

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

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Against the backdrop of two major continuing developments, the main trend of decreasing personnel figures in stable numbers of smaller multilateral peace operations endured in 2020. First, competition and disagreement between the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, as well as regional powers—particularly in the Middle East and North Africa region and sub-Saharan Africa—have continued, resulting in increased impetus for countries and organizations to show the flag, leading to further fragmentation of conflict management efforts. Second, during its final year, the administration of United States President Donald J. Trump persevered in striving for reduction of the UN peacekeeping budget—and consequently limiting personnel numbers—and the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan. In an environment of ongoing need for conflict management, the Covid-19 pandemic was an additional challenge, and many operations and the organizations deploying them struggled to continue their efforts.

Multilateral peace operations in 2020

In 2020 the UN, regional organizations and alliances, and ad hoc coalitions of states carried out 62 multilateral peace operations in 35 countries or territories across the world (see figure 2.2).¹ This was one more than in 2019 and similar to the number of multilateral peace operations that have been active in other years since 2013, when the Central African Republic (CAR) and Mali became hotspots (see figure 2.3).² Of the 62 multilateral peace operations that were active in 2020, 22 were in sub-Saharan Africa, 18 in Europe, 14 in the Middle East and North Africa, 5 in Asia and Oceania and 3 in the Americas (see table 2.4).

¹ See also table 2.5. 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 always fully correspond with data found in previous editions of the SIPRI Yearbook or other SIPRI publications.

² See Smit, T., Sacks Ferrari, S. and van der Lijn, J., 'Global trends and developments in multilateral peace operations', *SIPRI Yearbook 2020*, pp. 45–58.

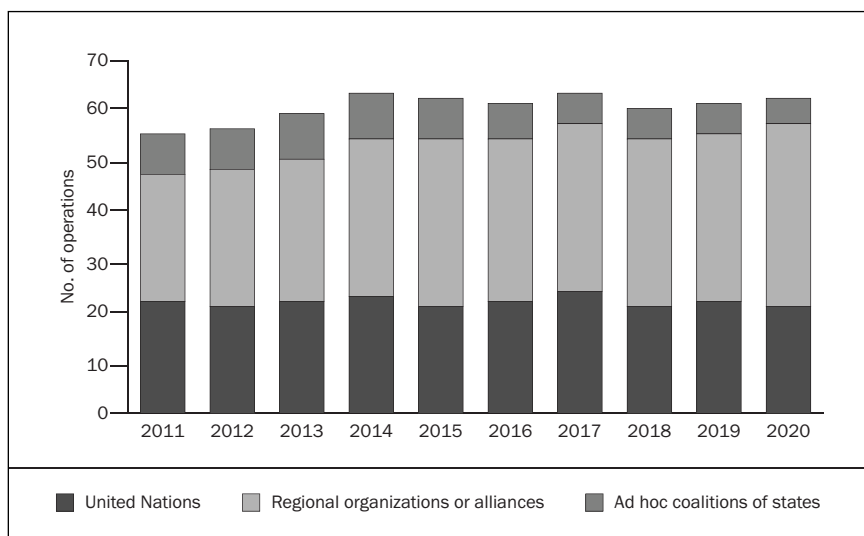


Figure 2.2. Number of multilateral peace operations, by type of conducting organization, 2011–20

New multilateral peace operations

Three multilateral peace operations started in 2020. These were the African Union (AU) Military Observers Mission to the CAR (MOUACA), the European Union (EU) Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) Advisory Mission in the CAR (EUAM RCA) and the AU Mission in Libya. While the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) was established in 2020, it did not start until 1 January 2021 and is therefore not included in 2020.

EUAM RCA was established on 9 December 2019 by the Council of the EU and launched on 9 August 2020.³ The launch date was later than initially expected due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the logistical challenges it imposed on the preparations for the mission. EUAM RCA is mandated to support security sector reform in CAR through the provision of strategic advice at the level of the Ministry of Interior and Public Security and to support development of the internal security forces. The mandate is scalable, which means that the mission can be upgraded to a capacity-building mission, similar to the civilian CSDP EU missions in Mali and Niger. EUAM RCA is the civilian equivalent of the military EU Training Mission in CAR,

³ Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/2110 of 9 Dec. 2019 on the European Union CSDP Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (EUAM RCA), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L318, 10 Dec. 2019; and Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/1131 of 30 July 2020 launching the European Union CSDP Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (EUAM RCA), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L247, 31 July 2020.

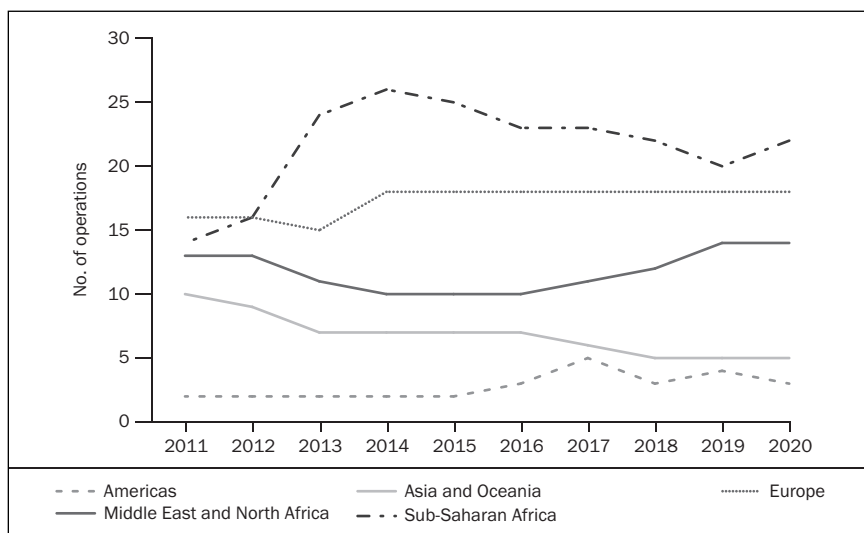


Figure 2.3. Number of multilateral peace operations, by region, 2011–20

which has been training the armed forces of CAR and advising its government on military issues since 2016.

MOUACA was established on 10 July 2020 by the Peace and Security Council of the AU, which on that day authorized the deployment of the mission.⁴ MOUACA is mandated to help monitor the implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR, specifically the provisions on the establishment of three joint security units composed of government forces mixed with reintegrated members of the armed groups that are signatories to the agreement. The deployment of MOUACA was complicated by the Covid-19 pandemic and there has been little information available on its progress. By October 2020, 14 military observers had been deployed out of an authorized strength of 30 military observers and 6 civilian personnel.

The AU Mission in Libya was established on 9 February 2020 by the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, which decided on that day to ‘Upgrade to the level of mission’ the AU Liaison Office in Libya (which did not qualify as a multilateral peace operation). The objective of the decision was to increase the political, diplomatic and military capacity of the AU in Libya ‘with a view to ensuring greater contribution and participation of the AU in the efforts aimed at finding a lasting solution to the crisis in Libya’.⁵ The decision followed shortly after the January 2020 Berlin Conference on

⁴ AU, Communiqué of the 936th meeting of the Peace and Security Council, held on 10 July 2020, on the situation in the Central African Republic, 10 July 2020.

⁵ AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, ‘Decision on Libya and the Sahel’, 33rd ordinary session of the Assembly of the Union, Assembly/AU/Dec.792(XXXIII), 9–10 Feb. 2020, para. 18(b).

Table 2.4. Number of multilateral peace operations and personnel deployed by region and type of organization, 2020

Conducting organization	Americas	Asia and Oceania	Europe	Middle East and North Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	World
Operations	3	5	18	14	22	62
United Nations ^a	2	2	2	7	8	21
Regional organization or alliance	1	1	14	6	14	36
Ad hoc coalition	–	2	2	1	–	5
Personnel	304	9 941	8 063	14 615	94 201	127 124
United Nations ^a	274	313	1 020	12 804	72 301	86 712
Regional organization or alliance	30	9 592	5 961	657	21 900	38 140
Ad hoc coalition	–	36	1 082	1 154	–	2 272

– = not applicable.

^a UN figures include the UN–African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur.

Notes: Numbers of operations cover the year 2020; personnel figures are as of 31 Dec. 2020.

Source: SIPRI Multilateral Peace Operations Database, accessed 1 Apr. 2021, <<http://www.sipri.org/databases/pko/>>.

Libya. The AU Peace and Security Council also called for the full engagement of the AU in all efforts to monitor the 23 October 2020 permanent ceasefire agreement, including through the deployment of African civilian and military observers. The establishment of the AU Mission in Libya, along with other initiatives, reflects the wish of the AU to be a more active and credible participant in the Libyan peace process. The AU has been deeply uncomfortable with the military intervention led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Libya in 2011 and the extent of foreign interference in the subsequent civil wars in Libya. However, it remains unclear what has been achieved concretely in terms of upgrading the mission. The fact that the AU Peace and Security Council in November 2020 stressed the need to ensure the AU Mission in Libya has enough capacity to carry out its mandate and be more visible suggests progress might have been limited so far.⁶ Also, the Libyan parties do not appear to be receptive to all AU involvement. For example, the signatories of the permanent ceasefire agreement have been clear that the request for international observers is strictly limited to unarmed and non-uniformed observers under the auspices of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL).⁷

⁶ AU, Communiqué of the 961st meeting of the Peace and Security Council, held virtually on 3 Nov. 2020, on the situation in Libya, 3 Nov. 2020.

⁷ United Nations, Security Council, Letter dated 29 December 2020 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, S/2020/1309, 30 Dec. 2020.

The three new multilateral peace operations in 2020 follow two trends. First, all three are very small compared to most others. Since the establishment in 2014 of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR (MINUSCA) no large multilateral peace operations have been established. Second, all three are part of complex constellations of other peace operations deployed in the same mission area. EUAM RCA and MOUACA became the fourth and fifth multilateral peace operations that were deployed in parallel in CAR. The AU Mission in Libya is the third concurrent multilateral peace operation in Libya, next to UNSMIL and the EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya.

Closed multilateral peace operations

Three multilateral peace operations ended in 2020. These were the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB), which closed on 10 September 2020, and the AU–UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), which both ended on 31 December 2020. The two missions in Guinea-Bissau were withdrawn notwithstanding the persistence of significant political instability in the country following a disorderly transition of power in the aftermath of the presidential elections in late 2019. Nonetheless, residual tasks of UNIOGBIS were handed over to the UN country team in Guinea-Bissau, the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel and other partners.

The closure of UNAMID was a significant milestone. Established in 2007 and once the largest multilateral peace operation, UNAMID was a unique mission for several reasons. The fact that it operated under the joint political authority of the AU and the UN was certainly one of them. The notoriously complicated relationship between the mission and the Sudanese Government under former president Omar al-Bashir was also a defining characteristic. Although the transition of UNAMID had been foreseen, its departure came at a precarious time: amidst a pandemic; while Sudan is undergoing a historic political transition, following the removal of al-Bashir in a coup d'état in 2019; in the wake of the Juba Peace Agreement of 3 October 2020 between the transitional government of Sudan and various Sudanese armed opposition groups; and ongoing and even increasing violence by militia and protection needs, particularly for internally displaced persons.⁸

⁸ Dessu, M. K., 'Darfur's conflict could return to square one: UNAMID should stay in Darfur to protect civilians until the political transition in Sudan is sustainable', *ISS Today*, Institute for Security Studies, 22 July 2020. On the armed conflict and peace process in Sudan see chapter 7, section IV, in this volume.

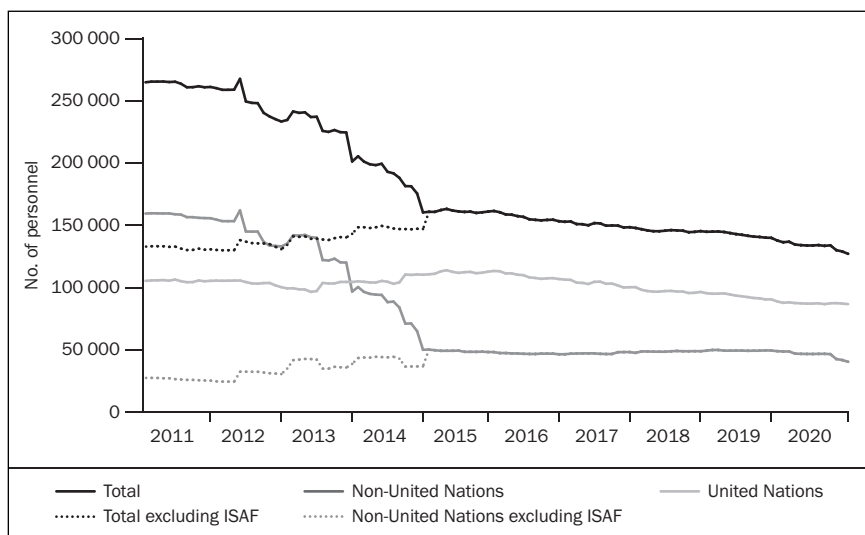


Figure 2.4. Number of personnel in multilateral peace operations, by type of conducting organization, 2011–20

ISAF = International Security Assistance Force.

Personnel deployments

Since 2012 there has been a general downward trend in the number of personnel deployed globally in multilateral peace operations. This can be explained by two main factors. First, the drawdown of troops from Afghanistan, initially the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and then the Resolute Support Mission (RSM). Second, since 2015 the reduction of personnel deployed in sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly in UN peace operations. Both trends have depended heavily on, but were not limited to, the policies of the US Government, especially the Trump administration.

The number of personnel deployed in multilateral peace operations globally was lower on 31 December 2020 than at any other point in 2011–20. During 2020 it decreased from 137 781 on 31 December 2019 to 127 124 on 31 December 2020 (see figure 2.4).⁹ This 7.7 per cent net decrease was thus a continuation of a key trend in the post-ISAF era. Indeed, it was the largest

⁹ The analyses of personnel levels in this chapter are based on estimates of the number of international personnel (military, police and international civilian staff) deployed at the end of each month in each of the multilateral peace operations that were active in the period Jan. 2011 to Dec. 2020. In previous editions of the SIPRI Yearbook, similar analyses used annual snapshot data on the number of international personnel in multilateral peace operations at the end of each year or, in the case of an operation terminated during a calendar year, on the number at its closure. Consequently, the data in this chapter does not exactly match the data used in previous editions of the SIPRI Yearbook.

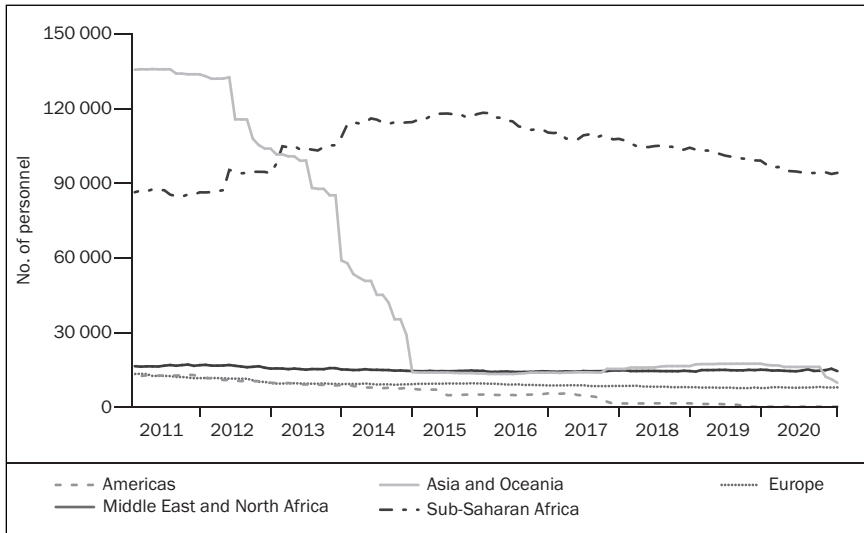


Figure 2.5. Number of personnel in multilateral peace operations, by region, 2011–20

annual decrease in this period, which means that the trend was accelerating. Based on expected future reductions, it is likely to continue.

The net decrease during 2020 was mostly due to reductions in a number of large multilateral peace operations, especially the RSM (see below). The number of personnel deployed in multilateral peace operations on 31 December 2020 included almost 10 000 personnel remaining in the RSM, who are expected to leave Afghanistan by 1 May 2021 as per the February 2020 withdrawal agreement between the Taliban and the USA.¹⁰ Whether this will happen or not will be decided in 2021 and depends primarily on the Afghanistan policy of the new US Government.

Multilateral peace operations in sub-Saharan Africa continued to account for most personnel deployed in multilateral peace operations globally (see figure 2.5). The number of personnel deployed in the region decreased by 3.4 per cent in 2020, from 97 519 on 31 December 2019 to 94 201 on 31 December 2020. It reached the lowest point since December 2012, before the deployment of multilateral peace operations to Mali. The number of personnel deployed in multilateral peace operations in sub-Saharan Africa peaked at almost 120 000 in 2015 and has decreased every year since. The 2020 personnel numbers still include almost 7000 personnel that were part of UNAMID, which ended on 31 December 2020. Had the mission closed earlier, the decrease in 2020 of the number of personnel deployed globally, and in sub-Saharan Africa, would have been much more pronounced.

¹⁰ On the armed conflict and peace process in Afghanistan see chapter 4, section II, in this volume.

Organizations conducting multilateral peace operations

United Nations

The UN remains the main organization deploying multilateral peace operations, with about one third of all operations and some two thirds of all personnel. It led 21 multilateral peace operations in 2020. This was one fewer than in 2019. The number of personnel deployed globally in UN peace operations decreased by 2.4 per cent in 2020, from 88 849 on 31 December 2019 to 86 712 on 31 December 2020. Total personnel deployments in UN operations have decreased every year since 2015. This is mainly because several UN peace operations have been drawing down or closing down and because the UN has not established any major or even moderate-sized peace operation since 2014. The last time when there were fewer personnel deployed in UN peace operations than in 2020 was in 2007.

Among the main developments in 2020 were the closure of UNAMID on 31 December 2020 and the establishment of UNITAMS to succeed it, effective as of 1 January 2021. UNAMID is the fourth major UN peacekeeping operation that closed down during 2011–20, after the UN Mission in Liberia in 2018 and the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti and the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire in 2017. The establishment of UNITAMS is the latest example of the trend of small UN peace operations. UNITAMS' budget for 2021 provides for only 21 police and 141 international civilian personnel.¹¹ Preparations for the build-up of the follow-up mission commenced in Sudan in October 2020.¹² UNITAMS is a UN special political mission rather than a UN peacekeeping operation. Special political missions tend to be small, they do not have a military chain of command and their personnel tend to be unarmed, with the exception of guard units for self-protection.

The UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) has also been scaling down since 2015 and could be the next major UN operation in line to close. In December 2020 the UN Security Council endorsed a joint strategy of the mission and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the progressive and phased drawdown of MONUSCO and asked the UN secretary-general to prepare a detailed transition plan.¹³ According to the joint strategy, maintaining a

¹¹ United Nations, General Assembly, 'Proposed programme budget for 2021', A/75/6 (Sect. 3)/Add. 7, 23 Oct. 2020.

¹² UN Security Council Resolution 2524, 3 June 2020; and United Nations, Security Council, 'Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan', Report of the Secretary-General, S/2020/1155, 1 Dec. 2020.

¹³ UN Security Council Resolution 2556, 18 Dec. 2020, paras 49–50.

strong presence of MONUSCO in provinces where fighting continues, such as North Kivu, remains essential in the medium term.¹⁴

Finally, a highlight for the UN was the role of UNSMIL in facilitating talks that led to a permanent ceasefire agreement between the main rival factions in the Libyan civil war on 23 October 2020.¹⁵ Pursuant to the agreement, the UN is expected to assist in the implementation of a ceasefire monitoring mechanism in Libya.¹⁶ The UN secretary-general has thus recommended to the UN Security Council on 29 December 2020 to establish a monitoring component within UNSMIL.¹⁷

Regional organizations and alliances

Regional organizations and alliances led 36 multilateral peace operations in 2020, which was 3 more than in 2019. There were three new operations in this category in 2020, two in CAR (EUAM RCA and MOUACA) and one in Libya (the AU Mission in Libya). The number of personnel deployed globally in multilateral peace operations led by regional organizations or alliances decreased by 18 per cent in 2020, from 46 569 on 31 December 2019 to 38 140 on 31 December 2020. This resulted primarily from reductions of the NATO-led RSM in Afghanistan and the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)—by far the two largest multilateral peace operations run by regional actors—and the closure of ECOMIB.

African regional organizations—the AU and the subregional ECOWAS and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)—conducted nine multilateral peace operations in 2020, two more than in 2019. The number of personnel in these operations decreased by 7.3 per cent, from 22 114 on 31 December 2019 to 20 496 on 31 December 2020. In addition to AMISOM, the AU Mission in Libya and MOUACA, the AU maintained small political missions in CAR and Mali and a small observer mission in Burundi. The ECOWAS Mission in Gambia, which has been active since January 2017, is the only remaining ECOWAS mission following the closure of ECOMIB. Finally, the IGAD-led Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism has been monitoring successive

¹⁴ United Nations, Security Council, Letter dated 26 October 2020 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, S/2020/1041, annex, 27 Oct. 2020. On the armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo see chapter 7, section III, in this volume.

¹⁵ UN salutes new Libya ceasefire agreement that points to “a better, safer, and more peaceful future”, UN News, 23 Oct. 2020. On the ceasefire agreement in Libya see chapter 6, section IV, in this volume.

¹⁶ United Nations, Security Council, Letter dated 27 October 2020 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, S/2020/1043, 27 Oct. 2020, annex, para. 10.

¹⁷ United Nations, S/2020/1309 (note 7), paras 29–41, 45.

cessation of hostilities and ceasefire agreements in South Sudan under different names since 2014.¹⁸

Regional organizations and alliances from the northern hemisphere—the EU, NATO and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)—led 26 multilateral peace operations in 2020, one more than in 2019. The number of personnel in these operations decreased by 28 per cent, from 24 426 on 31 December 2019 to 17 614 on 31 December 2020. Whereas the OSCE deploys peace operations in member states only, as most regional organizations do, the EU and NATO conduct peace operations in non-member states only.

The EU led 14 missions and operations in the framework of the EU CSDP that qualified as multilateral peace operations in 2020. This was one more than in 2019. These included: 10 civilian CSDP missions that qualified as a multilateral peace operation, including the new EUAM RCA; a military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina; and three non-combat military training missions in CAR, Mali and Somalia. The EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali) has been the largest military peace operation led by the EU since 2018. In 2020 the Council of the EU renewed the mandate of this mission for another four years, until 18 May 2024, and gave it more tasks and a larger budget.¹⁹ In addition to its operations being seriously affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, like all training and capacity-building missions, EUTM Mali temporarily suspended its activities following the August 2020 coup d'état in Mali.²⁰

NATO led three multilateral peace operations in 2020: the Kosovo Force (KFOR), the NATO Mission Iraq and the RSM. The partial drawdown of the RSM was one of the main developments of the year. On 29 February 2020 the Taliban and the USA reached an agreement on the conditional withdrawal of all remaining US forces (and all other foreign forces) in Afghanistan within 14 months, that is by 1 May 2021.²¹ Since the Taliban–US agreement the Taliban have largely refrained from attacking NATO and US forces in Afghanistan.

¹⁸ The mission was named the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism until the entry into force of the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS), after which it was renamed the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Mechanism. It was renamed again to its current name following the entry into force of the 2018 Revitalized ARCSS. On the armed conflict and peace process in South Sudan see chapter 7, section IV, in this volume.

¹⁹ Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/434 of 23 Mar. 2020 amending Decision 2013/34/CFSP on a European Union military mission to contribute to the training of the Malian Armed Forces (EUTM Mali), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L89, 24 Mar. 2020.

²⁰ Emmott, R. and Diallo, T., 'EU freezes Mali training missions after military coup, denies responsibility', Reuters, 26 Aug. 2020. On the armed conflict in Mali see chapter 7, section II, in this volume.

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. Also see chapter 4, section II, in this volume.

The OSCE conducted nine field operations that qualified as a multilateral peace operation. With more than 800 international personnel, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) in Ukraine continued to be the largest OSCE field operation by far, and the largest civilian mission in the world.²² Most of the other OSCE field operations have been active since the 1990s and maintained fewer than 30 international personnel in 2020.

Regional organizations and alliances did not play any meaningful role in the resolution and aftermath of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war.²³

Ad hoc coalitions

Ad hoc coalitions of states conducted five multilateral peace operations in 2020, one fewer than in 2019. These were the International Monitoring Team in Mindanao, the Philippines, the Office of the High Representative 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, and the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission on the Korean peninsula. The number of personnel deployed in multilateral peace operations in this category decreased by 3.9 per cent in 2020, from 2363 on 31 December 2019 to 2272 on 31 December 2020.

There were some notable ad hoc initiatives in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh war. However, these did not (yet) qualify as multilateral peace operations. In addition to a Russian ‘peacekeeping contingent’ (see below), Russia and Turkey signed a memorandum of understanding on 11 November 2020 on the establishment of a joint ceasefire monitoring centre in Azerbaijan to monitor the ceasefire.²⁴ Turkey’s Ministry of National Defence confirmed on 29 December 2020 that it had already dispatched 36 military officers including a general to Azerbaijan, who were on standby to start work as soon as the construction of the joint ceasefire monitoring centre was completed.²⁵ Russian Government officials, including President Vladimir Putin, have been reported saying that the joint centre will make use of surveillance drones to monitor the situation inside Nagorno-Karabakh and that Turkish monitors would not be physically present there.²⁶

²² On the armed conflict in Ukraine see chapter 5, section III, in this volume.

²³ On the armed conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh see chapter 5, section II, in this volume.

²⁴ ‘Russia, Turkey agree creation of Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire monitoring center’, TASS, 11 Nov. 2020.

²⁵ Turkey’s Ministry of National Defence, ‘Millî Savunma Bakanı Hulusi Akar: “Personelimiz Azerbaycan’a Gitti, Orada Hazır Bekliyor”’ [‘Minister of National Defence Hulusi Akar: “Our personnel went to Azerbaijan, they are ready”’], 29 Dec. 2020.

²⁶ ‘Turkey approves sending troops to joint Russian Monitoring center in Azerbaijan’, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 17 Nov. 2020.

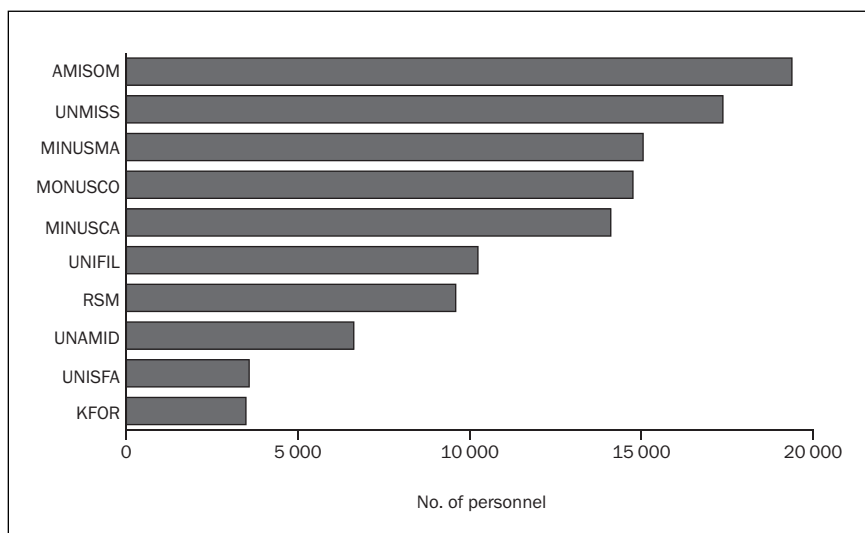


Figure 2.6. Largest multilateral peace operations as of 31 Dec. 2020

AMISOM = African Union (AU) Mission in Somalia; 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; RSM = Resolute Support Mission; UNAMID = UN–AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur; UNIFIL = UN Interim Force in Lebanon; UNISFA = UN Interim Security Force for Abyei; UNMISS = UN Mission in South Sudan.

The largest multilateral peace operations

AMISOM has been the largest ongoing multilateral peace operation in the world since 2015 (see figure 2.6). The mission maintained this status throughout the year, by some margin even, despite the withdrawal of 1000 troops in February 2020. The reduction was authorized by the UN Security Council and followed similar reductions of AMISOM's military component in 2017 and 2019.²⁷ AMISOM comprised 19 384 personnel on 31 December 2020. This was the smallest the mission has been since Ethiopia joined it in January 2014.

Among the 10 largest multilateral peace operations in 2020 were 7 UN peacekeeping operations. Most of them decreased in size during the year, especially MONUSCO, which went from 16 179 personnel on 31 December 2019 to 14 754 personnel one year later. UNAMID, once the largest UN operation, was the eighth-largest multilateral peace operation on 31 December 2020, the day on which its mandate ended. The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) has been the largest UN peace operation since

²⁷ UN Security Council Resolution 2472, 31 May 2019. On the armed conflict in Somalia see chapter 7, section IV, in this volume.

December 2019. The UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) is the only remaining major UN operation outside sub-Saharan Africa. In August 2020 the UN Security Council lowered the maximum authorized strength of UNIFIL for the first time since the end of the 2006 Lebanon War, from 15 000 troops to 13 000 troops.²⁸ This was mainly a symbolic move, however, as the number of military personnel in UNIFIL has already been well below 13 000 for more than a decade.

The NATO-led KFOR and RSM continued to be among the 10 largest multilateral peace operations. The personnel strength of the RSM decreased from 16 705 personnel on 31 December 2019, when it was the third-largest multilateral peace operation, to 9592 on 31 December 2020. The number of NATO-commanded forces in Afghanistan fell below 10 000 for the first time since 2006.

The total number of personnel deployed in the 10 largest multilateral peace operations decreased by 8.1 per cent during 2020, from 124 274 personnel on 31 December 2019 to 114 182 on 31 December 2020. This equals 90 per cent of all personnel deployed in all multilateral peace operations globally.

The main troop- and police-contributing countries

The 10 main military personnel contributors accounted for 90 per cent of all military personnel deployed globally in multilateral peace operations in 2020. Ethiopia has been the main military personnel contributor to multilateral peace operations since December 2014 (see figure 2.7). Ethiopia maintained this position in 2020 although its contribution decreased for the third year in a row, from 10 727 on 31 December 2019 to 10 124 on 31 December 2020. As a regional power in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia has been providing troop contingents to all major multilateral peace operations in the region—AMISOM, UNAMID, the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei and UNMISS.

Burundi, Kenya and Uganda were also among the 10 main contributors of military personnel in 2020, thanks to their participation in AMISOM. Their contributions also decreased somewhat during the year due to the withdrawal of 1000 troops from AMISOM, which was divided over the respective national contingents. Political tensions between Kenya and the Federal Government of Somalia escalated when the federal government cut diplomatic relations with Kenya in December 2020.²⁹ However, this did not immediately affect the participation of Kenya in AMISOM.

Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Rwanda continued to be among the states providing most military personnel thanks to their contributions to UN peace operations. Their contributions remained stable during the

²⁸ UN Security Council Resolution 2539, 28 Aug. 2020, para. 29.

²⁹ Dahir, A. L., 'Somalia severs diplomatic ties with Kenya', *New York Times*, 15 Dec. 2020.

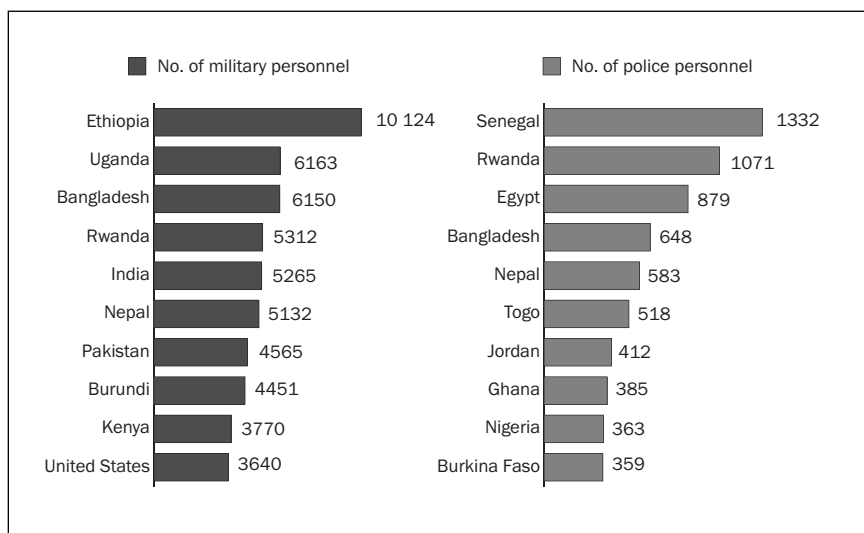


Figure 2.7. Main contributors of military and police personnel as of 31 Dec. 2020

year, although those of Pakistan and Rwanda each included around 1000 troops in UNAMID, which ended on 31 December 2020. Rwanda also dispatched ‘several hundred’ additional troops to CAR in December 2020, but these were not part of MINUSCA. The deployment was a reaction to a rebel offensive and fears of an attempted coup d’état in CAR ahead of the presidential elections that took place on 27 December 2020. According to the Rwandese Government, the extra troops were sent to protect civilians and Rwandese peacekeepers, and would remain outside MINUSCA so they would not be bound by the UN’s rules of engagement.³⁰

The US contribution to multilateral peace operations decreased by 60 per cent in 2020, from 9145 military personnel on 31 December 2019 to 3640 on 31 December 2020. This was entirely due to drawdown of US forces in Afghanistan to 2500 military personnel, the lowest level since the start of the US military intervention in 2001. According to NATO, the remaining 2500 US forces were all part of the RSM, although the US Department of Defense has indicated that the parallel US counterterrorism mission in Afghanistan will be its main focus.³¹ The USA remained the main contributor of military personnel to the MFO, KFOR and RSM, in addition to remaining the main contributor to the civilian OSCE SMM in Ukraine.

³⁰ ‘Rwanda bolsters force in CAR as rebels “held back”’, BBC News, 21 Dec. 2020. On the armed conflict in CAR see chapter 7, section III, in this volume.

³¹ US Central Command, ‘General Kenneth F. McKenzie Jr. interview on the record media round table—Dec. 20th, 2020’, 21 Dec. 2020.

The top 10 of the states providing the most police personnel to multilateral peace operations in 2020 was very similar to that in 2019. Senegal strengthened its position as the main police contributor by deploying an additional formed police unit to MONUSCO in December 2020. The total number of police it contributed increased from 1204 on 31 December 2019 to 1332 on 31 December 2020. Senegal has been the top police contributor to multilateral peace operations since 2016.

Fatalities in United Nations peace operations

Ninety-one international personnel and 32 local staff died while serving in UN peace operations in 2020 (see figure 2.8). This was more than in the previous two years although below the average over 2011–20. Of the 91 international personnel that died, 78 were military or police personnel and 13 were international civilian personnel. The fatality rate for uniformed personnel was 0.9 per 1000 in 2020, based on the average number of uniformed personnel deployed during the year (see figure 2.9).

Deaths of UN peacekeepers can have various causes. Malicious acts, or hostile deaths, tend to receive the most attention. However, UN peace operations suffered 13 hostile deaths in 2020 (less than 15 per cent of the total number of fatalities), which is fewer than in any other year in 2011–20 (see figure 2.8). Twelve of those that died this way were military personnel, while one was civilian. This corresponds to a fatality rate for hostile deaths of 0.15 per 1000 uniformed personnel, which was the lowest rate since 2011 (see figure 2.9). The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which has been the deadliest UN peace operation since it started in 2013, suffered six hostile deaths during 2020. By comparison, MINUSMA suffered 22 hostile deaths in 2019 alone and 125 in total between 2013 and 2019. The lower number and rate of hostile deaths among UN peacekeepers may be attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic. Measures to prevent infections and the spread of the virus imposed restrictions on the movement of UN peace operations personnel and led to a reduction of patrols and other types of exposure to risks of attacks.

In 2020 there were 54 registered deaths due to illness among international personnel in UN peace operations, twice as many as in 2019. The number of deaths caused by illness among local staff was also much higher in 2020 than in 2019. This increase is explained to a large extent by the Covid-19 pandemic. According to official figures, until 24 January 2021 across all UN field missions, 2486 members of personnel and dependents tested positive for Covid-19, and 24 died as a result of it.³²

³² United Nations, Security Council, 'Risk of instability, tension growing, amid glaring inequalities in Global Covid-19 recovery, top United Nations officials warn Security Council', SC/14422, 25 Jan. 2021.

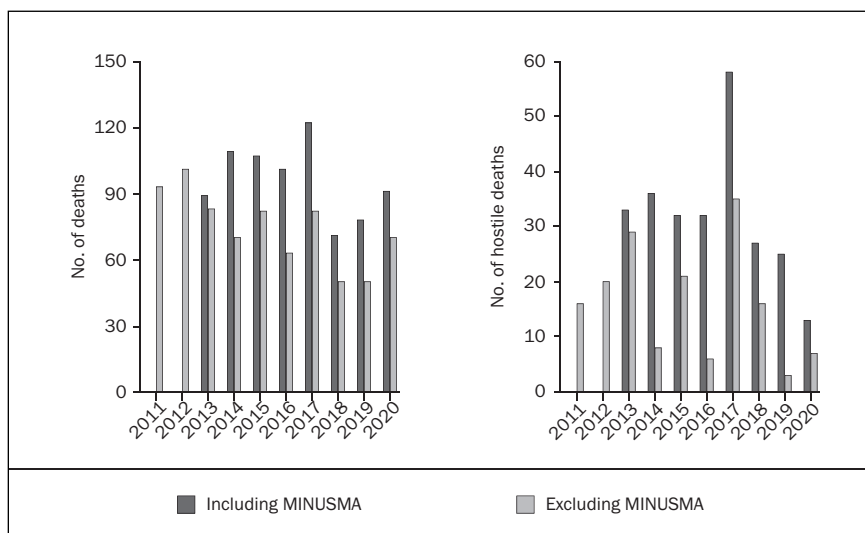


Figure 2.8. Fatalities among international personnel in United Nations peace operations, 2011–20

MINUSMA = UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

Other multilateral operations

The trend of increasing multilateral operations activity in the grey areas outside the scope of the SIPRI definition of a multilateral peace operation also continued in 2020. The 10 000-strong Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the Lake Chad Basin region and the 5000-strong Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel) are two other such multilateral operations.³³ The EU has also been conducting military naval operations in the context of the CSDP, in the Gulf of Aden off the coast of Somalia and in the Mediterranean Sea. There are, however, four noteworthy new initiatives.

First, in the Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement that was reached on 9 November 2020 and entered into force the next day, Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed on the deployment of a Russian ‘peacekeeping contingent’ of 1960 military personnel along the line of contact inside Nagorno-Karabakh and along the so-called Lachin corridor, which connects the disputed territory with Armenia.³⁴ The deployment of the Russian peacekeepers commenced immediately. The agreement stipulates that the duration of the deployment will be five years with the possibility of an extension for another five years. The Russian ‘peacekeeping contingent’ is neither conducted under

³³ On the MNJTF and G5 Sahel see chapter 7, section II, in this volume.

³⁴ President of Russia, ‘Statement by the president of the Republic of Azerbaijan, prime minister of the Republic of Armenia and president of the Russian Federation’, 10 Nov. 2020. Also see chapter 5, section II, in this volume.

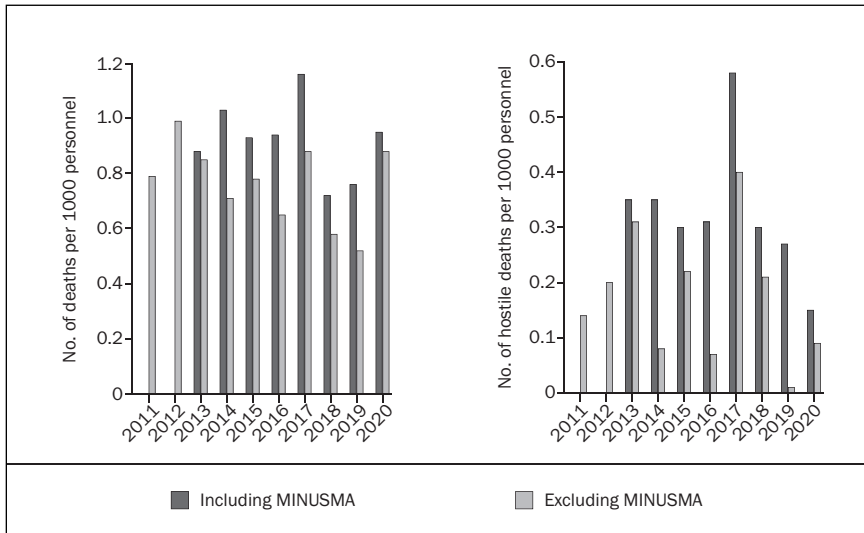


Figure 2.9. Fatality rates for uniformed personnel in United Nations peace operations, 2011–20

MINUSMA = UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

the auspices or on behalf of the UN or a regional organization or alliance, nor does it report to a multinational body such as the JCC in Trans-Dniester or the JCC in South Ossetia, which was active from 1992 to 2008. It is therefore not considered to be a multilateral peace operation.

The next two have their origins in Europe. First, is the new EU Naval Force Mediterranean Operation Irini that EU member states established in February 2020 following the January 2020 Berlin Conference on Libya and launched on 31 March 2020. The main task of Operation Irini is to implement the UN arms embargo on Libya.³⁵ Second, is creation of the European multinational Special Operations Forces Task Force Takuba under the command of the French-led counterterrorism Operation Barkhane in the Sahel. The aim of this force is counterterrorism operations in the Liptako region, at the Burkina Faso–Mali–Niger border.³⁶

Lastly, the AU considered increasing its counterterrorism activities in the Sahel. The AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government requested the AU Commission in February 2020 to start planning for a possible deployment of an AU force of 3000 troops to support the Joint Force of the G5 Sahel in order to ‘further degrade terrorist groups’.³⁷ The AU Peace and Security

³⁵ 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, 1 Apr. 2020.

³⁶ On Task Force Takuba see also chapter 7, section II, in this volume.

³⁷ AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government (note 5), para. 4.

Council endorsed a strategic concept for the force on 30 September 2020 and requested the AU Commission to proceed with the development of a concept of operations, together with ECOWAS and the G5 Sahel.³⁸ The deployment of the force had not yet been authorized by the end of 2020, and details remained scarce about its mandate, composition, financing and relation to the other military operations in the region.

Conclusions

The continuing competition and disagreement among the permanent members of the UN Security Council and the push of particularly the Trump administration to reduce the UN peacekeeping budget has in recent years resulted in the accelerated drawdown and closure of some of the larger UN peace operations. This trend coincides with the interests of a number of host-country governments and questions raised by some analysts on the effectiveness of large-scale stabilization operations. In 2020 UNAMID was the latest such large UN peacekeeping operation to close. However, the demand for conflict management efforts has continued. The Security Council has only been able to agree on the establishment of smaller specialized political missions, with UNITAMS being the latest addition effectuated at the start of 2021.

Regional organizations and alliances fill this gap to some extent, but often do so in a fragmented manner, resulting in complex constellations of peace operations, such as in Mali, Somalia and particularly CAR—with EUAM RCA and MOUACA as the latest additions in 2020. Also, the establishment of the AU Mission in Libya to increase the AU presence in that country is a case in point. While the number of multilateral peace operations deployed by regional organizations and alliances is increasing, these regional operations are generally smaller in size. As a consequence, the total number of personnel deployed in multilateral peace operations continues to decrease, as the numbers of personnel in newly established operations led by regional organizations do not replace the numbers of personnel reductions in UN peace operations. This is in part because some organizations do not have the capabilities and resources to deploy much more personnel (e.g. the AU), and others have specialized in niche efforts requiring less personnel (e.g. the EU). In fact, the number of personnel in operations deployed by regional organizations and alliances decreased significantly in 2020, as the Trump administration reduced the number of US forces in Afghanistan, and the NATO-led RSM.

³⁸ AU, Communiqué of the 950th meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on the consideration of the revised draft strategic concept note on planning guidance for the deployment of 3000 troops, 30 Sep. 2020.

Another development in recent years that continued in 2020 is the increasing conflict management activity in the grey areas outside the scope of SIPRI's definition of a multilateral peace operation. On top of ongoing counterterrorism operations, such as the Joint Force of the G5 Sahel and the MNJTF, the European multinational Special Operations Forces Task Force Takuba was set up and the AU was discussing its own force to support the Joint Force. At the same time, the new Russian 'peacekeeping contingent' in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict cannot be considered multilateral. These operations may be an indication of how peace operations in a more multipolar world may look like: potentially more fragmented, at times unilateral, and sometimes with competing efforts, that are frequently more securitized, and often have the interests of the intervenors higher on the agenda than 'traditional' multilateral peace operations.

The Covid-19 pandemic affected all these efforts in a variety of ways, not least by significantly increasing the number of fatalities due to illness, for example, in UN peace operations. Measures to prevent the further spreading of Covid-19 has meant operations have had to adjust their activities, for example by reducing patrols and ways of working, and troop rotations and the establishment of missions have been delayed. Only some training missions paused their operations for a short period. However, on top of existing challenges many operations faced an additional struggle to sustain their activities due to Covid-19.