

III. The way forward for multilateral peace operations

CLAUDIA PFEIFER CRUZ

There were three interconnected developments in 2022 that are likely to affect multilateral peace operations going forward: (a) the intensification of geopolitical rivalries between Russia and the West; (b) the deterioration in relations between some operations and their host countries; and (c) the regionalization of peace operations. These developments are a continuation of trends identified earlier, but during 2022 they were exacerbated by a combination of events, especially the war in Ukraine.

Geopolitical rivalries

The new geopolitical situation, highly influenced by the war in Ukraine, makes the future of several peace operations uncertain. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is one of them, especially following the decision of several troop-contributing countries to withdraw from the peace operation largely due to the presence of the Wagner Group in Mali. The same chain of events might be experienced in the Central African Republic (CAR), where the Wagner Group is also present. The requirement for consensus to renew or establish Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) field operations has already led to the termination of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), due to the Russian veto, although it is unlikely that the peace operation would have been able to continue even if a mandate extension had been agreed. Moreover, the format of the decision-making process might place the future of other OSCE operations in jeopardy. Within the UN Security Council, all operational mandates were renewed in 2022, despite harder negotiations and disagreements. Although Russia and China abstained in several mandate renewals, such as the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and MINUSMA (the latter was voted on without unanimity for the first time since its establishment), they did not veto any mandate extensions.¹ By the same token, CAR and Mali refused to condemn the invasion of Ukraine in UN meetings.² In this regard, it is not a coincidence that the deterioration in relations between some peace operations and their host countries and the regionalization of peace

¹ Security Council Report, 'Central African Republic: MINUSCA mandate renewal', What's In Blue, 13 Nov. 2022; and Security Council Report, 'Mali: Council vote to renew the mandate of MINUSMA', What's In Blue, 29 June 2022.

² United Nations, 'Aggression against Ukraine: Resolution/Adopted by the General Assembly', 2 Mar. 2022; and United Nations, 'Territorial integrity of Ukraine: Defending the principles of the Charter of the United Nations: Resolution/Adopted by the General Assembly', 12 Oct. 2022.

operations continued to unfold against a backdrop of intensified geopolitical rivalries between Russia and the West.

Relations with host countries

The notion that peace operations have not properly addressed protracted conflict-related crises has permeated discussions between these operations and their host governments. This was a constant source of tension during 2022, especially in certain host countries that saw demonstrations against UN peace operations, such as the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and MINUSMA. This anti-UN sentiment was, to some extent, both inflamed and embraced by the national governments of host countries. Popular discontent with UN peace operations also contributed to strained relationships between MINUSCA and the host government. In addition, local perceptions that UN operations had failed to address the security situation on the ground served as an endorsement of both the CAR and Malian governments bringing in Wagner Group forces. The presence of the Wagner Group and the targeting of UN peace operations with disinformation campaigns have further contributed to undermining the relationship between some peace operations and their host countries (see section II).

This erosion of relations has also hampered the execution of peace operation mandates. The Malian government, for example, denied MINUSMA free movement to investigate alleged human rights abuses—a core part of its mandate. Moreover, such abuse is likely to increase as national armed forces intensify collaboration with the Wagner Group (given the group's record to date).³ Nevertheless, the activities of Wagner are only one facet of the problem, as challenging relations between some peace operations and their host countries predate the group's deployment. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), for instance, where the Wagner Group's presence could not be confirmed by the end of 2022, other issues have worsened the relations between host government and peace operation, such as public demonstrations and the killing of civilians by UN peacekeepers.

The regionalization of peace operations

The five peace operations established in 2022 (see section I) illustrate how such operations have been increasingly launched under the auspices of regional organizations. Regional organizations and alliances have established operations in their own geographical area to address crises experienced by

³ Serwat, L. et al., 'Wagner Group operations in Africa: Civilian targeting trends in the Central African Republic and Mali', ACLED, 30 Aug. 2022.

their member states. Moreover, these newly established operations point to a continued trend of deploying peace operations in sub-Saharan Africa, which has been (and is likely to continue to be) the main host region of peace operations. Since 2019, it has been the region where most of the new operations have been deployed. Four of the five operations established in 2022 were deployed in sub-Saharan Africa, and the other operation—the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Collective Peacekeeping Forces to Kazakhstan—was short-term and discontinued soon after being launched. Additionally, apart from the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), which is largely a continuation of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), the newly established operations follow the existing trend of smaller operations with smaller deployments. Since the launch of MINUSCA in 2014, there has been no new large-scale operation.

In this context, regional organizations have launched operations to address crises that have either been neglected by the international community—the rationale for establishing the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) in 2021—or for which the existing peace operation is considered to have an inadequate mandate—part of the explanation for launching the East African Community Regional Force in the DRC (EACRF-DRC) in 2022. These regional responses have also become increasingly militarized. Combined with the intensification of geopolitical rivalries and the deterioration in relations between peace operations and host countries, the trend towards the regionalization of peace operations might lead to future mandates with less emphasis on human rights, good governance and democratization.