republic of Burundi’, 27 Apr. 2021.

¹⁶ US Embassy & Consulates in Russia, ‘Planned closure of the OSCE Border Observer Mission’, Sep. 20, 2021; and British Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, ‘Russia decision to close OSCE Observer Mission at 2 Russian border checkpoints: UK statement’, 16 Sep. 2021. On the armed conflict in Ukraine see chapter 5, section II, in this volume.

¹⁷ Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on Russia’s intention not to extend the mandate of the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk’, 2 Sep. 2021.

¹⁸ The number of personnel deployed in multilateral peace operations, unless otherwise specified, refers exclusively to international personnel and does not include national personnel employed in these operations.

¹⁹ Though the RSM, a large-scale mission, was established in 2015, it was a follow-up mission to ISAF and so began with large contingents already on the ground.

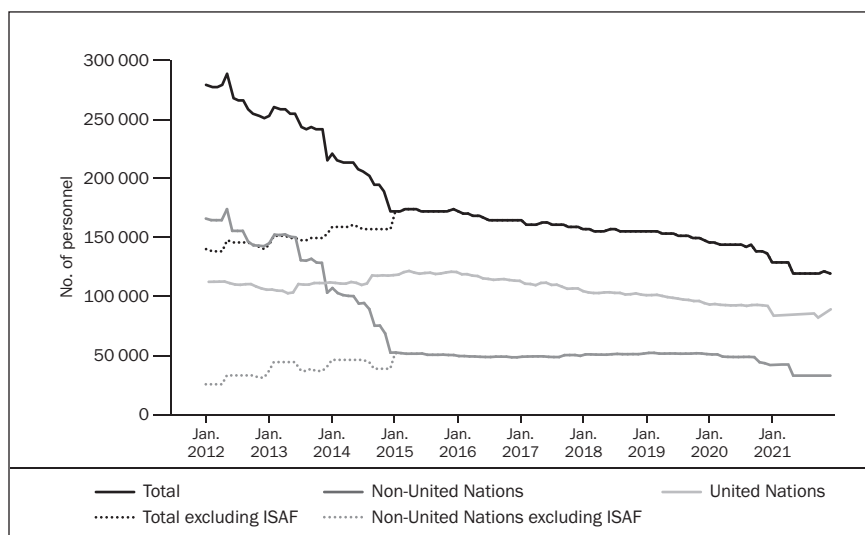


Figure 2.4. Number of personnel in multilateral peace operations, by type of conducting organization, 2012–21

ISAF = International Security Assistance Force.

Note: Monthly data, last observation is Dec. 2021.

The significant decrease in the number of personnel deployed from 2020 to 2021 can be explained by the closing of two of the largest multilateral peace operations active in 2020, namely the RSM in Afghanistan and the UN–AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). At the time they were terminated, these operations together accounted for approximately 16 000 personnel deployed. In fact, much of the downward trend in personnel numbers over recent years is explained by the drawdown of troops from Afghanistan, which for a significant period was host to the largest multilateral peace operation, with more than 130 000 troops on the ground between 2010 and 2011 (when the RSM’s predecessor, ISAF, was deployed).

Though both the RSM and UNAMID closed in 2021, their discontinuation had already been decided in previous years, with discussions in the Security Council on UNAMID’s closure having begun in 2018.²⁰ In the case of the RSM, the agreement between the USA and the Taliban that envisaged the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan by May 2021 had been signed back in February 2020.²¹ Therefore, the steep decline in the number of personnel deployed in peace operations globally in 2021 was already expected towards the end of 2020.

²⁰ UN Security Council Resolution 2559, 22 Dec. 2020.

²¹ US Department of State, ‘Agreement for bringing peace to Afghanistan between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan which is not recognized by the United States as a state and is known as the Taliban and the United States of America’, 29 Feb. 2020.

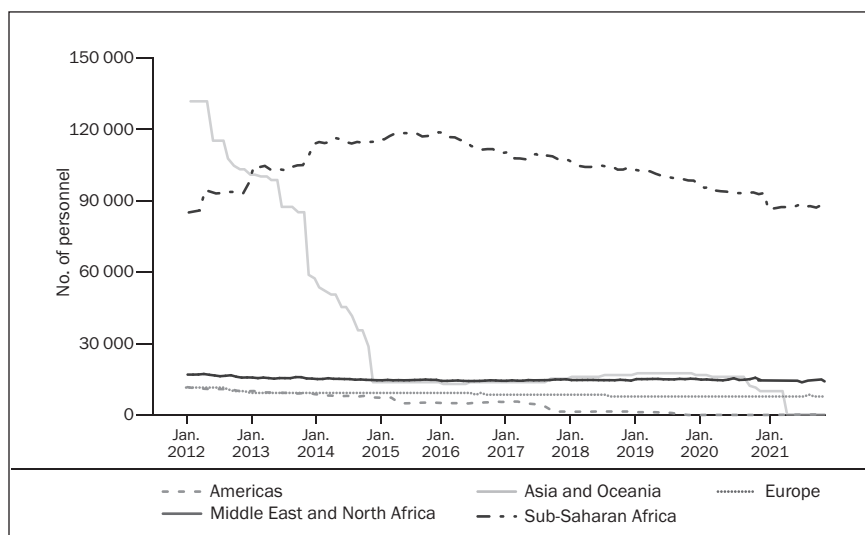


Figure 2.5. Number of personnel in multilateral peace operations, by region, 2012–21

Note: Monthly data, last observation is Dec. 2021.

Sub-Saharan Africa continues to host the highest number of multilateral peace operations (22 of the 63 peace operations active in 2021), including 7 of the 10 largest operations active on 31 December 2021. Moreover, 79 per cent of all international peace operations personnel deployed at the end of 2021 were assigned to this region (see figure 2.5). Even so, the number of personnel deployed in sub-Saharan Africa has decreased since 2015, the year following MINUSCA's establishment, and over the course of 2021 it declined further from 94 201 to 88 823. However, this decline of 6 per cent was lower than the global downward trend.

Organizations conducting multilateral peace operations

United Nations

The UN remains the main organization deploying multilateral peace operations, accounting for about one third of all operations and 71 per cent of all personnel deployed on 31 December 2021. In 2021 the UN deployed 20 multilateral peace operations—one fewer than in 2020. Over the course of 2021 the number of personnel deployed in UN peace operations decreased by 8.5 per cent from 86 712 to 79 343. This represents the continuation of a trend since 2015, with larger operations drawing down or closing in subsequent years.

The decrease in 2021 is largely due to the closing of UNAMID in Sudan, which still had 6623 deployed personnel at the time of its termination on 31 December 2020. UNITAMS, the UN peace operation established in the

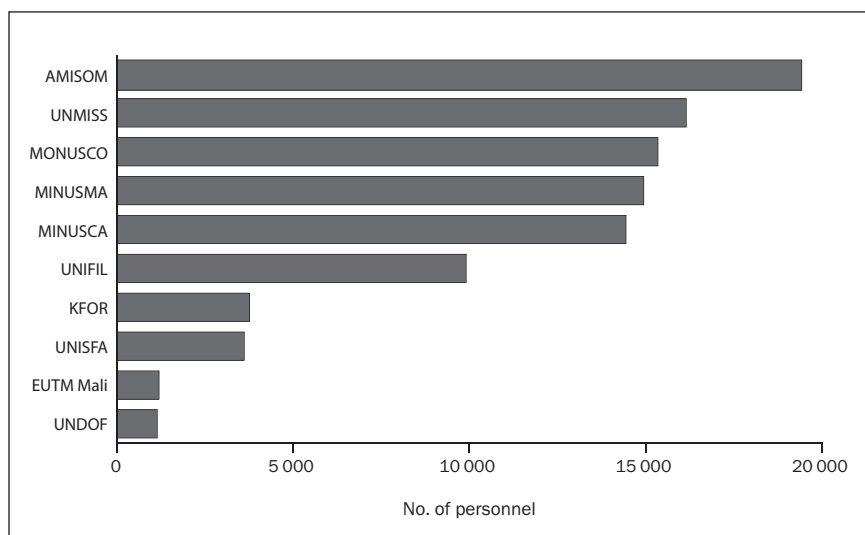


Figure 2.6. Largest multilateral peace operations as of 31 Dec. 2021

AMISOM = African Union Mission in Somalia; EUTM Mali = EU Training Mission Mali; KFOR = Kosovo Force; MINUSCA = United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic; MINUSMA = UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali; MONUSCO = UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; UNDOF = UN Disengagement Observer Force; UNIFIL = UN Interim Force in Lebanon; UNISFA = UN Interim Security Force for Abyei; UNMISS = UN Mission in South Sudan.

country ahead of UNAMID's closure, is a much smaller special political mission, with 98 personnel deployed as of the end of December 2021. Although some of the largest UN peace operations, such as MINUSCA and MONUSCO, increased in size during 2021, this has not been sufficient to counterbalance the effect of UNAMID's closure. Even so, 7 of the 10 largest multilateral peace operations in December 2021 were UN peacekeeping operations.

Since 2019 the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) has been the largest UN peace operation, although its size has decreased since then (see figure 2.6). As of 31 December 2021 it deployed 16 140 international personnel, representing a decrease of 7.1 per cent over the course of the year.

MONUSCO was the second largest UN peace operation on 31 December 2021, with 15 313 personnel deployed. For the first time since 2016, MONUSCO personnel increased, by 3.8 per cent over the course of the year. Although the mission continues to prepare its transition plan,²² on 20 December 2021, having considered the political instability and recurring violence in the DRC, the

²² United Nations, Security Council, 'Senior official in Democratic Republic of Congo spotlights violence in eastern provinces, outlines mission transition plans, briefing Security Council', SC/14655, 5 Oct. 2021.

Security Council maintained the mission's strategic priorities and authorized personnel strength of approximately 16 000.²³

MINUSMA was the third largest UN peace operation on 31 December 2021, with 14 917 international personnel deployed. This represents a decrease of less than 1 per cent compared to the end of the previous year. By contrast, MINUSCA's personnel number increased by 2.2 per cent over the same period to 14 423 on 31 December 2021. Lastly, the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) continues to be the only major UN operation outside sub-Saharan Africa, deploying 9871 personnel as of 31 December 2021. Over the past 10 years, this number has remained relatively stable under pressure from the parties to the conflict that wish UNIFIL to keep this level of commitment.

Fatalities in United Nations peace operations

Over the course of 2021, 92 international personnel and 32 local staff died while serving in UN peace operations (see figure 2.7).²⁴ This was two less fatalities than in 2020, which had been considerably more deadly than preceding years due to illnesses, particularly Covid-19. Of the 92 international personnel who died, 64 were military personnel, 26 were international civilian personnel, and 2 were police. The fatality rate for uniformed personnel in 2021 was 0.85 per 1000 uniformed personnel (see figure 2.8).

In 2021 peacekeepers died from three main causes: illness (48, of which 10 were due to Covid-19), accidents (9) and malicious acts (24). In addition, for 11 peacekeepers the cause of death was yet undetermined or unknown. Despite hostile deaths tending to receive the most attention, such fatalities comprised only 26 per cent of all deaths during 2021. This is, however, an 11 per cent increase compared to 2020, when Covid-19 measures likely reduced activities.

MINUSMA continues to register the highest number of deaths among deployed personnel, with 35 fatalities. With a total of 19 hostile deaths in 2021, compared to 6 in 2020, MINUSMA has returned to the higher levels of hostile deaths it saw prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.²⁵ These 19 fatalities in MINUSMA account for 79 per cent of the 24 hostile deaths experienced by UN peace operations in 2021. Excluding MINUSMA, fatality rates of uniformed personnel due to malicious acts within UN peace operations remain at near all-time-low levels—it was only in 2019 that fewer hostile deaths were recorded per 1000 uniformed personnel deployed.

²³ UN Security Council Resolution 2612, 20 Dec. 2021.

²⁴ The figures for fatalities in this section do not include the UN's personnel category described as 'other', and refer to international personnel unless otherwise specified.

²⁵ During 2021 restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic, such as a reduction in patrols, reduced personnel's exposure to the risk of attack.

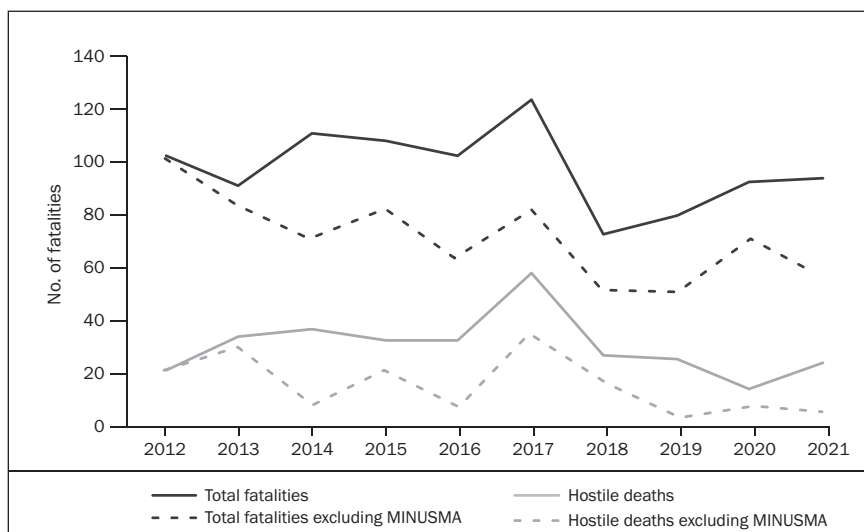


Figure 2.7. Fatalities among international personnel in United Nations peace operations, 2012–21

MINUSMA = UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

Regional organizations and alliances

Regional organizations and alliances led 37 multilateral peace operations in 2021—one more than in 2020. There were two new operations in this category, both in Mozambique: SAMIM and EUTM Mozambique. As of 31 December 2021 multilateral peace operations established by regional organizations or alliances deployed a total of 30 174 personnel, a decrease of 21 per cent compared to the 38 140 personnel deployed the previous year. Once again, this decline is largely explained by the closure of the NATO-led RSM.

Four African regional organizations—the AU, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and SADC—conducted a total of nine multilateral peace operations. While the number of operations deployed by African regional organizations remained the same over the course of 2021, the total number of personnel deployed by these organizations increased by 5 per cent from 20 496 to 21 562.

The AU conducted most of the African operations and was also the organization deploying most personnel. In fact, since 2015 AMISOM has been the largest multilateral peace operation, with 19 384 personnel in the field as of 31 December 2021. The AU also conducted the AU Mission in Libya and the AU Observer Mission to the Central African Republic (MOUACA). In addition, despite the closure of the AU HROs and MEs Mission in Burundi, the organization continued to maintain two small political missions in CAR and Mali.

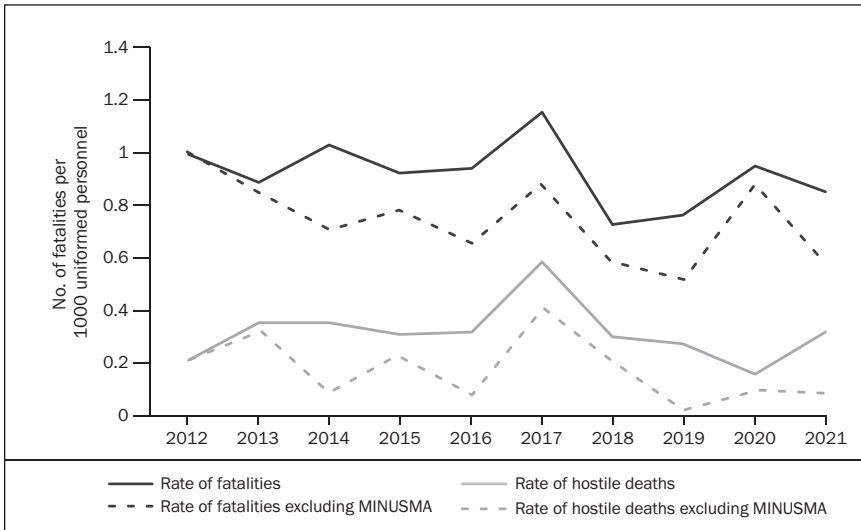


Figure 2.8. Fatality rates for uniformed personnel in United Nations peace operations, 2012–21

MINUSMA = UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

Following a decrease in the number of deployed troops in 2020, AMISOM maintained its number of personnel throughout 2021. Though the mission aims to transition its efforts to the Somali government and its mandate was set to run out on 31 December 2021, troop-contributing countries and the AU expect to maintain a significant presence into the near future. The main stakeholders involved have expressed concerns about the potential expansion of al-Shabab in the wake of any eventual discontinuation of AMISOM—echoing the Taliban’s rapid takeover of Afghanistan following the withdrawal of US and other international forces, including the RSM.

There was general agreement on the need to restructure the mission. During 2021 there were discussions between Somalia and the AU regarding the future of AMISOM and the establishment of an interim operation to facilitate the transfer of security responsibilities to Somali security agencies.²⁶ The report issued by an independent assessment team in May 2021 recommended that AMISOM be replaced by a hybrid AU–UN multidimensional stabilization mission starting in January 2022, financed under the peacekeeping budget.²⁷

²⁶ AU, Communiqué of the 978th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on the consideration of the Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the situation in Somalia and the implementation of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) mandate, 9 Feb. 2021. On the armed conflict in Somalia see chapter 7, section IV, in this volume.

²⁷ AU, ‘Report of the Independent Assessment Team on the African Union’s engagement in and with Somalia post 2021’, 30 May 2021.

In October 2021, however, the Somali government rejected the proposal.²⁸ AMISOM's mandate was subsequently renewed until the end of March 2022 in order to allow the AU, the Somali government, troop contributors and donors to agree on the mission's future.²⁹

The ECOWAS Mission in Gambia (ECOMIG), in place since January 2017 to address the constitutional crisis that followed the 2016 national elections, was the only multilateral peace operation led by ECOWAS in 2021. As of 31 December 2021 it deployed approximately 1000 personnel, primarily military. IGAD also led a single multilateral peace operation, the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (CTSAMVM), which since 2018 has been monitoring compliance with the South Sudan peace agreement. Prior to that, the mission—under different names—successively monitored other ceasefire agreements. Finally, SADC established SAMIM in June 2021, with the objective of addressing extremist violence across northern Mozambique (see above).

Regional organizations and alliances from the northern hemisphere—the EU, NATO and the OSCE—conducted 27 multilateral peace operations during 2021, one more than in 2020. Nevertheless, by December 2021 two of these operations had closed, namely the NATO-led RSM and the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk. The closure of RSM explains the steep 51 per cent decrease in the combined number of personnel deployed by these organizations, from 17 614 on 31 December 2020 to 8 588 on 31 December 2021. Whereas the OSCE only deploys peace operations in member states, the EU and NATO only conduct peace operations in non-member states.

The EU conducted 15 peace operations in 2021, comprising 5 military and 10 civilian missions—one more than in 2020. The deployment of EUTM Mozambique brought the total number of EU military training missions to four, with other EUTMs active in CAR, Mali and Somalia. Though some EU member states proposed establishing a similar mission in Ukraine, this was not supported by the Council of the EU.³⁰ Meanwhile, EUTM RCA suspended its training activities due to the growing influence of the Russian private military company Wagner Group in CAR, following reports that it had effectively taken command of a Central African Armed Forces (Forces Armées Centrafricaines, FACA) battalion that had previously been trained by the EU mission. In December, the arrival of Wagner Group operatives in Mali also raised the possibility of the EU pausing or discontinuing EUTM

²⁸ AU, Communiqué of the 1042nd Meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union at the Level of Heads of State and Government on the update on the situation in Somalia, 28 Oct. 2021.

²⁹ UN Security Council Resolution 2614, 21 Dec. 2021.

³⁰ Dutch House of Representatives, 'Verslag informele Raad Buitenlandse Zaken Defensie d.d. 1 en 2 september 2021' [Report of the informal meeting of defence ministers of the Foreign Affairs Council of the Council of the EU, 1–2 September 2021], 16 Sep. 2021.

Mali's activities, which were already challenged by the absence of civilian control over the Malian armed forces following the most recent military coup in 2021.³¹ The number of personnel deployed in EU multilateral peace operations increased 9.9 per cent, from 2992 on 31 December 2020 to 3289 on 31 December 2021.

NATO conducted three multilateral peace operations in 2021, the same number as in 2020. This, however, includes the RSM, which was terminated in 2021. NATO had been active in Afghanistan since 2003, when it assumed command of ISAF. The number of personnel in NATO peace operations decreased 68 per cent in 2021, to 4270 on 31 December 2021. Prior to the decision to end the RSM, NATO had decided in February 2021 to proceed with a gradual expansion of the NATO Mission in Iraq (NMI), which advises the Iraq armed forces. One important reason for this expansion was that the US-led Operation Inherent Resolve, which NMI has been relying on for protection as well as logistical and medical support, is drawing down. However, by the end of 2021 the expansion of NMI, which consists of approximately 500 military and civilian personnel, had yet to begin.

The OSCE conducted nine multilateral peace operations in 2021, although only eight were active by the end of the year. As of 31 December 2021 the organization had 1029 personnel deployed in these eight operations, mostly in the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine, which consisted of 827 international personnel, in addition to local personnel from the host country. This makes the SMM the largest civilian mission globally. Despite the deteriorated situation on the ground, the mission's mandate was almost not renewed in March 2021 after Armenia blocked consensus on the decision for several weeks—allegedly to express its discontent with the OSCE's handling of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.³² Hours before the mandate was set to expire, however, consensus was reached on extending it for a further year. Most of the other OSCE operations have been active since the 1990s and maintained fewer than 30 international personnel in 2021.

Ad hoc coalitions

Ad hoc coalitions of states conducted six multilateral peace operations in 2021, one more than in 2020. These were the International Monitoring Team in Mindanao, the Philippines; the Office of the High Representative (OHR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina; the Joint Control Commission (JCC) Joint Peacekeeping Forces in the disputed Trans-Dniester region of Moldova; the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in the Sinai Peninsula; the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission on the Korean peninsula; and the RTJMC

³¹ 'EU suspends military training in Central Africa over Russian mercenaries', Reuters, 15 Dec. 2021.

³² Liechtenstein, S., 'OSCE Ukraine Mission extended in last-minute breakthrough', Security and Human Rights Monitor, 31 Mar. 2021.

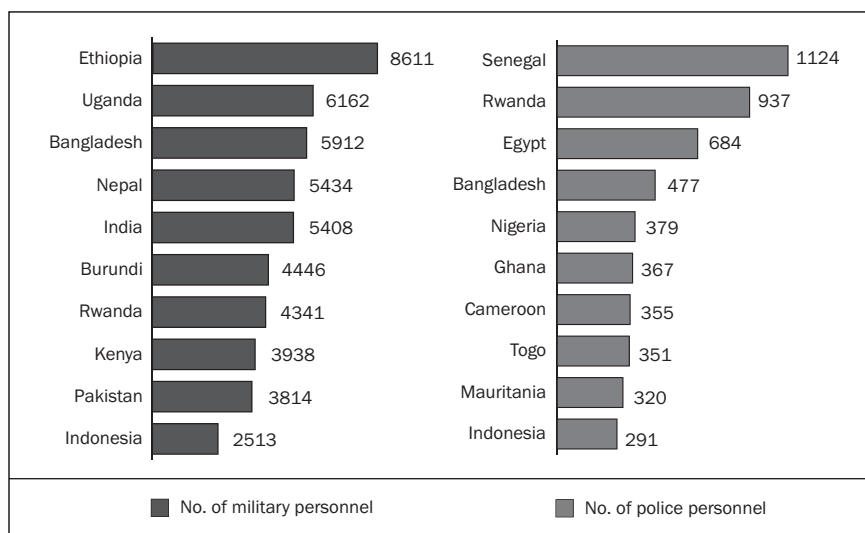


Figure 2.9. Main contributors of military and police personnel as of 31 Dec. 2021

in Azerbaijan. The number of personnel deployed in multilateral peace operations in this category increased by 3 per cent in 2021, from 2272 on 31 December 2020 to 2341 on 31 December 2021. This increase is mainly due to the establishment of the RTJMC in 2021, with the other missions' deployments remaining relatively constant.

In July 2021 Russia submitted a resolution, co-sponsored by China, to the UN Security Council to close the OHR on the basis that the Bosnian parties had achieved progress.³³ Russia and China were the only members of the Security Council to vote in favour of the resolution. This episode came just a few weeks after Russia had refused the appointment of German politician Christian Schmidt to the OHR post.³⁴ The OHR has caused disagreements between Russia and Western governments for years given the former's support to the Serbia and its desire to close the office. These tensions increasingly overlap with geopolitical rivalries affecting decisions on peace operations. Out of discontent with the OHR appointment, in November 2021 Russia also threatened to veto the renewal of EUFOR Althea's mandate, the EU force deployed to oversee the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement in Bosnia–Herzegovina.³⁵

³³ United Nations, Security Council, 'Security Council turns down resolution that would end powers of Bosnia and Herzegovina High Representative', SC/14585, 22 July 2021.

³⁴ 'UN rejects Russian bid to scrap Bosnia peace envoy post', Deutsche Welle, 23 July 2021.

³⁵ Ruge, M., 'Peace of the action: The Kremlin's plans in Bosnia and Ukraine', European Council on Foreign Relations, 11 February 2022.

The main troop- and police-contributing countries

As of 31 December 2021 the 10 largest contributors of military personnel accounted for 52 per cent of all military personnel deployed globally in multilateral peace operations. While Ethiopia has remained the largest military personnel contributor (see figure 2.9) since 2014, its contribution has decreased for the fourth year in a row, down from 10 124 on 31 December 2020 to 8611 on 31 December 2021. This 15 per cent decline can be explained by the closing of UNAMID, to which the country was the third main contributor. Aside from this, Ethiopia has been providing personnel to the major multilateral peace operations in the Horn of Africa, namely AMISOM, UNMISS and the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). In August 2021 the Sudanese government requested that the UN withdraw the Ethiopian peacekeepers from UNISFA due to deteriorating Sudan–Ethiopia relations arising from disputes over the the Fashaga border area, where Ethiopian farmers cultivate land claimed by Sudan. Nonetheless, as of the end of 2021 Ethiopia remained by far the largest contributor to the mission, with no indication that its contributions were being significantly affected by conflict in the country’s Tigray region.

Four other sub-Saharan African countries feature among the 10 largest contributors of military personnel in 2021: Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda. Burundi, Kenya and Uganda rank highly mainly due to their contributions to AMISOM. Rwanda, meanwhile, is the largest troop contributor to MINUSCA and UNMISS, two of the UN’s largest peace operations.

South Asia is the other region well represented in multilateral peace operations, with Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan among the main contributors of military personnel due to their participation in UN peace operations. Bangladesh is the largest troop contributor to MINUSMA and Pakistan is the largest troop contributor to MONUSCO. Due to the closure of UNAMID, Pakistan’s troop contribution fell by 752 over the course of 2021, to 3813 as of 31 December 2021.

The novelty in the 2021 list of top contributors is that the USA dropped out of the top 10, while Indonesia entered the list in 10th position. US contributions to multilateral peace operations were already declining due to the drawdown of forces in Afghanistan. With the closure of the RSM, US troop contributions decreased by some 68 per cent over the course of 2021, from 3640 at the end of 2020 to 1145 as of 31 December 2021. As such, it went from being the 10th largest contributor to peace operations in December 2020 to the eighteenth largest contributor in December 2021. The USA has remained the largest contributor of military personnel to the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the MFO. Indonesia has been a key contributor of troops to UNIFIL and MONUSCO, and its contributions remained virtually the same over 2021.

The top 10 contributing countries of police personnel to multilateral peace operations together provided 64 per cent of all police personnel in 2021. Senegal has continued to be the main contributor of police personnel to peace operations, although its personnel contribution declined by 208 over the course of 2021, standing at 1124 as of 31 December 2021. Despite this 16 per cent decrease, Senegal provided 14 per cent of all police personnel deployed to multilateral peace operations. As in 2020, it is followed by Rwanda, Egypt and Bangladesh. Nepal, Burkina Faso and Jordan dropped out of the 2021 top 10 contributors of police personnel, to be replaced by Cameroon, Indonesia and Mauritania. It is noteworthy that in 2021 the top 10 contributors for both military and police personnel were exclusively African and Asian countries.

Other multilateral operations

In recent years there has been an ongoing trend of establishing multilateral operations that fall outside the scope of SIPRI's definition of a multilateral peace operation. The Joint Force of Group of Five for the Sahel (JF-G5S) and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the Lake Chad Basin belong to this category. Both operations consist of uniformed personnel (mainly military) operating primarily within their own territory, meaning they cannot be considered a multilateral peace operation. A November 2021 Report of the UN Secretary-General to the Security Council proposed creating a UN support office to the JF-G5S,³⁶ while NATO has also been exploring options for enhanced support to the mission.³⁷ Nevertheless, these discussions had not developed further by the end of 2021. Meanwhile, in March 2020 a number of EU member states established the European multinational Special Operations Forces Task Force Takuba, comprising European special forces under French command in support of the Malian Armed Forces in coordination with the JF-G5S. Confined to the objective of countering terrorism in the Liptako-Gourma region and with no UN Security Council mandate, this operation does not meet the SIPRI definition of a multilateral peace operation.³⁸

The EU has continued two military naval operations in the context of its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The EU Naval Force (NAVFOR) Atalanta, in the Gulf of Aden, functions in support of the Somali

³⁶ United Nations, Security Council, 'Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel', Report of the Secretary-General, S/2021/940, 11 Nov. 2021.

³⁷ United Nations, Security Council, Letter dated 4 October 2021 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, S/2021/850, 8 Oct. 2021.

³⁸ On 27 March 2020 the governments of Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Mali, Niger, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and the UK issued a political statement expressing support for the creation of the task force. French Ministry of the Armed Forces, 'Task Force Takuba: political statement by the governments of Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Mali, Niger, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom', 27 Mar. 2020.

government to prevent, deter and repress acts of piracy and armed robbery off the coast of the country. Elsewhere, the main task of the EU NAVFOR Irini is implementing the UN arms embargo on Libya in the Mediterranean Sea.³⁹

Since the ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan established on 10 November 2020, Russia has maintained a ‘peacekeeping contingent’ of 1960 personnel along the disputed area and the Lachin corridor—a road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia. Under the trilateral agreement, the deployment is for five years with an automatic five-year extension unless one of the parties objects.⁴⁰ Despite the trilateral agreement, it is not considered a peace operation as it consists of a unilateral force. It has established 27 checkpoints, and in August 2021 began conducting daily patrols in different regions, only deploying to the frontline upon receiving alerts from the local population or parties.⁴¹

The joint international ‘peacekeeping mission’ to the Solomon Islands was established at the end of November 2021 at the request of the national government following violent anti-government protests. It comprised forces from Australia, New Zealand, Fiji Islands and Papua New Guinea. At the end of December Australia and New Zealand announced a plan to drawdown their troops within the peacekeeping force, although some Australian military personnel was to remain to provide ‘command, communications, logistics and air movement’ support to the joint peacekeeping effort with police.⁴² In contrast to the 2003 Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), the 2021 ‘peacekeeping mission’ is not considered a multilateral peace operation for two main reasons. First, it is not based on the Biketawa Declaration, a framework agreed by the leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum for coordinating responses to regional crises; nor is it mandated by the UN Security Council. Second, rather than being established following a peace agreement or ceasefire, it was a response to civil unrest.

Multilateral peace operations after Afghanistan

During the 20 years between the start of the US-led intervention that toppled the Taliban government in 2001 and the withdrawal of US and allied troops in 2021, Afghanistan has hosted four multilateral peace operations: the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and its successor Resolute Support Mission (RSM); the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL

³⁹ Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/472 of 31 Mar. 2020 on a European Union military operation in the Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED IRINI), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L101/4, 1 Apr. 2020.

⁴⁰ Russia Presidency, [Statement by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the President of the Russian Federation], 10 Nov. 2021 (in Russian).

⁴¹ Vartanyan, O., ‘A risky role for Russian peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh’, Italian Institute for International Political Studies, 10 Nov. 2021.

⁴² ‘Australia’s peacekeeping mission in Solomon Islands to be wound down’, SBS News, 22 Dec. 2021.

Afghanistan); and the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). One of them—ISAF—was the largest multilateral peace operation ever deployed, as well as being the first peace operation mounted by NATO outside Europe. The closure of the RSM and the subsequent Taliban victory heralds the end of an era.

The prominent role of these efforts in the broader multilateral peace operations landscape, the enormous investments made in Afghanistan, and the limited results these have arguably produced, explain why the Taliban victory features prominently in debates on the future of UN and non-UN multilateral peace operations. This raises the question of what its impact will be.

Consolidating a trend away from nation and state-building

The day after Kabul fell to the Taliban, President Biden argued that the US mission in Afghanistan was never supposed to have been nation building, counterinsurgency or bringing democracy, but instead should have been narrowly focused on counterterrorism.⁴³

The façade of a state that his predecessors had created in Afghanistan collapsed the moment international support was withdrawn. Commentators were quick to reflect that nation building had been ‘a fool’s errand’ and ‘over-ambitious if not downright naïve’.⁴⁴ It spelled a ‘tragedy’ that had been ‘20 years in the making’, relying on a theory that was ‘only half right, at best; and in Afghanistan, it was dead wrong’.⁴⁵ Indeed, policymakers had presumed that nation and state-building in Afghanistan could be imposed on society from above by foreign forces. However, most frequently states have been built and power centralized under state institutions based on compromise and cooperation, drawing on the consent and support of populations.⁴⁶

Before becoming president of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani, as a scholar, emphasized the importance of the state gaining legitimacy through performing economic, social and political functions. He argued that the international community should not micromanage each project based on ‘microaccountabilities’, but ‘connect to an overall goal of global stability and prosperity’.⁴⁷ Once Ghani attained high office, however, the continued corruption of his government became one of the main reasons its popular

⁴³ White House, ‘Remarks by President Biden on Afghanistan’, 16, Aug. 2021.

⁴⁴ Price, G., ‘Why Afghan nation-building was always destined to fail’, Chatham House, 10 Sep. 2021.

⁴⁵ Acemoglu, D., ‘Why nation-building failed in Afghanistan’, Project Syndicate, 20 Aug. 2021.

⁴⁶ Acemoglu (note 45).

⁴⁷ Ghani, A. and Lockhart, C., *Fixing Failed States: A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2008).

support collapsed, ultimately leading to Ghani being forced to hand over power to the Taliban.⁴⁸

Despite these critical reflections, during the first two decades of the 2000s the common ground between the permanent members of an increasingly polarized Security Council was that democratization, human rights and protection of civilians could be balanced with the ‘restoration’ or ‘extension of state authority’. This form of state-building made the liberal peace agenda more acceptable to China and Russia, to whom state sovereignty, or even regime security, is important. Consequently, large multidimensional UN peacekeeping operations in places such as CAR, the DRC and Mali were mandated to extend state authority.⁴⁹ However, during the second half of the 2010s, based on the already apparent failures in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the slow progress made in many such peacekeeping operations, the Security Council lost its appetite for new multidimensional peacekeeping operations.⁵⁰

As a result, MINUSMA in 2013 and MINUSCA in 2014 remain the last two large-scale multidimensional peacekeeping operations established. By contrast, the UN’s efforts in Libya, Syria and Yemen have been much more limited. With the Taliban’s return to power in Afghanistan constituting the end of an era, there are increasing calls for further reflection on the approach applied in the country. Germany, for example, is to review its international military deployments.⁵¹ French president Emmanuel Macron claims that even before the return of the Taliban in Afghanistan he had already drawn the lesson that the West cannot build a state in Mali and the Sahel.⁵²

As such, the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan has reinvigorated an already existing discussion, consolidating the trend away from large-scale multidimensional nation and state-building interventions in countries experiencing armed conflict.

⁴⁸ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), *What We Need to Learn: Lessons From Twenty Years of Afghanistan Reconstruction* (SIGAR: Arlington, VA, Aug. 2021); and Kopplin, Z., ‘Afghanistan collapsed because corruption had hollowed out the state’, *The Guardian*, 30 Aug. 2021.

⁴⁹ Osland, K. and Peter, M., ‘UN peace operations in a multipolar order: Building peace through the rule of law and bottom-up approaches’, *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 42, no. 2 (2021), pp. 197–210; and Lukunka, B., Rendtorff–Smith, S. and Donati, M., *Presence, Capacity and Legitimacy: Implementing Extension of State Authority Mandates in Peacekeeping* (UN Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support Policy, Evaluation and Training Division Policy and Best Practices Service, 2017).

⁵⁰ United Nations, Security Council, 8877th meeting, New York, 12 Oct. 2021, S/PV.8877.

⁵¹ Glucroft, W., ‘After Afghanistan: Germany rethinks its military missions’, *Deutsche Welle*, 19 Aug. 2021.

⁵² Clemenceau, F., ‘Exclusif. Afghanistan, réfugiés, Irak, terrorisme... Emmanuel Macron s’explique dans le JDD’ [Exclusive: Afghanistan, refugees, Iraq, terrorism... Emmanuel Macron explains himself in the JDD], *Le Journal du Dimanche*, 28 Aug. 2021.

Undetermined impact on the credibility of international support

It is not only in Afghanistan that donor frustration and fatigue has been on the rise. In Somalia, for example, the EU and USA have been frustrated with the limited progress made on key transitional milestones and in the electoral process. The EU has withheld budgetary support to the Somali government over the delayed elections and is reducing its support for AMISOM.⁵³ In Mali, meanwhile, it has led to tensions between the junta and France, culminating in the planned departure of France's Barkhane operation from Mali and its redeployment to neighbouring countries in the region.⁵⁴ The US decision to pull out from Afghanistan and stop investing in 'endless international state-building projects' that lack significant progress may also provide impetus to host country elites, potentially signalling that if international support is to be secured, progress must be made in terms of democratization, transitions and fighting corruption.⁵⁵

On the other hand, the fall of Afghanistan may also lead to a diminishment in the credibility of international assistance and military efforts, due to a perception that they cannot be strategically sustained. In particular, the solidity of US security guarantees are being questioned by several Asian and East European allies.⁵⁶ Moreover, host governments may feel they need to decrease their dependence on international troops,⁵⁷ or alternatively seek diversification of international security assistance, such as in Mali with regard to the Wagner Group.⁵⁸

There is, however, one major difference between, on the one hand, the USA and NATO in Afghanistan and, on the other, the French in the Sahel, and, in particular, the EU in the Western Balkans and African neighbouring states in the Sahel and Somalia—in the latter cases, the main intervening parties have a much clearer stake in regional stability and are therefore more committed to their investments. Nonetheless, there remains a risk that violent extremists may underestimate the extent of these commitments and so be encouraged to step up their activities.

Providing inspiration for armed groups, instilling fears in host governments

The Taliban's victory in Afghanistan has inspired and emboldened armed groups, particularly al-Qaida affiliates, in other places, demonstrating that

⁵³ Mahmood, O. and Ainte, A., 'Could Somalia be the next Afghanistan?', *Foreign Policy*, 22 Sep. 2021.

⁵⁴ 'France, European allies announce military withdrawal from Mali', *Al Jazeera*, 17 Feb. 2022.

⁵⁵ Mahmood and Ainte (note 53).

⁵⁶ Kelly, L. and Samuels, B., 'US credibility with military allies at risk over Afghanistan pullout', *The Hill*, 22 Aug. 2021; and O'Hanlon, M., 'After Afghanistan, where next? Biden must show resoluteness', *Brookings Institution Order from Chaos blog*, 20 Aug. 2021.

⁵⁷ Kahiye, M., 'Security experts warn al-Shabab may try to emulate Taliban in Somalia', *VOA*, 16 Aug. 2021.

⁵⁸ 'Reports of Russian mercenary deal in Mali trigger French alarm', *France 24*, 14 Sep 2021.

their struggles can bear fruit. This is evidenced by the celebratory pronouncements made by such jihadist movements.⁵⁹ In Somalia, for example, Islamist group Harakat al-Shabab al-Mujahideen (Mujahedin Youth Movement, or al-Shabab) responded with ‘God is great’, while in Mali, Iyad Ag Ghaly—leader of Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims, or JNIM)—compared the withdrawal of foreign forces in Afghanistan to the French drawdown in the Sahel by stating ‘We are winning’,⁶⁰ and praised his ‘brothers’ strategy of ‘two decades of patience’.⁶¹

At the same time, fears have increased among embattled governments and elites of a similar situation occurring in their own countries. Somalia’s armed forces would arguably be even less prepared than their counterparts in Afghanistan for a similar situation, as they have received much less support and Somalia has been unable to purchase weapons due to an arms embargo.⁶² The Malian press has also drawn comparisons with Afghanistan.⁶³ Against this backdrop, Macron’s decision to drawdown from Mali is perceived by some violent extremists as the first step towards making Mali France’s ‘Afghanistan’.⁶⁴ Even so, it remains unclear how the Taliban’s victory will ultimately affect violent extremist groups’ funding and recruitment.⁶⁵ Thus, the long-term operational impacts on multilateral peace operations remain to be seen.

Consolidating existing trends in regional focus, personnel contributions and deploying organizations

With the end of the Western presence in Afghanistan, the era in which Central Asia represented a primary focus area for multilateral peace operations has come to an end. From 2010 to 2012, Central Asia—due to the efforts in Afghanistan—hosted the largest proportion of personnel deployed in peace operations. By the time of ISAF’s closure at the end of 2014 this title had already been passed to Africa, in part due to increased personnel numbers in the continent. In reflecting on the Taliban victory, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari observed that the ‘War on Terror’ is not winding down, but shifting to a new frontline in Africa. Moreover, he complained that Western partners, ‘bruised by their Middle East and Afghan experiences’,

⁵⁹ Drevon, J. et al., ‘How Islamist militants elsewhere view the Taliban’s victory in Afghanistan’, International Crisis Group, 27 Oct. 2021; and ‘America’s flight from Afghanistan will embolden jihadists around the world’, *The Economist*, 28 Aug. 2021.

⁶⁰ Byaruhanga, C., ‘Africa’s jihadists: What Taliban takeover of Afghanistan means’, BBC News, 21 Aug. 2021.

⁶¹ Paquette, D. and Noack, R., ‘France’s drawdown in West Africa fuels local extremists’ hope for a Taliban-style victory’, *Washington Post*, 27 Aug. 2021.

⁶² Byaruhanga (note 60).

⁶³ Byaruhanga (note 60).

⁶⁴ Chutel, L., ‘Will the War on Terror move to Africa?’, *Foreign Policy*, 25 Aug. 2021.

⁶⁵ Drevon et al. (note 59); and ‘America’s flight from Afghanistan will embolden jihadists around the world’ (note 59).

do not prioritize Africa and that the fight against terrorism was never in fact global.⁶⁶

Indeed, the closure of the RSM signifies an end to the period in which European and North American countries have played a prominent role in multilateral peace operations. For example, 2021 is the first time since 2006 that the USA is not among the top 10 contributors. Intervention fatigue has led NATO members to stay away from new ‘forever wars’ like those in Iraq and Afghanistan, and as a result they chose not to play the role of the ‘world’s policeman’ in Syria.⁶⁷ Additionally, amid increasing geopolitical rivalries, the USA withdrew from Afghanistan in part to focus its attention on balancing China and Russia. It is therefore unlikely that the USA will continue to play a prominent role in multilateral peace operations.⁶⁸ The same likely holds true for European countries, with the transition from ISAF to the RSM in 2014 having already sparked a debate on what to do next with their armed forces. Given that UN peacekeeping operations in Africa were in need of high-tech niche forces, contributing to such operations was considered.⁶⁹ Indeed, to some extent there was a ‘return’ to UN peacekeeping, though it was limited and focused mainly on MINUSMA.⁷⁰ Now, with the continued rise of China and Russia’s resurgence, ‘grey zone operations’ and ‘hybrid warfare’ have replaced ‘counterinsurgency’ and ‘counterterrorism’ as the dominant phrases in Europe’s military vocabulary.⁷¹ Moreover, even when European countries do consider activities that extend beyond territorial defence, this is now mainly confined to increasing their involvement in multilateral operations that fall within the context of counterterrorism, rather than multilateral peace operations—and even within this realm, France has already decided to decrease its presence in Mali.⁷²

Consequently, NATO’s role in multilateral peace operations is also likely to decrease, with the drawdown of ISAF having already brought to a close the 2010–13 period when NATO was the organization deploying the largest number of personnel in multilateral peace operations. Since then, NATO has shifted its focus from out-of-area operations to its core tasks of deterrence and territorial defence. The end of the RSM and the US presence in Afghanistan

⁶⁶ Buhari, M., ‘Africa needs more than US military aid to defeat terror’, *Financial Times*, 15 Aug. 2021.

⁶⁷ Aydıntaşbaş, A. et al., ‘The fall of the Afghan government and what it means for Europe’, European Council on Foreign Relations, 25 Aug. 2021.

⁶⁸ White House (note 43).

⁶⁹ Nadin, P., ‘After Afghanistan: A return to UN peacekeeping?’, UN University, 5 Mar. 2014.

⁷⁰ Koops, J. and Tercovich, G. (eds), ‘A European return to UN peacekeeping?’, *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 23, no. 5 (2016); Karlsrud, J. and Novosseloff, A., *Doing Less With More? The Difficult ‘Return’ of Western Troop Contributing Countries to United Nations Peacekeeping* (Global Governance Institute: Brussels, Feb. 2020); and Boutellis, A. and Beary, M., *Sharing the Burden: Lessons from the European Return to Multidimensional Peacekeeping* (International Peace Institute: New York, Jan. 2020).

⁷¹ Heisler, J., ‘Is UN peacekeeping losing its appeal?’, VOA, 22 July 2021.

⁷² ‘France, European allies announce military withdrawal from Mali’ (note 54).

has, however, forced European countries to face up to the fact that they are heavily dependent on US capabilities, having not been in a position to even evacuate their own personnel and local staff from Afghanistan without US support. In response, the EU is likely to seek strategic autonomy. At the same time, it cannot ignore trouble spots in its neighbourhoods. Therefore, while the EU is likely to resist stabilization interventions, it may opt for clearly defined military activities with achievable goals for which it has the necessary means to deliver.⁷³ With this in mind, calls have been made to strengthen EU CSDP capabilities for the deployment of civilian and military CSDP missions.⁷⁴

Conclusions

The year 2021 saw two major developments that could impact the future of multilateral peace operations: first, peace operations in the field being affected by the exacerbation of geopolitical rivalries between the West on the one hand and China and, particularly, Russia on the other; and, second, the Taliban's victory in Afghanistan.

The US drawdown in Afghanistan was based on a strategic decision to rebalance its forces towards China. Meanwhile, Russia's refusal to renew the mandate and subsequent closure of the OSCE Observer Mission at the Gukovo and Donetsk checkpoints, as well as its attempts to reject the appointment of a new OHR in Bosnia-Herzegovina and later calls for the position to be discontinued altogether, indicate how increasing geopolitical tensions between Western countries and Russia are impacting multilateral peace operations. The closure of the OSCE operation in particular widened the divide between Russia and the West over Ukraine, raising concerns over potential escalation of the conflict. Additionally, the presence of the Wagner Group in the conflict in CAR, in support of the FACA, has led organizations conducting peace operations in the country (namely, the UN and the EU) to urge the government to cut ties with the group—unsuccessfully thus far. EUTM RCA suspended its training activities, with questions raised about the future deployment of EUTMs in places where the Wagner Group is active. Mali could be the next country to have its EUTM suspended.

The Taliban victory in Afghanistan is likely to consolidate ongoing trends in peace operations—especially given that the international presence in the country had already been reduced since 2014, and that the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq were already increasingly considered failures. Sub-Saharan Africa will likely remain the focus of interventions both within

⁷³ Aydıntaşbaş et al. (note 67).

⁷⁴ Pietz, T., 'After Afghanistan, EU crisis intervention should go big, not go home', *World Politics Review*, 1 Sep. 2021.

and outside the scope of multilateral peace operations, as not only are other regions too contentious due to great power interests, but African countries continue to have an interest in having peace operations on their soil. Additionally, given intensifying tensions between the West and Russia, NATO is likely to place greater focus on territorial defence of the alliance. This means that North American and European countries will be even less likely to make significant personnel contributions to peace operations. However, the EU may not be able to ignore instability at its borders, with increasing tensions in Ukraine potentially providing new impetus to civilian and military CSDP missions and operations. At the same time, the demand for multilateral action may increase due to violent extremist groups taking inspiration from the Taliban's victory, with host country governments, fearing abandonment, considering diversifying their sources of support.

The rapid takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban following the RSM drawdown has raised concerns about a similar turn of events in Somalia—that is, a potential al-Shabab victory following the eventual termination of AMISOM. Discussions about exit strategies for other large operations, such as MONUSCO, also indicate that the trend towards smaller missions is likely to continue. Nevertheless, developments in Afghanistan have intensified concerns about transitional phases and exit strategies.⁷⁵

Counterintuitively, the impact of the Taliban's victory may be that international responses will become even more militarized, even where there is no military solution to a conflict. The general perception is that nation and state-building has failed, and that large-scale multidimensional peace operations are not effective. If countries and organizations do feel a need to intervene they will likely prefer focused counterterrorism conflict-management activities (e.g. airstrikes/drones, and training and supporting local partners), as these are seen as more attainable. The intervention in Afghanistan failed largely because the state and security apparatus that was established was insufficiently inclusive, and failed to deliver economic opportunities to the country's populations. As a consequence, it did not gain enough support. A perverse effect of the Taliban's victory may therefore be a stronger emphasis on supporting security institutions. However, in the absence of broader state-building, including around governance and inclusivity, such measures are unlikely to lead to conflict resolution and may even aggravate conflict.

⁷⁵ UN Security Council Resolution 2594, 9 Sep. 2021.

Republic; Civ. = international civilian personnel; CTSAMVM = Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism; DRC = Democratic Republic of the Congo; ECOMIG = ECOWAS Mission in the Gambia; ECOWAS = Economic Community of West African States; EU = European Union; EUAM Iraq = EU Advisory Mission in Support of Security Sector Reform in Iraq; EUAM RCA = EU Advisory Mission in the CAR; EUAM Ukraine = EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform Ukraine; EUBAM Libya = EU Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission in Libya; EUBAM Rafah = EU Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point; EUCAP Sahel Mali = EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) Mission in Mali; EUCAP Sahel Niger = EU CSDP Mission in Niger; EUFOR ALTHEA = EU Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina; EULEX Kosovo = EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo; EUMM Georgia = EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia; EUPOL COPPS = EU Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories; EUTM Mali = EU Training Mission Mali; EUTM Mozambique = EU Training Mission Mozambique; EUTM RCA = EU Training Mission in the CAR; EUTM Somalia = EU Training Mission Somalia; IGAD = Intergovernmental Authority on Development; IMT = International Monitoring Team; JCC = Joint Control Commission Peacekeeping Force; KFOR = Kosovo Force; MAPP/OEA = Organization of American States Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia; MFO = Multinational Force and Observers; Mil. = military personnel (troops and military observers); MINURSO = UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara; MINUSCA = UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR; MINUSMA = UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali; MISAC = AU Mission for the CAR and Central Africa; MISAHÉL = AU Mission for Mali and the Sahel; MONUSCO = UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC; MOUACA = AU Military Observers Mission in the CAR; NATO = North Atlantic Treaty Organization; NMI = NATO Mission Iraq; NNSC = Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission; OAS = Organization of American States; OHR = Office of the High Representative; OMIK = OSCE Mission in Kosovo; OSCE = Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe; OSCE SMM = OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine; Pol. = police; PRIO = Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference; RSM = Resolute Support Mission; RTJMC = Russian-Turkish Joint Monitoring Centre; SADC = Southern Africa Development Community; SAMIM = SADC Mission in Mozambique; UN = United Nations; UNAMA = UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan; UNAMI = UN Assistance Mission in Iraq; UNDOF = UN Disengagement Observer Force; UNFICYP = UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus; UNIFIL = UN Interim Force in Lebanon; UNISFA = UN Interim Security Force for Abyei; UNITAMS = UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan; UNMHA = UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement; UNMIK = UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo; UNMISS = UN Mission in South Sudan; UNMOGIP = UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan; UNSMIL = UN Support Mission in Libya; UNSOM = UN Assistance Mission in Somalia; UNTSO = UN Truce Supervision Organization; UNVMC = UN Verification Mission in Colombia.

^a Figures on international civilian staff may include uniformed police.

^b EUBAM Libya was established in 2013 but did not qualify as a multilateral peace operation prior to 1 Jan. 2019.

Source: SIPRI, Multilateral Peace Operations Database, accessed 1 Apr. 2022. Data on multilateral peace operations is obtained from the following categories of open source: (a) official information provided by the secretariat of the organization concerned; (b) information provided by the operations themselves, either in official publications or in written responses to annual SIPRI questionnaires; and (c) information from national governments contributing to the operation under consideration. In some instances, SIPRI researchers may gather additional information on an operation from the conducting organizations or governments of participating states by means of telephone interviews and email correspondence. These primary sources are supplemented by a wide selection of publicly available secondary sources, including specialist journals, research reports, news agencies, and international, regional and local newspapers.