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Peace Operations and the *Zeitenwende*

Monika Benkler, Tobias von Gienanth, Sina Golgowski, Annika S. Hansen,
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Content

Executive Summary

International peace operations are under pressure. Not least following the end of the intervention in Afghanistan, their effectiveness has come under massive scrutiny and their credibility has been challenged on the ground. What then does the often-quoted *Zeitenwende* mean for peace operations? And how are different multilateral organisations affected?

Against the backdrop of a confrontational geopolitical context and continued high levels of conflict, this study analyses developments in the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), as well as the African Union (AU) and other African regional organisations.

The anticipated high demand for crisis intervention is at odds with the limited capabilities of international organisations. Whether the demand translates into an effective range of peace operations is currently an open question. In light of the *Zeitenwende*, peace operations face a threefold challenge of being able to adopt appropriate mandates, develop legitimacy and assertiveness on the ground, and apply effective approaches to conflict management.

Concrete assessments vary from organisation to organisation but preliminary, general observations are the following:

First, contrary to what many feared, it has been possible to extend the mandates of peace operations – except where Russian interests are directly involved, as in Ukraine.

Second, despite differing ideas about what the international order should look like and which set of values it should be based on, Russia, China, the United States and others continue to use existing multilateral institutions for debate and coordinated decision-making.

Still, these positive signs should not obscure the fundamental political and structural challenges that peace operations – in whatever form – must overcome if the instrument is to effectively fulfil its role in the future.

Geopolitical challenges and conflict trends

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has been the latest development to raise geopolitical tensions to a new high. In the long term, though, it is the power struggle between the US and China that will have the greatest impact on international politics. While the two countries compete for global dominance, both also recognise the need to cooperate on important global problems. Where their security interests coincide in specific cases, there is an opportunity for joint action to address conflicts.

Regional powers such as Turkey, the Gulf States or Iran are also increasingly intervening in conflicts or exploiting them for their own interests. This internationalisation of conflicts – including the involvement of third countries – changes how conflict parties calculate risks, costs and opportunities, and renders it all the more arduous to bring peace to trouble spots.

Moreover, current conflict situations are affected by a number of risk factors. Worldwide, state fragility is rising and democracy declining. Climate change and the destructive influence of disinformation exacerbate conflict. Looking ahead, the growing complexity of conflicts and geopolitical disputes will make finding effective responses a tall order for international organisations.

United Nations (UN)

Since 2003, the wrangling over the values and goals of peace operations has steadily intensified. At the same time, the mandates of peace operations have gradually expanded to the point that their implementation is barely feasible and they are unable to meet the high expectations they generate. UN peace operations manoeuvre in three challenging spaces: In Security Council decision-making; in cooperation with host governments; and vis-à-vis host populations who feel inadequately protected and whose confidence they have lost.

The (geo-)political constellations are likely to become even more influential in the foreseeable future. Traditional peacekeeping missions and Special Political Missions in their many forms will endure; any new missions, however, are likely to be limited in ambition and scope. In the near future, new large-scale or even multidimensional missions are doubtful. Most importantly, UN peace operations will have to rebuild lost trust through new approaches and better calibrated mandates.

EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)

In the anniversary year of its CSDP missions, the EU is faced with the question of which goals it wishes to pursue. After 20 years of various deployments, it is time for an independent and honest analysis of where CSDP did and can make a real difference.

After ten years in which the EU focussed on smaller and mostly technical training and advisory missions, the new mission in Armenia (EUMA) could herald a return to a more politically ambitious CSDP. In order to live up to greater levels of ambition, though, civilian missions would have to be adequately financed. At present, other missions typically have to be reduced or closed altogether in order to release the necessary funds for new ones. This is an intolerable situation for European civilian crisis management, which is supposed to be fast and focused on the demands on the ground, not on available funds. The New Compact to be adopted in May 2023 could be a milestone for initiating reforms and strengthening civilian CSDP.

Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

As a consensus organisation, the OSCE has been seriously affected by the Russian invasion into Ukraine. The war of aggression is a blatant breach of all the organisation's founding principles by a key actor. However, on the anniversary of the attack, it can be said that the worst case scenario did not materialise. The Chair and the Secretariat jointly managed to avert the most acute threats to the Organisation.

The war also had an impact on OSCE field operations. Following the evacuation of the international members of the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) and the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine, Russia blocked the renewal of the mandates for the SMM in March and for the Project Co-ordinator in June 2022. Where Russia was a covert or overt party to the conflict, the extension of mandates had already failed several times before. Nevertheless, the mandates for the remaining ten field operations were extended by consensus in mid-December 2022. The extension of the mission in Moldova, however, was limited

to only six months at Russia's instigation. Mandating new field missions is not ruled out at this point in time, but unlikely. In the long term, the future of field operations depends largely on the duration and outcome of the war against Ukraine. In the short term, participating states should seek new ways to circumvent a lack of consensus in individual cases – as practised with setting up the Support Program for Ukraine (SPU) succeeding the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine. There is every reason to remain pragmatic for the time being, using diplomatic opportunities and crafting creative workarounds in order to preserve the OSCE's conflict management tools and structures to the maximum.

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)

NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept reaffirms the three core tasks of the Alliance, as defined in 2010: deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security. However, the annexation of Crimea and the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine led to a change in the Alliance's strategic orientation. The prioritisation has shifted from international crisis management back to collective defence.

NATO wants to retain its capabilities for international crisis management operations at strategic distance. Yet, against the backdrop of the Alliance's track record, especially in Afghanistan, an ambitious out of area engagement seems unlikely in the near future. More likely is cooperation with selected partner states and organisations or the deployment of smaller missions in the area of capacity building, training or operational support, primarily in the southern neighbourhood.

African Union (AU) and African regional organisations

The most acute problem of the African security architecture is the unresolved issue of subsidiarity, i. e. the precise – and as yet undefined – delineation of tasks and responsibilities of the AU and various subregional organisations with multiple and overlapping memberships.

The second major challenge is funding. For this purpose, the AU has the African Peace Fund to finance its operations which reached an all-time high of about $295 million in 2022. But two-thirds of the AU's budget is still funded by external partners, and 100 percent of the AU Peace Support Operations (PSO) budget of $279 million (2022) is externally funded. For years, African UN member states and the AU have called for a mechanism to provide financial support to African peace operations from the assessed contributions to the UN peacekeeping budget (2021/22: $6.38 billion).

Despite the growing role of Russia, China, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the future of peace operations in Africa remains in the hands of four actors: the AU, African Regional Economic Communities (RECs)/Regional Mechanisms (RMs), the UN, and the EU.

Germany and international peace operations

The intensified geopolitical competition makes it more difficult for the international community to pursue a common response to conflicts. In light of the anticipated high level of conflict, Germany, together with its partners, must significantly strengthen prevention and secondary prevention, i. e. the prevention of a resurgence of conflicts. The latter is at the core of international peace operations.

- **United Nations**: The current development of the New Agenda for Peace is an important opportunity for reviewing policies and honing instruments. Germany should play an active role in shaping this agenda and work consistently to strengthen multilateral action. It will also be key to develop mandates that are as realistic and pragmatic as possible and to make cooperation with regional organisations more effective.

- **Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe**: The German Federal Government should support activities diplomatically, financially and with personnel in order to maintain and strengthen OSCE field operations and instruments. Especially now, it is necessary to join all forces in order to maintain a functioning organisation and not let the established working relations erode.

- **European Union:** Germany should promote efforts to refocus CSDP missions based on an analysis of their effectiveness: missions should be authorised where they can hope to be effective and to which a sufficient number of member states are substantially committed. In addition, the EU could use CSDP missions as building blocks for UN operations or support operations by other actors as donors.

- **Strengthening alliances:** The growing geopolitical confrontation requires approaches to be well-coordinated with partners in the EU and NATO. Germany should assume a stronger role when it comes to political initiatives and providing capabilities, not least to develop the EU into a more effective geopolitical actor in security matters.

- **Multilateral coalitions:** On a case-by-case basis, consideration should also be given to whether a coalition of the willing can provide an appropriate response to a conflict.

- **Civilian and military capacities:** Germany must have sufficient civilian and military capacities to make a significant contribution to conflict management and prevention.

- **Integrated Approach:** The growing complexity of peace operations, but also of foreign and security policy more generally, requires further strengthening the coordination within German policy making.

- **Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus:** In the future, putting the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDP Nexus) into practice will gain further relevance. Together with its partner countries, Germany should advance HDP Nexus processes in the UN and OECD and underpin them with financial incentives. Peace operations and the support provided to them should be a standing item in Germany's joint inter-ministerial approach.

- **Public diplomacy and strategic communications**: Germany must expand its instruments for promoting (its own) narratives oriented toward democracy and human rights and for reining in disinformation together with like-minded partners worldwide.

- **Public strategic debate in Germany**: Strategic debates on foreign and security policy should be communicated more clearly and purposefully to the German public in order to improve popular understanding of difficult decisions. This applies both to the deployment of personnel in dangerous contexts and to the considerable financial efforts that are necessary, sometimes at the expense of other government tasks, and which ultimately have to be legitimised by democratic majorities.

- **Context analysis and impact measurement**: Knowledge about the effects and factors of success of crisis interventions must be improved. This requires capacities for analysis and evaluation to be expanded.

Introduction

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has intensified the debate about future security challenges. Chancellor Olaf Scholz views recent events as a *Zeitenwende*, a historic turning point, that requires new, decisive action. At the end of his government declaration on 27 February 2022, three days after the Russian invasion, he affirmed: "We stand for peace in Europe. We will never accept the use of force as a political instrument. We will always advocate the peaceful resolution of conflicts. And we will not rest until peace in Europe is secured. And we are not alone in this – we are joined by our friends and partners in Europe and worldwide."[1]

But how does the *Zeitenwende* actually affect global conflict dynamics? Which geopolitical changes were in motion even before Russia's war? What does "integrated conflict engagement" mean in practice?[2] And to what extent are international peace operations authorised by the various multilateral organisations affected?

At least since the early 2000s, peace operations have found themselves in a fundamental crisis of credibility. In part, this concerned their effectiveness and the question of whether their goals and mandated tasks were realistic at all. These queries led peace operations into a double crisis of legitimacy in their areas of operation: both among the local population, who hoped peace operations would deliver a just peace and protect their human rights, but also in their dealings with host governments and political elites, who often presumed a largely uncritical strengthening of their statehood and positions of power.

With the *Zeitenwende*, an additional question has arisen: which multilateral organisation will be able to adopt appropriate mandates at all and back peace operations with the political support of member states. At the same time, the geopolitical contest is changing the nature of conflict itself, with external powers increasingly using conflicts in their own interests.

Under these conditions, can peace operations still be saved as an instrument of international conflict management, how, by whom and in what form? This study uses the collective knowledge of ZIF's Analysis Team to examine developments in the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the African Union (AU) as well as African regional organisations against the backdrop of a confrontational geopolitical context and a continuously high level of conflict. Ultimately, the question is how Germany can contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of international peace operations.

1   The Federal Government (2022): Policy statement by Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and Member of the German on 27 February 2022 [Link].

2   Federal Foreign Office (2022): Stabilisierung gestalten. Außen- und sicherheitspolitisches Konzept für ein integriertes Friedensengagement. [Link].

1. Geopolitical challenges for peace operations

For about 15 years now, the geopolitical confrontation has been accelerating between China and Russia on the one side and the West on the other. Keywords such as the annexation of Crimea, Hong Kong or the trade war between the US and China reflect this. In addition, the European Union (EU) – spurred on by the America First policy – has striven for greater strategic autonomy and taken the first necessary military and economic steps in this direction.

The war that Russia started with the intention of bringing Ukraine completely under its control represents a new quality compared to previous developments. And it seals the end of the existing European peace order.

At the same time, a new political development is unfolding in which China under the rule of President Xi Jinping – and the growing concentration of power in his hands – is aiming to become the defining power in the 21st century. China has pursued this goal with increasing determination for several years.

Both developments together indeed signify a turning point. But what do the geopolitical changes look like in detail and what do they entail for the future of peace operations?

Russia and the end of the European peace order

The greatest most acute threat to the international order emanates from Russia. When a permanent member of the Security Council, which is also the world's second largest nuclear power, wages a war of conquest against a neighbouring country and commits massive war crimes, it shakes the foundations of internationally agreed rules and of the European peace order, as laid down, among other things, in the Charter of Paris in 1990.[3]

Russia could become an even bigger spoiler in international relations.

Trust in rational and predictable dealings among states – despite differing interests – has been destroyed and is forcing European countries to invest massively in their own defence capabilities. Cooperation has been replaced by credible deterrence as the main pillar of European security policy towards Russia in the coming years.

The war against Ukraine could in fact weaken Russia's geopolitical position and lead Russia to act out its role as a spoiler in international relations. It can do so by using its veto power in the UN Security Council and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

For some time now, the Russian approach to peace operations has been less a case of peacekeeping and more of "conflict keeping". After a brief phase of cooperative military engagement, including in UN-mandated peace operations, Russia has since the early 2000s increasingly shifted to using these operations as an instrument for exerting influence in its neighbourhood and asserting its claim to a "sphere of privileged interests". Efforts to strengthen peacekeeping in the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) also serve this purpose.

3 OSCE (1990): Charter of Paris for a New Europe. [Link]: "In accordance with our obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and commitments under the Helsinki Final Act, we renew our pledge to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or from acting in any other manner inconsistent with the principles or purposes of those documents."

Russia: Peacekeeping vs. "conflict keeping"

At the end of 1991, the Russian Federation claimed the Soviet Union's vacant seat on the Security Council, with the silent consent of other members – a procedure that Ukraine is currently challenging as incompatible with the UN Charter.[4] In the years that followed, Russia's interest in contributing militarily to UN peace operations increased.

In the mid-1990s, there was a brief phase of close, albeit not tension-free cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in the Balkans. Russia provided 1,200 of the 20,000 troops of the NATO-led Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina. From there, after the end of NATO's campaign against Yugoslavia in 1999, a Russian advance party occupied Kosovo's main Slatina airport in a surprise raid, but then placed its 3,150-strong contingent under the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR). Russia's engagement in Kosovo, however, ended as early as 2003.[5]

Russia has a key role in the deployment of UN military observers, including in the Middle East, West Africa and Sudan. Overall, though, Russia's contributions to UN peace operations, which had mainly been an attempt to gain access to strategic positions, declined at the turn of the millennium. In 2022, Russia was still providing military personnel for eight UN missions.[6]

At the same time, Moscow uses 'peacekeeping forces' as an instrument to regulate conflicts in its neighbourhood and to keep these protracted ("conflict keeping" rather than peacekeeping). As Russia became increasingly aggressive in staking its claim to a "sphere of privileged interests," the geopolitical significance of these conflicts grew, in that they granted lasting opportunities for Russia to influence the political orientation of the states concerned. This currently applies to Transnistria (Moldova) and Karabakh (Azerbaijan). Moreover, the peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Georgia) were replaced by military cooperation agreements after the Five-Day War in 2008. In parallel, Russia is pursuing the expansion of peacekeeping within the CSTO.[7]

In early 2005, Russia created the 15th Independent Guard Motorised Rifle Brigade, a specialised peacekeeping force that was initially deployed in Abkhazia (Georgia), but later also, in true Orwellian fashion, in support of the Russian attack on Ukraine. The presence of Russian peacekeeping/"conflict keeping" troops in South Ossetia and Karabakh was also reduced in favour of their deployment in Ukraine.[8]

In recent years, Russia has also significantly expanded its influence in Africa and uses this to steer conflicts there.[9] In doing so, Moscow often rekindles old connections from Soviet times. 43 of 54 African heads of state and government attended the first Russia-Africa Summit in Sochi in 2019.[10] Clearly, what Russia has to offer is very attractive to many African governments. Moreover, Russia has repeatedly intervened militarily in certain conflicts, such as in Syria, the Central African Republic (CAR) or most recently in Mali, often by employing the paramilitary Wagner group. Russia also influences conflicts by fostering dependencies through military cooperation agreements and arms exports. According to the Stockholm Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Russia was by far the most important arms supplier to sub-Saharan Africa in the period 2016 – 2020.[11]

Finally, Moscow has massively expanded its propaganda and disinformation network in Africa. It uses Russia Today (RT) and social media in particular, but in part also works with China Central Television.[12]

4 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine (2022): Statement of the MFA of Ukraine on the illegitimacy of the Russian Federation's presence in the UN Security Council and in the United Nations as a whole. [Link].

5 Andreas Wittkowsky (2011): Grand Hotel Kosovo. Schlaglichter einer europäischen Staatsbildung, Berlin; NATO (n. d.): NATO and Russia: Partners in Peacekeeping. [Link].

6 IPI (2016): Country Profile: Russian Federation. [Link]; Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation (2023): Russia's Participation in Peacekeeping Operations. [Link]; UN Member States Contribution Tracker (2022) [Link].

7 Andreas Wittkowsky (2021): Verschleppte Konflikte und hybride Staatlichkeit im post-sowjetischen Raum, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Online-Dossier Innerstaatliche Konflikte. [Link]; Gaye Christoffersen (2022): Russian Thinking about CSTO Peacekeeping: Central Asia, China, and the Ukraine War, The Asan Forum. [Link].

8 Wikipedia (2023): 15th Separate Guards Motor Rifle Brigade. [Link]; Olena Roshchina (2022): Ukrainian Armed Forces General Staff says two-thirds of Russia's 15th Mechanised Brigade have become unfit for duty after fighting, Ukrainska Pravda. [Link].

9 Andreás Rácz (2020): Afrikanisches Comeback, IP. [Link].

10 Antonio Cascais (2022): Russlands Verbündete in Afrika, Deutsche Welle. [Link].

11 Pieter D. Wezeman, Alexandra Kuimova, Siemon T. Wezeman (2021): Trends in international arms transfers - 2020, SIPRI Fact Sheet. [Link].

12 Justin Arenstein (2022): Desinformation an allen Fronten: "Krieg besteht nicht nur aus Bomben und Panzern," Deutsche Welle Akademie. [Link].

China – world order Beijing style

In the long term, it is China who will change the current international order. China's rapid economic and military rise, combined with the country's size, is shifting the existing power structure, which has been dominated by the US since the end of the East-West conflict. The resulting power struggle between the US and China will be the prevailing feature of the coming decades. Not least, their contest will determine who will most shape the rules in international organisations and agreements.

The Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in October 2022 not only massively strengthened Xi Jinping, but also reaffirmed Beijing's global ambitions to be the defining global power by the middle of the century. In terms of foreign policy, the Belt and Road Initiative, the expansion of China's presence in international organisations and the strengthening of alliances such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation have served this purpose.

China's rapid economic and military rise is changing the global power structure.

In 2021, the Chinese leadership also decided on a Global Development Initiative, which was supplemented by a Global Security Initiative (GSI) in April 2022.[13] Despite geopolitical rivalry, converging interests within the context of the GSI could provide entry points for joint international approaches to regional conflicts. Still, it will be important to keep in mind the underlying intentions that China is pursuing through the GSI.[14]

China has also greatly increased its participation in UN peace operations in recent years.[15] It wants to be perceived as a responsible global power and in this way improve its image in the world. At the same time, Beijing is seeking to use its growing influence in the UN to implement its own peacekeeping ideas more determinedly in the future.

The greatest uncertainty stems from Beijing's future course of action with regard to Taiwan. China's growing military and economic power gives Beijing new leeway on this issue. At the last Party Congress, Xi Jinping reiterated that the unification of Taiwan with the motherland was inevitable and that he would also be willing to use military means to achieve this. For now though, Beijing is more likely to adopt a medium-term perspective rather than an imminent military solution.[16]

13 Helena Legarda, Grzegorz Stec (2022): China's Global Security Initiative seeks international buy-in for Beijing's vision of the global order, MERICS China Security and Risk Tracker. [Link].

14 Ibid.

15 Christoph Zürcher (2019): 30 years of Chinese peace-keeping, CIPS report. [Link].

16 Amanda Hsiao, Ivy Kwek (2022): Foreign Policy Implications of China's Twentieth Party Congress, ICG. [Link].

China and the future of peace operations

The People's Republic of China has had a permanent seat on the UN Security Council since 1971, but for about 20 years vehemently opposed any material or financial participation in UN peace operations. It was not until the 1990s that China first participated in UN missions in Cambodia (UNTAC) and Somalia (UNITAF).[17] Today, China is the largest troop contributor among the five permanent members of the Security Council with around 2,200 UN troops.[18]

The number of Chinese civilian staff in UN institutions is also growing steadily, including several high-level appointments and elected positions, such as Huang Xia's appointment in 2019 as the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for the African Great Lakes Region, or Guang Cong as Deputy Special Representative for South Sudan UNMISS.[19] With 15 per cent share of the 2020-21 peace operations budget, China has become the second largest donor after the US (28 per cent).[20]

Chinese experts emphasise that the principle of non-interference still applies.[21] China's 2019 White Paper, for example, speaks of the country "never seeking hegemony, expansion or spheres of influence" and being committed to the path of peaceful development.[22] While China is pursuing a more aggressive foreign policy in the South China Sea, towards Hong Kong and Taiwan, their support for multilateral peace operations can be seen as a counterweight in an attempt to be recognised as a "responsible great power" acting effectively in a multilateral environment.[23]

Peace operations are also a way for China to develop its own approaches to multilateral security cooperation and gradually anchor them in UN doctrine.[24] In this way, peacekeeping becomes another venue for the global normative contest in which China tries to defy the 'Western consensus.' China's peace doctrine focuses on promoting economic growth and the stability that goes with it.[25] Furthering human rights, in contrast, plays an increasingly marginalised role. Observers at the UN have for instance noted China's consistent efforts to reduce the number of human rights positions in UN peace operations.[26]

China's contribution to peacekeeping is expected to increase in the future. The key question is to what extent China's growing influence will affect the policy and practice of peacekeeping. Particularly with regard to promoting democracy and human rights, the UN is facing difficult debates.

17 Mamata Kumari (2018): China's Peacekeeping Operations in Africa, World Affairs. [Link].

18 UN Peacekeeping (2022): Troop and Police Contributors. [Link]; Georg Lammich (2019): China and Regional Security in Africa. In: Christof Hartmann, Nele Noesselt (Eds.) (2019): China's New Role in African Politics: From Non-Intervention Towards Stabilization? Routledge Global Cooperation Series. London: Taylor&Francis Ltd.

19 Cedric de Coning, Kari M. Osland (2020): China and UN peacekeeping, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, p. 6-8. [Link]; UN (2023): Guang Cong. [Link].

20 UN Peacekeeping (2022): How We are Funded. [Link]; Marc Lanteigne (2018): The Role of UN Peacekeeping in China's Expanding Strategic Interests, Special Report 430, United States Institute of Peace. [Link]; Pascal Abb (2018): China's Emergence as a Peacebuilding Actor: From 'Peaceful Development' to 'Developmental Peace,' The Asian Dialogue. [Link].

21 Nele Noesselt (2019): China's African Dream: Assessing China's New Strategy. In: Hartmann, Noesselt (Eds.) (2019).

22 Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China (2019): China's National Defense in the New Era, White Paper. [Link].

23 Zürcher (2019).

24 Ibid.

25 Mark Lanteigne, Mirwa Hirono (2012): Introduction: China and UN Peacekeeping. In: Marc Lanteigne, Mirwa Hirono (Ed.) (2012): China's Evolving Approach to Peacekeeping, London: Routledge, Taylor&Francis Group.

26 Zürcher (2019).

The return of the United States

The United States are determined to defend the current international order and their position in it. Which is why they are trying to put the brakes on China's economic and political rise, including through economic measures such as restrictions on the semiconductor industry enshrined in the Chips and Science Act.[27] At the same time, Washington is both strengthening its political and military alliances, especially in the Indo-Pacific, and renewing its emphasis on cooperation with Europe.

Despite the struggle for global dominance, the US sees the need to cooperate with China.

The current US National Security Strategy states unequivocally: "The PRC [People's Republic of China] [...] is the only competitor with the intent to reshape the international order and increasingly the economic, diplomatic, military and technological power to advance that objective."[28]

The US focus on China will mean that Europe will be called upon to play a greater part in guaranteeing security in its own geographical neighbourhood in the future. The EU's Strategic Compass already acknowledges this new understanding of Europe's role.[29]

Despite the fierce struggle for global dominance, the US National Security Strategy underlines the need to cooperate where "challenges to humanity" are at stake, across ideological boundaries and national interests: "we will work with any country, including our competitors, willing to constructively address shared challenges within the rules-based international order and while working to strengthen international institutions."[30]

Role of the regional powers

Even though the confrontation between China (and Russia) on the one hand and the West on the other will continue to shape international relations in the coming years, various regional powers cannot simply be assigned to one side or the other. They are increasingly assertive in pursuing their own interests and are expanding their geopolitical spheres of influence.

Regional powers are trying to expand their influence amid geopolitical competition.

In doing so, they not only take advantage of existing conflicts, such as Turkey or India have done in relation to the war in Ukraine, but also of opportunities that have arisen in recent years as a result of the withdrawal of the US as a global power, such as Turkey, the Gulf States or Iran have done in the Near and Middle East.

Various conflicts in Africa are also subject to targeted intervention by regional powers – quickly turning local conflicts into proxy wars and rendering conflict resolution much more difficult.

In the future, economically important states such as India or Brazil will likely try to significantly expand their influence and their role amid the evolving geopolitical competition.

27 The White House (2022): FACT SHEET: CHIPS and Science Act Will Lower Costs, Create Jobs, Strengthen Supply Chains, and Counter China. [Link]; Rob Garver, 2022: US Moves to Keep Advanced Semiconductor Technology Out of China, VOA. [Link].

28 The White House (2022): National Security Strategy. [Link].

29 Council of Europe (2022): A Strategic Compass for Security and Defense. [Link].

30 The White House (2022): FACT SHEET: The Biden-Harris Administration's National Security Strategy. [Link].

Capacity of the international community to act

The growing geopolitical rivalry between the US and China and the belligerent behaviour of permanent Security Council member Russia will probably further complicate cooperation at the United Nations and especially in the Security Council. When the interests of one of its five permanent members (P5) were affected, the Security Council has been largely unable to act also in the past. The more the P5 instrumentalise conflicts worldwide, the less able the UN will be to decide on joint action to address these conflicts.

So far, mandate extensions of UN peace operations have not been blocked, but whether this will continue and whether new peace operations will be authorised under these conditions is extremely uncertain. Moreover, both China's efforts to participate more actively in peacekeeping within the UN framework and Russia's policy of deploying peacekeepers in regional contexts are clearly driven by their desire for political and economic dominance.

In line with Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, regional organisations such as the AU could play a stronger role in the future. The fact that they are pawns in the great power rivalry and targets of geopolitical influence, however, limits the space for regional organisations. In fact, they can even be instruments used explicitly to secure regional hegemony, such as the CSTO in the post-Soviet region.

In light of the above, the time has come for the EU to raise its profile as a global actor. Although the West taking unilateral action in a world of intensifying systemic conflicts also has drawbacks – e. g. when interventions are criticised as an expression of Western domination and therefore dismissed – the EU must be able to react to conflicts independently. To this end, it must clarify the level of its ambitions in future crisis interventions, adapt to these ambitions and generate the required civilian and military capabilities.

The EU must be able to respond independently to conflicts.

NATO's Strategic Concept of June 2022 clearly returns the defence of the Alliance itself to centre stage. At the same time, counter-terrorism and stabilisation of southern neighbouring regions will continue to be of central importance. In a shift away from direct intervention brought about by the sobering experience of previous missions, especially in Afghanistan, the focus moves to cooperation and partnership.[31]

Ultimately, those members of the international community that have a genuine interest in a peaceful, rules-based order will have to examine in each individual case which options are on the table with which partner countries. Forging common positions and winning allies remains the primary task of a policy that is committed to multilateralism.

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31 Chapter 7; Claudia Major (2019): Die Rolle der NATO für Europas Verteidigung, SWP Berlin, p. 9. [Link].

2. Conflict trends and peace operations

The Peace Report 2022 states that the number of conflicts worldwide remains high.[32] 2016 was the most conflict-intensive year since 1991 with 54 conflicts, including those between the state and an armed group or between armed groups, and violence directed against civilian populations. Since then, the number of conflicts has remained consistently high.[33]

Intrastate conflicts remain the predominant threat to international peace, but since the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, international conflicts are garnering more attention. The sharp rise in geopolitical tensions further drives conflict.

Similarly, the OECD "States of Fragility 2022" report maintains that the number of extremely fragile contexts has reached a 10-year high.[34] To assess the fragility of a state, the report uses political indicators, such as state legitimacy and the rule of law, alongside economic and social indicators.[35]

The fragility of a state increases the potential for conflict in that it reduces the likelihood that a government can respond effectively to crises.[36] Numerous studies document the risk factors associated with fragility that favour the outbreak of violent conflict, including low per capita GDP, high unemployment, as well as repressive, corrupt governments and a lack of rule of law.[37]

Fundamentally, the essential causes of conflict remain unchanged: Struggles for political power and for access to resources. As a result, entanglements between political, economic and criminal actors or armed groups have long been a feature of conflicts – from Afghanistan to Kosovo or the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).[38] Incentive structures through which actors in fact benefit from continued instability and an absence of state authority also result in conflicts lasting longer on average.[39]

Societal divisions and disinformation

At the same time, social polarisation and alienation from political systems is increasing.[40] Where political and economic tensions are high, inequalities marked and extremist ideologies widespread, the rift between the political elites and the population deepens. The fact that a growing number of states demonstrate strong authoritarian traits exacerbates the divide. Their governments typically use every opportunity to expand their own power and undermine other institutions, such as independent courts or electoral authoritie, thus further weakening social and political cohesion.[41]

The geopolitical power shifts further contribute to hollowing out democracy worldwide. Governments that adopt a more authoritarian stance are encouraged and supported by like-minded countries such as Russia and China. As a result, democratic opposition movements, such as in Sudan, lose their Western support, while opponents of democracy are bolstered through financial aid and disinformation campaigns. Russia's current manipulation attempts in Moldova are a case in point.[42]

32 BICC et al. (2022): Friedensgutachten 2022 Friedensfähig in Konfliktzeiten, p. 47-56. [Link].

33 Júlia Palik, Anna Marie Obermeier, Siri Aas Rustad (2022): Conflict Trends: A Global Overview, 1946–2021, Oslo, Peace Research Institute Oslo, p. 12. [Link].

34 The OECD defines fragility as the "combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacities of the state, system and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks. It occurs in a spectrum of intensity across six dimensions: economic, environmental, political, security, societal and human." OECD (2022): States of Fragility 2022. [Link].

35 OECD (2022); Fragile States Index (2022). The Fragile States Index uses following indicators: (1) Coherence indicators (security apparatus, factionalised elites, group grievance); (2) Economic indicators (economic decline, uneven development, human flight & brain drain); (3) Political indicators (state legitimacy, public services, human rights & rule of law); (4) Social and cross-cutting indicators (demographic pressures, refuges & IDPs, external intervention). [Link].

36 IDEA (2022): The Global State of Democracy, p. 8ff., 17. [Link]; Rana Dasgupta (2018): The demise of the nation state, The Guardian. [Link].

37 Barbara F. Walter (2017): The New New Civil Wars, Annual Review of Political Science, p. 476. [Link].

38 Mats Berdal, David Malone (eds.) (2000): Greed and Grievance. Economic Agendas in Civil War, International Peace Academy; Adam Day (2020): The future of UN peace operations in a changing conflict environment, paper written for the UN DPO Future of Peace Operations initiative. [Link].

39 Mary Kaldor (2019): Peacemaking in an Era of New Wars, Carnegie Europe. [Link].

40 UNDP (2022): Human Development Report 2021/2022 Overview Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World, p. 8, 13. [Link]; IDEA (2022); Kaldor (2019).

41 Freedom House (2022): Freedom in the World 2022: The Global Expansion of Authoritarian Rule. [Link]; IDEA (2022), p. 7.

42 Fragile States Index (2022), p. 33; Freedom House (2022), p. 2; IDEA (2022), p. 6; Der Spiegel (2022): Putins Plan für Moldau und die Möglichkeiten der EU, Acht Milliarden (Podcast). [Link].

The cracks in society are exacerbated by an information space which itself has become an arena for conflict, in which competing narratives vie for influence. Through new technologies – above all social media – information spreads at high speed and with enormous reach. Technology allows extremist groups in particular not only to spread ideologies quickly and across borders, but also to mobilise financial resources and supporters, to expand their networks worldwide and to win external supporters for their cause.[43]

Disinformation undermines the credibility and capacity of peace operations to act.

Targeted disinformation contributes to destabilsation by exploiting existing ethnic, social or political cleavages.[44] It can also pose a direct threat to peace operations, by undermining their credibility, calling into question their ability to act, impeding the implementation of mandates and destabilising the security situation in the area of operation.[45] Hostile communication measures are particularly influential in fragile contexts and, according to UN Secretary-General António Guterres, are increasingly used as a "weapon of war."[46]

Strategies of international organisations on disinformation

So far, peace operations do not have a dedicated strategy for dealing with disinformation, even though there are indicative approaches in several international organisations. The EU and NATO have recognised the political and security challenge of disinformation in numerous documents and have intensified their efforts to combat Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) in the EU terminology and Hostile Information Activities in NATO since the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014.[47] For 2023, the EU has announced a FIMI toolbox for CSDP missions, among others.[48] A NATO Toolbox for Countering Hostile Information Activities, which is currently being revised, is intended to more directly address NATO operations. Efforts are also underway at the OSCE to expand its capacities.

For the UN, by far the largest actor with 12 peacekeeping missions and 15 Special Political Missions, the new Strategy for the Digital Transformation of UN Peacekeeping proposes the establishment of a multidisciplinary, integrated capacity at the organisation's headquarters.[49] This is to work closely with the missions and support them with new technologies, among other things. At the beginning of 2022, the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) launched a two-year project to counter disinformation.[50] Disinformation was also a central theme of the first discussion in the UN Security Council on strategic communication in peace operations in July 2022.[51]

There are essentially four areas, in which peace operations can take action to counter disinformation.

- *Situational Awareness:* recognising the threat in the information space early on,
- *Response:* establishing efficient structures of strategic communication,
- *Resilience:* strengthening the resilience of missions and countries of operation against disinformation, and
- *Cooperation:* establishing appropriate cooperation with national and international partners.

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43 Walter (2017), p. 469-486; Kaldor (2019).

44 International organisations do not share a uniform definition of disinformation. It is often defined - in contrast to misinformation and malinformation - as information that is false and created to cause harm to a person, social group, organisation or state; Claire Wardle, Hossein Derakhshan (2017): Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making, Council of Europe. [Link]; UNESCO (2018): Journalism, 'Fake News' and Disinformation: A Handbook for Journalism Education and Training. [Link].

45 Monika Benkler, Annika S. Hansen, Lilian Reichert (2022): Protecting the truth: Peace operations and disinformation, ZIF Study. [Link]; Monika Benkler (2022): Für die Sicherheit in Friedenseinsätzen: Desinformation mit strategischer Kommunikation bekämpfen, 49security. [Link]; Albert Trithart, (2022): Disinformation against UN Peacekeeping Operations, IPI. [Link]; UNDP (2022), p. 7, 12.

46 UN (2022): SG/SM/21372, Press release. [Link].

47 Council of the European Union (2022): 7371/22. [Link]; NATO (2020): NATO's approach to countering disinformation: a focus on COVID-19. [Link]; Karl Moritz Heil (2021): Resilienz und Abschreckung bei EU und NATO. Kollektive Strategien zur Abwehr digitaler Desinformation, München.

48 Council of Europe (2022): 7371/22. [Link].

49 UN Peacekeeping (2021): Strategy for the Digital Transformation of UN Peacekeeping. [Link].

50 Trithart (2022), p. 7.

51 UN (2022): SC/14966. [Link].

Risk factors in conflict areas with international peace operations

Legend:
8. — Index/Ranking
— Position

Index/Ranking

Columns (left to right):
- Freedom in the World 2022
- Fragile States Index 2022
- Global Climate Risk Index 2021
- Corruption Perceptions Index 2022
- Global Hunger Index 2022
- IRC Emergency Watchlist 2023
- Countries hosting Peace Operations 2022/2023

Countries

Country	Freedom in the World 2022	Fragile States Index 2022	Global Climate Risk Index 2021	Corruption Perceptions Index 2022	Global Hunger Index 2022	IRC Emergency Watchlist 2023	Countries hosting Peace Operations 2022/2023
South Sudan	1.	4.	8.	3.	3.	7.	●
Somalia	9.	2.		1.	2.	1.	●
Syria	2.	3.		2.	4.	6.	●
Yemen		1.		5.	5.	5.	●
Central African Republic	7.	5.			6.		●
Democratic Republic of the Congo		6.			8.	4.	●
Afghanistan		8.	6.			3.	●
North Korea	5.			7.			
Equatorial Guinea	6.			9.			
Chad		9.			9.		●
Haiti				8.		9.	●

Source: ZIF 2023

Effects of climate change

Another risk factor, particularly in Africa, is the advancing climate change that aggravates food and water shortages, which – among other things – exacerbates existing conflicts and gives rise to new ones.

The debate on the links between climate change, peace and security has become more prominent in recent years. Although a direct causality has not yet been proven, it is undisputed that climate change acts as a risk multiplier, especially in fragile contexts, and accelerates existing political, ethnic, religious and socio-economic conflicts.[52] In particular, dwindling resources, extreme weather events or fluctuating food prices endanger livelihoods and affect the stability of political systems and societies.[53]

Climate change is a serious risk multiplier.

Even today, most personnel for multilateral peace operations are stationed in areas severely affected by climate change.[54] Climate risks and the associated consequences are thus climbing up the agenda of international crisis management.[55]

Strategies of international organisations on climate and security

The **UN** Security Council has recognised the degrading effect of climate change on security and stability in some missions (MINUSMA, MINUSCA, UNRCCA, UNFICYP, UNOCA, UNOWAS, MONUSCO, UNAMI) and incorporated this in mission mandates. In early 2022, the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) joined the Climate Security Mechanism, which supports the entire UN system in addressing climate-related security risks more systematically.

Several years ago, the **EU** identified climate change as an existential issue of international security.[56] In addition to the Green Deal and the 2020 Climate Change and Defence Roadmap, the EU announced that it will integrate climate factors into the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and establish a network of environmental and climate advisors in its missions.[57]

The 2007 **OSCE** Madrid Declaration already recognised the links between environment and security and pointed to the OSCE's role in addressing the challenges of climate change.[58] The OSCE has projects and centres in 14 participating states that seek to engage citizens, governments and the private sector in a dialogue on environmental challenges.[59]

NATO views itself as a pioneering organisation with regard to climate security. In 2021, its Foreign Ministers endorsed NATO's Climate Change and Security Agenda. The issue of climate change and security is also an integral part of the NATO 2030 decisions taken by the heads of state and government at the Brussels Summit in 2021.[60] To this end, NATO intends to inaugurate a centre of excellence for climate security in 2023.[61]

The **African Union** (**AU**), too, recognised the risks and published a communiqué on climate change, peace and security in 2021. Among other things, the AU calls for climate-sensitive planning in its peace operations as well as in post-conflict reconstruction and development measures. In addition, early warning systems are to be established and the capacities of member states reinforced.[62]

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52 Susanne Dröge (2020): Addressing the Risks of Climate Change. What Role for the Security Council. SWP Berlin. [Link]; Tanja Bernstein, Maximilian Schoppa (2019): Der Klimawandel als Risiko-Multiplikator: Ein Thema für den UN-Sicherheitsrat? ZIF Kompakt. [Link].

53 Katharine J. Mach et al. (2019): Climate As a Risk Factor for Armed Conflict. [Link].

54 Florian Krampe (2019): Climate Change, Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace. SIPRI Policy Brief. [Link].

55 Tobias Pietz (2022): Klimasicherheit und Friedenseinsätze. Neue Initiativen und Chancen. ZIF Briefing. [Link].

56 Richard Youngs (2021): The EU's Indirect and Defensive Approach to Climate Security. In: Richard Youngs, Olivia Lazard (2021): The EU and Climate Security: Toward Ecological Diplomacy. Brussels: Carnegie Europe.

57 Pietz (2022).

58 OSCE (2007): Madrid Declaration on Environment and Security. [Link].

59 OSCE (2022): Climate Change. [Link].

60 NATO (2021): NATO Climate Change and Security Action Plan. [Link].

61 Pietz (2022).

62 Ibid.

Internationalisation of conflict

The fact that today's protracted conflicts are more internationalised than ever before poses structural challenges to the search for peaceful solutions and affects conflicts in several different ways. First, internationalisation is linked to violent extremism and terrorist groups that pursue transnational goals and have been expanding steadily for 20 years. Since 2014, this development has gained further momentum with the growing prominence of the Islamic State.[63] According to the Peace Research Institute Oslo, groups affiliated with the Islamic State have been involved in about one third of all conflicts since 2015. Among other things, they exploit the fragility of societies to mobilise followers and support by filling the gap of absent or ineffective state structures and services.[64]

Second, in internationalised conflicts, armed groups finance themselves at least in part through transnational illegal trade and smuggling, seek protection in neighbouring countries and build political support through diaspora networks.

Third, actors who actively oppose a political solution to the conflict (so-called spoilers) are not only present in the institutions or non-state armed groups of the conflict country, but are also active in neighbouring states and further afield. The intervention of geopolitical actors in support of different conflict parties causes these parties to revisit their cost-benefit-calculations and reduces their willingness to negotiate and settle conflicts.

Peace operations encounter additional obstacles when external spoilers use conflicts for their own ends.

A worrying development is the increased deployment of third-country troops in conflict areas, such as Libya, DRC or Mali. But even purportedly more harmless examples, such as Russian flags being waved at demonstrations in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad – spurred on by concerted anti-French and pro-Russian disinformation campaigns – illustrate the influence third countries can wield.[65] The challenges facing peace operations grow significantly when external spoilers fuel conflicts and use them to further their own geopolitical agendas.

Outlook: Need for and supply of peace operations

The assumption that a high level of conflict entails a great need for crisis management is obvious. But whether this demand will translate into an effective response in the shape of a peace operation is less certain at present. In whatever configuration, this would require four things: political will in the mandating multilateral organisations; acceptance of the missions in the host countries; suitable and tailored approaches to conflict management; and sufficient resources.

As far as political will is concerned, a look back at the Cold War demonstrates that it was possible to cooperate across system boundaries in a number of conflicts, despite geopolitical confrontations. At least, this was the case where the political interests of the permanent members in the UN Security Council were not directly affected. The current intensifying geopolitical tensions suggests, though, that the scope for joint action may be diminishing.

63 Palik et al. (2022): Conflict Treands in Africa, 1981-2021, PRIO Paper, p. 18ff. [Link].

64 Ibid., p. 12-14; Friedensgutachten 2022; Walter (2017), p. 474-475; Fragile States Index (2022).

65 BBC News (2023): Russia in Africa: How disinformation operations target the continent. [Link].

3. International peace operations: Actors and mandates

Confronted with the *Zeitenwende*, international peace operations face a threefold challenge: How and from whom do they obtain appropriate mandates? How do they gain legitimacy and assert themselves on the ground? And which of their approaches is or in what form can approaches be effective?

For years, recurring debates have challenged the effectiveness and legitimacy of international peace operations. Most worryingly, several large multidimensional missions, such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), have failed to bring about tangible improvements in the security of the population despite being deployed for many years. In order to assess the way ahead for peace operations, it is important to understand how they have evolved to date.

Ever since the United Nations (UN) began deploying peace operations immediately after the Second World War, they have been a central instrument for dealing with international crises and conflicts. Three developments illustrate how adaptable peace operations have proven:

- **More organisations deploy peace operations:** In addition to the UN, the European Union (EU), Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), Organisation of American States (OAS), African Union (AU), and various sub-regional organisations as well as coalitions of the willing have been conducting peace operations since the 1990s.
- **Missions consist of multiple components:** While the first missions were almost purely military, virtually all the newer missions also have police and civilian components or focus specifically on political processes.
- **More mandated tasks are assigned to peace operations:** Similar to the number of components the range of tasks has also grown. Peace operations established more recently are rarely tasked only with observing compliance with a ceasefire or keeping conflict parties apart. Their mandated tasks range from active protection of civilians to a variety of measures intended to contribute to building sustainable peace.

The following look at the recent history of international peace operations provides insight into why and how these trends arose and where peace operations stand today.

The "new world order" of the 1990s

At the end of the Cold War, faced with a sharp rise in the number of intrastate conflicts, the international community acquired a previously unimagined collective capacity to act. There was hopeful talk of a "new world order," in which conflicts would be met with common approaches. Within five years, between 1989 and 1994, the UN Security Council authorised 20 new peace operations – more missions than had been created in the previous 40 years. By further comparison, not a single peace operation was authorised between 1979 and 1989.[66]

> Between 1989 and 1994, the UN Security Council authorised 20 new peace operations – more missions than in the previous 40 years.

66 UN (2020): List of Peacekeeping Operations 1948–2020. [Link].

23

This phase of multilateral engagement came to a sudden end following the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, which unfolded unchecked despite the presence of a UN mission and which claimed the lives of some 800,000 people, and the massacre of some 8,000 Bosniaks in the UN protection zone in Srebrenica in 1995. According to official evaluation reports, the peace operations had not been sufficiently prepared for these conflict situations: Neither had the underlying concepts been adapted to the "new" conflicts, nor were they backed by the necessary resources.[67]

International responsibility to protect and protection of civilians

It took a decade for the UN to adjust their approaches to the challenges. Having redefined and renegotiated "state sovereignty" in the context of an international "responsibility to protect" in 2005, the UN initiated a normative and strategic shift that was to reframe peace operations globally.[68] Most importantly, the protection of civilians (POC) became an overriding priority for peace operations. According to the UN, more than 95 per cent of peacekeepers today operate under a POC mandate.[69] Today the UN "remains the standard-bearer and has advanced the most comprehensive and ambitious definition of POC."[70] Albeit at different times and to varying degrees, other international organisations, including the AU, the EU and NATO, have developed their own concepts on how to implement POC.[71]

Mandates in fragile contexts and active conflicts became more extensive and more demanding.

This normative shift brought peace operations renewed recognition as an instrument for conflict prevention and resolution. At the same time, it gave rise to new challenges. Deployed into fragile contexts and active conflicts, mandates inevitably became more extensive and demanding. And the expectations placed on international peace operations grew significantly.[72]

Actors in peace operations

In 2022, the UN accounted for about 63 per cent of all personnel in international peace operations. Four of the five largest peace operations are currently led by the UN, although the AU has deployed the largest operation in terms of personnel numbers in Somalia (around 19,900) for several years now. Four UN missions (UNMISS, MONUSCO, MINUSMA, MINUSCA) alone account for about 50 per cent of peace operations personnel worldwide. In March 2023, the UN was deploying a total of twelve peacekeeping operations (and fifteen field-based Special Political Missions), half of which were in Africa.[73]

Other actors have joined the fold and are making substantial contributions to maintaining international peace and security. Since 2003, the EU has led 40 civilian missions and military operations on three different continents under its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).[74] In March 2023, it maintained a total of 22 missions and operations. Still, the EU deployments only amount to about 3 per cent of personnel in peace operations.[75] Its civilian missions in particular are small, targeted setups that focus on establishing the rule of law, good governance and security sector reform (SSR). As does the UN, the EU views SSR as a process that is not exclusively technical, but political and that contributes to the protection of civilians in the long term.[76]

67 More on the background and extent of the international failure can be found in official UN evaluation reports. For instance: UN Security Council (1999): Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Actions of the United Nations during the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda, S/1999/1257. [Link]; UN General Assembly (1999): The Fall of Srebrenica, A/54/549. [Link].

68 This is reflected in numerous UN documents from the Brahimi Report in 2000 to the World Summit in 2005, at which member states defined a new Responsibility to Protect, to the publication of the Capstone Doctrine in 2008 – to name just a few examples.

69 UN (2022): Protecting Civilians. [Link].

70 Joachim A. Koops, Christian Patz (2022): UN, EU, and NATO Approaches to the Protection of Civilians: Policies, Implementation, and Comparative Advantages, International Peace Institute, New York, p. 5. [Link].

71 Ibid. p. 3.

72 Charles T. Hunt, Shannon Zimmerman (2019): Twenty Years of the Protection of Civilians in UN Peace Operations. Progress, Problems and Prospects, IPI, p. 50 –81. [Link].
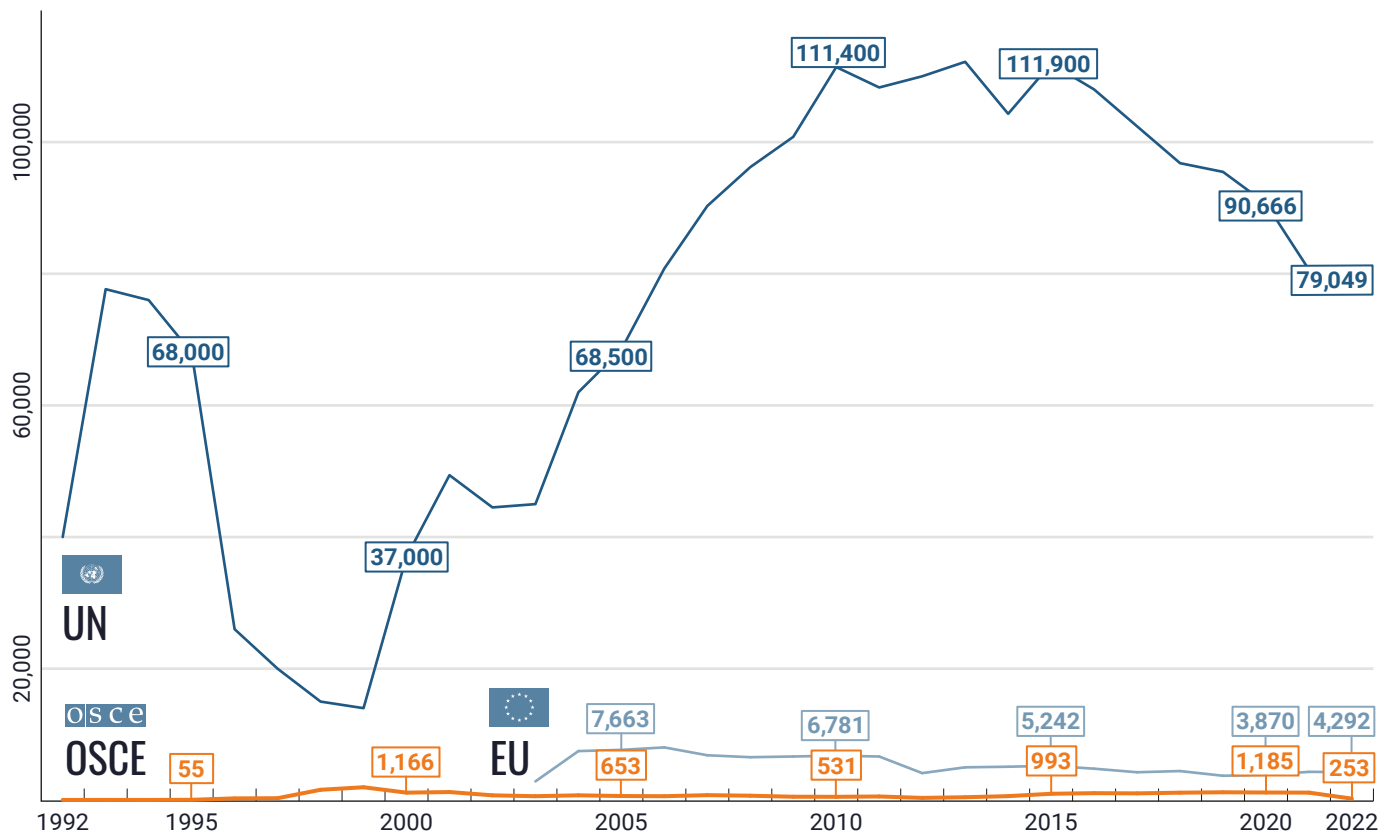
73 SIPRI (2022): Map of Multilateral Peace Operations 2022. [Link].

74 European Parliament (2021): Common Security and Defence Policy. [Link].

75 SIPRI (2022).

76 Jaïr van der Lijn et al. (2020): EU Military Training Missions: A Synthesis Report, SIPRI, Stockholm, p. 9. [Link].

Personnel numbers in UN, EU and OSCE peace operations, 1992–2022

Source: ZIF 2022

Unlike UN peace operations, current EU military operations are not directly mandated to stabilise a country or protect civilians. They generally do not have robust mandates, but rather support host countries through training and technical advice.[77]

As of March 2023, the OSCE is deploying 13 field operations, mostly long-term missions in South Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia. These missions support host-country efforts to implement OSCE principles and promote confidence-building, conflict-reducing activities.[78] However, the OSCE's "human dimension" – i.e. protecting human rights, promoting democracy and guaranteeing the rule of law – has come under increasing pressure.[79] Since all OSCE mandates have to be issued by consensus, they are vulnerable to pressure from rising political tensions. As a result, several field operations have folded in recent years or their mandates had to be redrafted much more restrictively. Less often, the OSCE has authorised missions to observe ceasefires – as in Kosovo and Georgia. Further-reaching considerations for robust, military OSCE peace operations have been discussed for years, but never put into practice. In fact, all OSCE missions to date have been unarmed, civilian missions.

77 Thierry Tardy (2019): The European Union and UN Peace Operations: What Global–Regional Peace and Security Partnership? In: Cedric de Coning und Mateja Peter (eds.) (2019): United Nations Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 236.

78 OSCE (2022): Where We Are. [Link].

79 CSCE (1990): Charter of Paris for a New Europe. [Link].

Since its creation in 2002, the AU has established nine stand-alone military peace operations, which are not part of or linked to peace operations deployed by another organisation. In addition, the organisation provides support to regional security cooperations established on an ad hoc basis, such as the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF).[80]

The AU and African states have vastly expanded their capacities for peace operations in the past decade, most importantly through the establishment of the African Stand-by Force (ASF) under the leadership of the AU. The ASF consists of "multidimensional capabilities, including military, police and civilian, on standby in their countries of origin and ready for rapid deployment"[81] and aims to enable African states to react quickly to crises and security threats. It represents a significant step towards African states actively shaping the regional security architecture rather than being mere recipients of efforts to promote peace.[82] Indeed, even in UN peace operations, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia have represented the lion's share of the top ten troop- and police-contributing countries (T/PCCs) for years.[83]

African states are no longer mere recipients of peace measures, but are actively shaping the international security architecture.

Due to its contribution to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force/Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, the US for a long time was the only country from the Global North that featured in the upper ranks of the T/PCCs.[84] Since its engagement in Afghanistan ended in 2021, the Global North has in the main provided financial contributions to peace operations.[85] And yet, NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept reaffirms the organisation's commitment to work with international partners to address security threats wherever Alliance interests are affected, including in the Middle East, North Africa and the Sahel region.[86] In light of the Russian invasion in Ukraine, however, NATO's priority is shifting back to deterrence and is likely to concentrate on the defence of allied territory in the near future.

At the beginning of 2023, a number of organisations and coalitions were deploying international peace operations with a total of 135,000 personnel worldwide, of which 119,800 were military, 8,700 police and 6,500 civilian staff.[87] The following chapters examine how geopolitical shifts and changing times impact these peace operations.

80 ICG (2020): What Role for the Multinational Joint Task Force in Fighting Boko Haram? [Link].

81 AU (2019): The African Standby Force. [Link].

82 Cedric de Coning (2019): Africa and UN Peace Operations: Implications for the Future Role of Regional Organisations, in: de Coning and Peter (eds.) (2019): p. 214.

83 Timo Smit, Sofía Sacks Ferrari, Jaïr van der Lijn (2020): Trends in Multilateral Peace Operations, 2019, SIPRI Fact Sheet, p. 5. [Link].

84 Ibid.

85 UN (2022): Troop and Police Contributors. [Link].

86 NATO (2022): NATO 2022 Strategic Concept. [Link].

87 ZIF (2023) Dashboard Peace Operations 2023. [Link].

4. UN peace operations: Pragmatism and crisis of legitimacy

There was much talk of how the Russian war of aggression would impact political debates in the United Nations (UN) system in the immediate aftermath of the invasion. The true turning point for UN conflict management, though, occurred much earlier. The consensus around the goals and tasks of peace operations had begun to crumble in the early 2000s.[88] The erosion makes itself felt in contentious decision-making in the UN Security Council, the fraying consent of host governments and key conflict actors, and the waning trust of host populations. Today, UN peace operations face the triple challenge of designing appropriate mandates, regaining legitimacy and applying effective approaches.

Broad mandates and diversity: UN peace operations in transition

The UN can look back on a rich 75-year history of peace operations. Despite the mounting challenges, the UN is still the largest and most established actor in global crisis and conflict management. The strength of UN peace operations traditionally lies in their global composition and political credibility. The latter derives from their Security Council mandates and the former from the broad coalition of troop and police contributors that enables the UN to deploy an operation in the first place. In that way, UN peace operations can be viewed as a strong expression of international solidarity for conflict management.

The strength of UN peace operations traditionally lies in their global composition and political credibility.
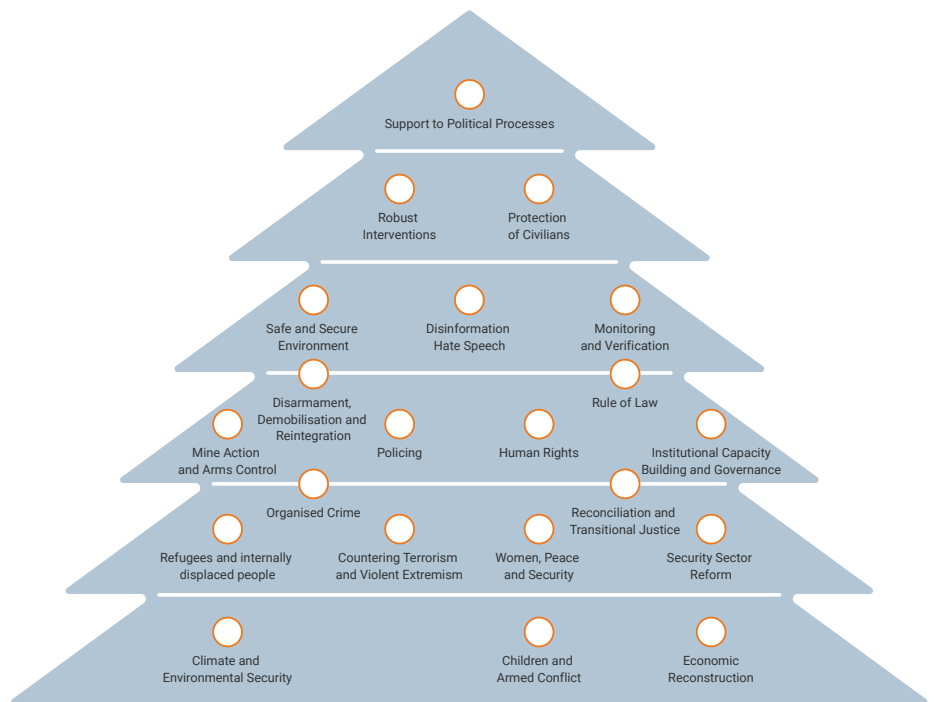
From the outset, UN peace operations have followed three fundamental principles: (1) consent of the main parties to the conflict, (2) impartiality, and (3) non-use of force except in self-defence and in defence of the mandate. They always deploy at the invitation of a host government and are thus not well-suited to peace enforcement.

Instead, the traditional core tasks of UN peace operations have been to create space for confidence-building between hostile parties and prepare the ground for political solutions to a conflict. With few exceptions, the early missions – now called 'traditional' missions – were inter-positioning forces, i.e. blue helmets stationed in a buffer zone to monitor a ceasefire while a political solution is sought. Some areas of operation, such as Cyprus, Western Sahara or Kashmir, are still waiting for that solution to emerge today.

Since the end of the Cold War, the range of tasks has greatly expanded, so that today's large peace operations are described as multidimensional. At present, missions accompany societies and states on their way to independence, support democratic elections or the (re)construction of state structures, protect civilians and facilitate the provision of humanitarian aid. The four 'big ones' – MONUSCO, UNMISS, MINUSMA and MINUSCA – are also tasked with stabilisation albeit without conceptual clarity as to what this entails. The expectations of what a peace operation would deliver have grown accordingly. This proliferation of tasks gave rise to the term "Christmas tree mandates," i.e. mandates that reflect a veritable wish list of interests, hardly prioritise and are not backed by sufficient resources. Even more so, missions are being deployed more and more frequently into situations where there is no resilient peace agreement (no peace to keep) and where they struggle to uphold peacekeeping principles. This renders it increasingly difficult to meet rising expectations. As a result, observers and beneficiaries alike have questioned the effectiveness of UN peace operations over the past decade and member states have exercised pressure to demonstrate impact and efficiency.

88 Sebastian von Einsiedel, David Malone, Bruno Stagno Ugarte (2015): The UN Security Council in an Age of Great Power Rivalry, United Nations University, Working Paper Series No. 4. [Link]; Adam Day (2020): The future of UN peace operations in a changing conflict environment, paper written for the UN DPO Future of Peace Operations initiative. [Link]; Kari M. Osland, Mateja Peter (2021): UN peace operations in a multipolar order: Building peace through the rule of law and bottom-up approaches, Contemporary Security Policy, p. 1-14. [Link].

"Christmas tree mandates" in UN peace operations: Example MINUSMA

Support to Political Processes

Robust Interventions

Protection of Civilians

Safe and Secure Environment

Disinformation Hate Speech

Monitoring and Verification

Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration

Rule of Law

Mine Action and Arms Control

Policing

Human Rights

Institutional Capacity Building and Governance

Organised Crime

Reconciliation and Transitional Justice

Refugees and internally displaced people

Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism

Women, Peace and Security

Security Sector Reform

Climate and Environmental Security

Children and Armed Conflict

Economic Reconstruction

Source: ZIF 2022

In addition to peacekeeping operations, the UN Security Council also authorises Special Political Missions (SPMs). SPMs originally focused more narrowly on political processes, but especially the so-called field-based SPMs are growing increasingly similar to peace-keeping operations, although they usually do not have a military component.[89] In the last decade, SPMs have been assigned mandated tasks such as security sector reform – for example in Libya – and even civilian protection – as in Sudan. The expansion in mandated tasks heightens the expectations placed on SPMs, without a concurrent and necessary increase in their capacities.

The legitimacy of existing UN missions is crumbling. Their mandates and operational contexts challenge whether the basic conditions for successful peacekeeping exist.

For several years now, the UN and their peace operations have had to navigate troubled waters. Lately, major success stories have been few and far between, and the efforts of peace operations have rarely seemed to tip the scales. Arguably, one reason has been the lack of political backing that in turn deprives peace operations of leverage on the ground and further constrains their ability to effectively implement extensive mandates. The fact that many existing UN peace operations are deployed into less than propitious circumstances with overstretched resources contributes to their diminishing legitimacy and begs the question of whether the basic conditions for successful peacekeeping even exist.[90] Particularly in the case of large multidimensional missions such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) or in Mali, one might ask: Are mandates too ambitious and peace operations ultimately doomed to fail?

89 In addition to field-based special political missions, which are most similar to peacekeeping, SPMs also include special envoys, mediation and good offices.

90 Anjali Dayal (2022): A Crisis of Consent in UN Peace Operations, IPI. [Link].

Number of peacekeeping operations and Special Political Missions in the field, 2010 – 2021
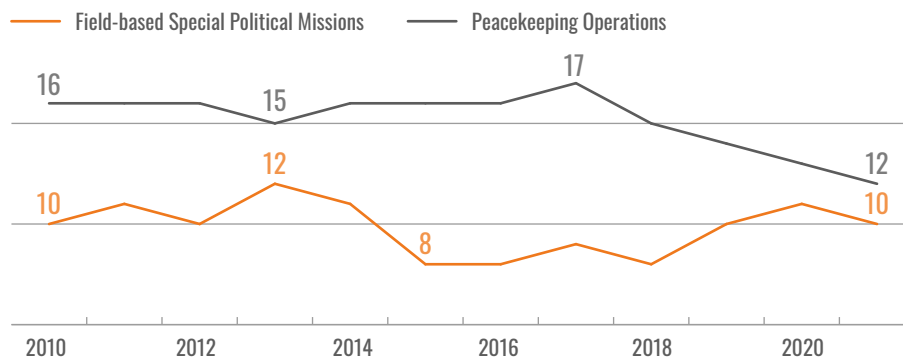
Source: ZIF 2022, UN DPPA/DPO 2022.

UN Security Council: decision-making and mandating since 2000

As the most central body for peace and security, the UN Security Council dynamics mirror the current global political state of affairs. And yet, political tensions between its 15 members are not a new phenomenon. Cooperation, especially between the five permanent members with veto rights (the so-called P5 – China, France, Russia, the US and the United Kingdom), has been deteriorating steadily for a number of years.[91]

The growing systemic competition between authoritarian states and Western democracies is reflected in practically all aspects of Council discussions and is limiting its ability to take action – whether diplomatically or with blue helmets.[92] Since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, divisions in the Council have hampered decision-making, such as on Libya and Syria. With regard to Syria, the Council was hamstrung for years due to the Russian veto. In the case of Libya, long delays have impeded the appointment of special envoys. Although a strong UN role in conflict resolution is more necessary than ever, given the high levels of conflict and civilian casualties, its substantive engagement is too often limited to humanitarian aid. Also, the manifest normative conflict among Security Council members is gradually undermining mission mandates to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law.[93]

Now more than ever, Russia's aggression against Ukraine challenges the Council's legitimacy and ability to function: The Council had already been criticised for not being representative of the UN's overall membership. Now, the fact that one of its permanent members so blatantly and persistently violates the UN Charta further challenges the body's authority and the validity of its decisions.[94] What does this mean for the UN Security Council's ability to address other conflicts raging worldwide?

As yet, the worst fears of the Council becoming completely paralysed have not materialised: The body has retained a minimum of cooperative capacity in conflict management and is still able to differentiate among issues on their individual merit.[95]

91 ICG (2019): Council of Despair? The Fragmentation of UN Diplomacy, Crisis Group Special Briefing No. 1. [Link].

92 Richard Gowan, Stephen John Stedman (2018): The International Regime for Treating Civil War, 1988–2017, Daedalus, p. 182. [Link].

93 ICG (2019), p. 6-9.

94 The ICG described this as the "Greatest challenge to the body's principles at least since the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003." ICG (2022): Ten Challenges for the UN in 2022-2023, Crisis Group Special Briefing No. 8. [Link].

95 ICG (2022); Comfort Ero (2022): Keynote speech Challenges Annual Forum.

Although the permanent (P5) and non-permanent members, the so-called elected 10 (E10), more frequently abstained from or vetoed decisions in 2022, the UN Security Council still passed 53 resolutions in 2022, almost as many as the 56 it had adopted in 2021.[96]

The fact that the mandates of all current peace operations were renewed suggests that the P5 continue to value working within the system. At the same time, the E10 – regardless of which region of the world they represent – have been demonstrating a newfound activism in recent years, voicing individual priorities and views more clearly and confidently.[97]

Nevertheless, political tensions in the Security Council inevitably impact UN peace operations. For one, agreement on new missions or major adjustments to existing mandates appear highly unlikely in the near future. But also, missions can fulfil their political remit more effectively when mandates are backed by unanimous Security Council decisions. More recently, that type of consensus has been difficult to drum up for some of the most ambitious peace operations: by repeatedly abstaining from resolutions for complex multidimensional missions such as MINUSCA or MINUSMA, Russia and China (and in some cases also elected council members) convey that, while they have no interest in causing these missions to collapse completely, they also reject elements of the mandate. Their political support is half-hearted at best.[98]

What leverage do UN Heads of Mission have to confront the parties to the conflict when important Security Council members withhold their political backing?

MINUSMA's mandate extension in June 2022 is a case in point: Russia and China abstained due to language on monitoring and reporting on human rights violations. The Malian government, for its part, announced shortly after the mandate renewal that it would not be able to provide the necessary support for the implementation of these tasks. This slight was plainly directed at the authority of the UN Security Council and highlights the fragile political foundation on which MINUSMA rests.[99] What leverage then can UN heads of mission realistically bring to bear on the parties to the conflict when important Security Council members withhold their political backing?

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96 Adrian Steube (2023): Voting Wrap-up of the UN security Council in 2022: Bitterness Mixed with Agreements, Passblue. [Link].

97 ICG (2019), p. 9-10.

98 Ibid., p. 6-9.

99 ICG (2022): "The Council's most recent renewal of MINUSMA's mandate, in June 2022, was plagued by differences over, among other things, its previously established human rights monitoring and reporting mandate, which led China and Russia to abstain. The tension between the transitional authorities and the Council showed after the vote, when the Malian ambassador to the UN announced that Bamako was "not in a position to guarantee the freedom of movement for MINUSMA investigations" and "does not intend to implement [the human rights]. provisions of the mission's mandate."; Dayal (2022). [Link].

Cooperation with host governments: Crumbling consent, lack of leverage

A peace operation's success hinges on the consent of the host government and the main parties to the conflict – consent both to a political process and to the deployment of the peace operation. Particularly for missions with complex, multidimensional mandates, a minimum of political commitment on the part of national elites with regard to human rights, democracy and good governance is a critical factor of success. The extent to which a host government merely tolerates a mission, accepts its mandate or actively commits to a political process usually fluctuates in the course of a mission's lifespan.

The situation becomes truly problematic when a host government and the peace operation develop diverging interpretations of the mandate, or the civilian population perceives the government itself as a threat to their safety.[100] The military government in Mali, for instance, is keen to fight terrorism and restore – or at least demonstrate – its authority. MINUSMA's main objectives, in contrast, are to support the political process, promote human rights and protect civilians.[101] In the DRC, the government is also looking for a military solution, in short the elimination of rebel groups, which MONUSCO cannot deliver. UN peace operations thus find themselves walking a tightrope: in order to secure host-state consent and cooperation in both countries, they help the respective governments to achieve partial military successes. In the process, however, they run the risk of damaging their impartiality.[102] When missions are no longer perceived as impartial, the pressure on conflict parties to find peaceful solutions diminishes, leaving UN peace operations with little leverage to advance political processes.

Several examples over the past two decades illustrate how uncooperative elites at national and local levels have undermined the UN's role as mediator and peacekeeper.[103] In fact, without a minimum of constructive cooperation with the host government, even the numerically largest and supposedly most robust missions cannot exercise their mandate effectively. The African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation UNAMID in Darfur is a case in point: For a long time, the world's largest peacekeeping mission (2008 – 20) was subject to systematic obstructions by the Sudanese government, such as restricting the mission's freedom of movement, delaying visas for mission members or the import of materials and supplies for the mission.[104]

On its part, the UN lacks the enforcement tools and political backing to effectively counter a host government's systematic obstruction. The growing disunion in the Security Council exacerbates this situation, often leaving even blatant violations of the Status of Forces Agreement unchecked. In some areas of operation, the growing interference of third countries further undermines the UN's leverage by offering host governments alternative support without onerous conditions. As a result, the incentive for host governments – such as in Mali or Libya – to cooperate with peace operations continues to shrink.

Without a minimum of constructive cooperation with host governments, even the largest and supposedly most robust missions cannot exercise their mandate effectively.

100 Sofia Sebastian, Aditi Gorur (2018): U.N. Peacekeeping & Host-state Consent, Stimson Center, p. 5f. [Link]; Osland & Peter (2021), p. 6.

101 ICG (2022): MINUSMA at a Crossroads. [Link].

102 Bastian Richter, Sina Golgowski (2022): Déjà-vu congolais: Die M23-Rebellion und der geplante Abzug MONUSCOs, ZIF kompakt. [Link]; Osland & Peter (2021), p. 5.

103 Gowan & Stedman (2018), p. 180.

104 UN (2021): Summary Report on Lessons Learned from the Experience of UNAMID. [Link].

Expectations and perceptions of the population

The population in conflict areas also increasingly challenges the legitimacy of some UN peace operations. This is especially true when it come to the so-called stabilisation missions MONUSCO in DRC, MINUSMA in Mali, or MINUSTAH in Haiti (until 2017). In July 2022, for example, the violent popular protests and attacks against MONUSCO bases in eastern Congo claimed the lives of dozens of demonstrators and several peacekeepers.[105]

At the core of the criticism is quite simply that civilian populations do not feel adequately protected by UN peacekeepers. And indeed, lately MONUSCO and MINUSMA have not been able to significantly reduce the number of civilian victims from armed attacks, sexual violence and other human rights violations.[106]

Moreover, when peace operations – in the eyes of the population – side with host governments in their attempts to assert state authority, the missions' ability to constructively engage with rebel groups and gain the trust and consent of local populations is diminished. Some observers consider the inability of UN peace operations to achieve robust peace agreements at the local level one of their central weaknesses.[107]

At the core of the criticism is usually the fact that the civilian population does not feel adequately protected by the blue helmets.

The complex constellation of actors and interests on the ground places large multidimensional UN peace operations in intractable situations. They are faced with a steadily growing number of non-state armed and sometimes extremist groups which have no genuine interest in a peaceful solution as their fight is directed against any established state, terrorising the civilian population in the process. Even more so, where political framework conditions are lacking or the state itself does not act with good intentions, the recent stabilisation approaches and the expansion of state presence cannot promise sustainable success. Instead, host governments take advantage of popular discontent or magnify popular criticism through targeted information campaigns in order to strengthen their own position vis-à-vis the mission. As the former head of mission of MONUSCO, Alan Doss, explains, "At base, the crisis of protection in the Congo is a crisis of politics."[108]

The road back to credibility and legitimacy

The evolution of armed conflicts indicates that the demand for crisis management is unlikely to fade. As an organisation that commands a global presence and a wide range of instruments and that can combine civilian and military, short-term and long-term, humanitarian as well as development and security policy measures in challenging conditions, the UN's services will arguably continue to be in demand. However, if mandates and approaches are not fundamentally rethought, the prospects for success will remain unclear and crises unresolved.

In New York, it remains to be seen what lasting consequences the geopolitical shifts will have, how the political room for manoeuvre will develop and whether the global solidarity that the UN Secretary-General calls for can be regained.[109] In June 2022, observers welcomed the fact that the General Assembly adopted a slightly increased budget for peace operations for the first time since 2015.

105 Richter & Golgowski (2022).

106 Dayal (2022).

107 Gowan & Stedman (2018), p. 181.

108 Alan Doss (2022): Catch-22 in the Congo: Politics, Peacekeeping and the Fault Lines of Protection, Passblue. [Link].

109 UN (2021): Our Common Agenda Report of the Secretary-General, p. 14–18. [Link].

But member states simultaneously reiterated their call for clear evidence of the impact of UN peace operations.[110] Fundamentally, the adoption of the budget and member state engagement in efforts to enhance peace operations underscore their continued validity, but unanswered questions around the credibility and legitimacy of UN missions, as well as existing operational challenges, persist.[111]

- **Transitions and withdrawal:** For the last decade, the UN has been exploring how and under what circumstances and conditions a responsible withdrawal of large peace operations – so-called transition processes – can succeed. This is currently the case with regard to the multidimensional operations MONUSCO and MINUSMA.[112] The goal of transition processes is to safeguard achievements by grounding political and security measures in national ownership. This requires, above all, that transition planning takes place in close cooperation with host governments, while also placing real emphasis on the needs of the population and on tangible change. As the example of UNAMID in Darfur shows, the withdrawal of missions with a significant military presence entails great risks and questions of how to guarantee the protection of civilians post-transition were never answered.

- **Leaner mandates:** When presenting his Action for Peacekeeping Agenda in 2018, Secretary-General Guterres declared that "Christmas is over."[113] Overloaded and overly ambitious "Christmas tree mandates" are now considered hardly feasible and, in view of an often fragmented landscape of actors amid regional and global interdependencies, display limited impact.[114] At the same time, slimming down mandates means accepting potential losses in the global competition over norms. Given the crumbling normative consensus, mandated tasks that aim at strengthening democracy, protecting human rights or promoting the rule of law are vulnerable to being declared 'unnecessary.' The protection of civilians and the Agenda 1325 on women, peace and security are likely to remain integral elements of peace operations, but a lack of political support can complicate and/or limit the implementation of these tasks. Some members of the UN Security Council and influential member states such as India and Brazil also resist broadening the concept of international peace and security and, for instance, refuse to recognise climate change as a pressing issue in the context of peace operations despite the unmistakable urgency of these types of emerging challenges.

- **Regionalisation**: Should a lack of consensus in the Security Council lead the UN to concentrate on narrower mandates or smaller, less intrusive missions, the question arises as to which actors can fill the gap and meet the need for more large-scale crisis management. Regionalisation – i.e. the creation of regional capacities for crisis management and the deployment of peace operations by regional organisations – has been advancing for more than 20 years and could gain additional momentum. Moreover, the trend towards parallel operations and ad hoc coalitions, even without a mandate from the UN Security Council, might also accelerate. Regionalisation is in line with the principle of subsidiarity, which is anchored in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, and ideally seeks to take advantage of a regional organisation's geographical proximity to causes of conflict and its interest in sustainable settlement. However, outsourcing conflict management to regional organisations also poses challenges: Especially in the context of regional missions in Africa, some fear a lack of transparency and where mandates are robust, also human rights violations. The East African Community (EAC) Regional Force in eastern DRC illustrates the risks: For one, the force is charged with fighting rebels, but not with protecting civilians in the process. For another, the neighbouring states that contribute to the EAC force do so in pursuit of their own national interests, which in turn undermines the UN peace operation's search for moderated political solutions.[115]

> "Christmas is over," Secretary-General Guterres said in 2018 when he presented his Action for Peacekeeping agenda.

110 Daniel Forti (2022): The 2022 UN Peacekeeping Budget: Signs of Progress or a Fleeting Moment of Consensus? IPI. [Link].

111 Osland & Peter (2021), p. 2.

112 Doss (2022).

113 UN News (2018): Unrealistic demands on UN peace-keeping costing lives and credibility – Guterres. [Link].

114 Day (2020).

115 Richter & Golgowski (2022).

**The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda –
a pawn in systemic competition?**

The adoption of Resolution 1325 in October 2000 was a milestone in global norm-setting. With nine follow-up resolutions, the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda provides a global frame of reference for the gender-specific impacts of armed conflicts and the multiple roles of women in their prevention, management and resolution. Concrete goals and measures have been formulated and cast into what are now over 100 national action plans.

All major international organisations that deploy peace operations have incorporated implementing the WPS agenda into their strategic guidance. And indeed, peace operations themselves – as in Darfur or Liberia – have contributed significantly to the greater inclusion of women in peace negotiations and political processes as well as to the gradual transformation of traditional gender understandings over the past two decades.

And yet, some 22 years after Resolution 1325, a look at the global indicators is sobering. In October 2022, UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned that the world was experiencing a reversal of cross-generational gains in women's rights and that authoritarianism and misogyny were mutually reinforcing and antithetical to stable and prosperous societies.[116] On average, only one fifth of the delegates in peace negotiations are women; human and women's rights defenders are increasingly victims of violence; the proportion of women in political and social functions is stagnating; and the number of sexual violence cases in conflicts is rising.[117]

At the global level – including in the UN Security Council – a tug-of-war is taking place between those states that want to strengthen and develop the WPS agenda[118] and a smaller faction that is intent on watering it down or removing the agenda entirely to the extent possible.[119] So far, WPS and gender references in the mandates of peace operations have often been less controversial than in stand-alone, thematic resolutions.[120] But it is conceivable that this normative conflict could spill over into future mandating processes. For years, Russia and China in particular, but also other Council members and troop- and police-contributing countries, have held the view that topics such as human and women's rights and protection against sexualised violence should not be core mandated tasks and mandate language on these issues should not be too prescriptive.[121]

A sustained focus at both global and country level is therefore needed to advance the WPS agenda. There is at least a tentative reason for hope: the growing number of countries with a decidedly feminist foreign policy, as well as multilateral affirmations of the WPS agenda such as in NATO's new strategic concept and the recent EU Council conclusions of November 2022.[122] They reiterate the organisations' commitment to the agenda and seem to exclaim: now more than ever.

116 UN (2022): Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security (S/2022/740). [Link].

117 Ibid.

118 See e.g. the commitment of some Security Council members to strengthen WPS in all matters of the Council. [Link].

119 Liz Ford (2020): Russia makes bid to water down UN commitments on women's rights in conflict. [Link]; Liz Ford (2019): UN waters down rape resolution to appease US's hardline abortion stance. [Link].

120 Sarah Kenny Werner, Elena B. Stavrevska (2020): Where are the Words? The Disappearance of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the Language of Country-Specific UN Security Council Resolutions, p. 4. [Link].

121 Lisa Sharland (2021): Women, Peace, and Security Mandates for UN Peacekeeping Operations: Assessing Influence and Impact, IPI. [Link].

122 Council of the EU (2022): Council conclusions on women, peace and security, Press release. [Link].

- **New Agenda for Peace:** In response to the many questions being raised, the UN is pursuing a conceptual repositioning in the lead-up to the Summit of the Future planned for 2024. A good 30 years ago, the then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali published the ground-breaking Agenda for Peace,[123] which for the first time differentiated between different types of peace operations. Since then, the UN has repeatedly sought to address persistent challenges through reviews and reform initiatives. The 2000 Brahimi Report still serves as a reference for pertinent (but not implemented) recommendations.[124] In 2018, many existing initiatives and resulting recommendations were bundled together under the heading Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) and grouped into eight Areas of Commitment. Then, for the period 2021-2023, seven priorities and two cross-cutting themes were defined in the A4P+ implementation plan. The aim of the initiative is to generate and secure the sustained engagement of member states as well as to find solutions to concrete operational challenges on the ground.[125]

> The aim is to develop innovative, mission-specific approaches that focus on local engagement and address global conflict drivers.

At present, the UN is developing an overarching New Agenda for Peace. It is intended to place global principles and multilateral structures for peace and security on a new strategic footing. What exactly this implies for peace operations remains to be seen – but the New Agenda will have to focus on expanding the existing spectrum of instruments for conflict prevention and conflict management and applying them more flexibly. For peace operations and similar future constructs, the aim will be to adopt innovative, mission-specific approaches that simultaneously target local engagement (bottom-up approaches) while tackling global conflict drivers.[126] Reinforced strategic communications will also be key to mobilising and retaining popular support.[127]

The evolution of UN peace operations has always been cyclical. After the high of the early 1990s came the post-Rwanda, post-Srebrenica low. Despite these traumatic experiences, the organisation recovered and missions with comprehensive mandates in Kosovo and East Timor followed in the early 2000s. UN peace operations then reached a peak in 2015 with a personnel strength of more than 110,000. At the time of writing in March 2023, UN peace operations once again appear to be heading into a deep valley. Morphing (geo-)political configurations will become even more important in the foreseeable future. Traditional peace operations and SPMs will continue, but any new undertakings will probably be limited in ambition and scope. New major or even multidimensional peace operations are unlikely. Instead, pragmatism is the order of the day with creative, tailor-made approaches to crises.

But the history of UN peace operations also confirms that they have been pronounced dead more than once and right up until the moment when they are needed once again. It is undeniable that UN peace operations need to rebuild trust – especially with populations – through new approaches and better calibrated mandates. The fact that UN peace operations continue to be the subject of passionate debates in UN decision-making bodies reveals the value and relevance that member states continue to attach to them. It is equally undisputed that their adaptability is currently being put to the test.

123 Boutros Boutros Ghali (1992): An Agenda for Peace, Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping, Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992. [Link].

124 Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations ("Brahimi Report") (2000) [Link]. The High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (2015) repeated key demands and pointed to structural obstacles in UN peacekeeping. Uniting our Strengths for Peace – Politics, Partnership and People. Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (2015) [Link].

125 The A4P Areas of Commitment are the following: Politics; Women, Peace and Security; Protection; Safety and security; Performance and accountability; Peacebuilding and sustaining peace; Partnerships und Conduct of peacekeepers and peacekeeping operations. The A4P+ Priorities are the following: Collective coherence behind a political strategy; Strategic and operational integration; Capabilities and mindsets; Accountability to peacekeepers; Accountability of peacekeepers; Strategic communications; Cooperation with our host countries. WPS and Technologies in peace operations are two cross-cutting themes. [Link].

126 Osland & Peter (2021), p. 2ff.

127 Sebastian & Gorur (2018), p. 8.

5. CSDP deployments: Time for substantial reforms?[128]

2023 marks the 20th anniversary of external European crisis management: in 2003, the European Union (EU) deployed civilian and military international missions for the first time to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). At the time, the deployments still took place within the framework of the "European" Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). It was a time when, shortly after the attacks of 11 September and the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan, Europeans set out to define their own international crisis management policy, to build respective structures and to gain their first practical experience. Since then, there have been over 40 crisis management missions in the CSDP (renamed "Common" Security and Defence Policy" following the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon). As of March 2023, 22 missions were deployed to crisis areas, of which 13 are civilian missions and nine are military operations.[129] At first glance, these figures appear impressive. But European missions have undergone considerable change in the last decade.

From great ambition to "visibility?"

Initially, EU missions were shaped by the ambitious European Security Strategy (ESS) presented in 2003. The EU wanted to get involved, to make a difference – and it did so primarily with the aim of supporting United Nations (UN) activities and operations.[130] Whether it was securing the UN's support to elections in the DRC, handing over responsibility from the UN to the EU Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or even the EU rule of law mission (EULEX) in Kosovo assuming the UN operation's executive tasks: seamless complementarity to or smooth transitions from UN missions were pivotal goals for planning and implementing ESDP/CSDP crisis management operations.

European CSDP operations changed significantly in the last decade.

In the first five years, the EU deployed nearly the entire range of military and civilian missions envisaged under the ESDP/CSDP. These missions not only enjoyed strong political support from EU member states, but also benefited from their willingness to supply significant numbers of personnel as well as the necessary resources. Specifically, this meant 3,700 soldiers for stabilisation in Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR), 1,800 in the DRC, almost 500 international police officers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 3,200 EULEX Kosovo staff and 200 monitors each in Aceh and Georgia – EU member states were ambitious and applied their crisis management tool globally.

Two things changed with EU enlargement and the Lisbon Treaty. Put simply, new member states from Eastern Europe had different interests and threat perceptions. This became a central weakness for the further deployment of CSDP missions, both when it came to agreeing on a mission and to providing personnel. The interests of larger member states, which had shown great commitment in the early days of CSDP, also shifted, causing them to lose their appetite for personnel- and cost-intensive missions. With the exception of the Sophia naval operation (which consists of around 1,400 military personnel), the military operation in CAR (around 750) and the – currently dormant – military training mission in Mali (around 600), the personnel strength of new EU missions and operations since 2010 has generally been between 20 and 100. Moreover, civilian and military missions have increasingly been deployed in parallel with little cooperation on the ground.

128 An earlier version of this article appeared in September 2022 in the journal Internationale Politik.

129 An overview of all previous missions can be found here: [Link].

130 Tobias Pietz (2013): Die EU und das UN-Peacekeeping: Halbzeit bei Brüssels Aktionsplan, ZIF Policy Briefing. [Link].

The average size of the missions is only one indicator of change. Equally important is the fact that the level of ambition has been lowered: stabilisation missions now merely play a subordinate role. Where, as was the case in the conflict in CAR, the EU envisaged sending a stabilisation mission, the endeavour almost failed because of member states' unwillingness to deploy larger military contingents. EUFOR CAR was ultimately much smaller than initially planned, and it took six meetings of potential contributors instead of the usual one to generate the required forces. The final size was only achieved through a substantial contribution from the non-EU member Georgia.[131]

Almost all post-Lisbon missions focus on capacity building and training of security services (police and military) or on advising ministries and other government institutions in the host country. As a result, non-military CSDP missions now often resemble projects implemented by the European Commission on the ground, i.e. a collection of longer term European advisory and training activities.[132] Unlike the early days of European crisis management, missions are no longer primarily deployed complementary to and in coordination with the United Nations, but rather represent a targeted, stand-alone EU contribution. Visibility of the EU ("waving the EU flag") is increasingly prioritised. Indeed, some missions appear to be pet projects of individual member states, rather than being pursued in the EU common interest.[133]

Prioritising the visibility of the EU (waving the EU flag) has greatly increased.

Since 2014–15, the narrative as well as the political objectives of these missions have also shifted; a development that was subsequently reinforced by the EU Global Strategy 2016.[134] Clearly responding to the migration movements of 2014 and 2015, the terrorist attacks within Europe, the Brexit referendum and Russia's behaviour since the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, the Global Strategy realigned European foreign and security policy. Unlike the European Security Strategy (ESS) of 2003, which was oriented towards norms and values, the 2016 document stressed the interests and protection of the EU. Especially the fact that the protection of the Union, its citizens and its territory was declared the first of the strategy's five priorities left no room for doubt.

Member states such as Austria, Italy, Hungary, the Czech Republic or Poland, reinforced this trend through their partially lop-sided interpretation of the Global Strategy, leading the CSDP and its missions to favour the direct internal and external security of EU member states ahead of global crisis management. Nowhere was this more visible than during the Austrian EU Presidency 2018 which chose the telling motto "A Europe that protects."[135]

Once the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) had deployed its first mission Triton in November 2014, aimed at reducing illegal migration across the Mediterranean, the CSDP quickly followed suit in 2015 with the military operation EUNAVFOR Med ("Operation Sophia"). Within the framework of CSDP, this operation primarily sought to combat criminal smuggling networks in the central Mediterranean. In addition, the EU adapted the mandates of its civilian CSDP missions in Mali and Niger to better reflect calls for migration control and border security. In June 2016, both missions joined the EU's Migration Partnership Frameworks (MPF) for Mali and Niger. The goal, in the eyes of EU member states, is for the MPF to contain migration towards the north and to do so in a holistic manner with other European actors and instruments. Opening the regional office of EUCAP Sahel Niger in Agadez was another attempt to disrupt one of the central migration routes towards the Mediterranean.

In this way, CSDP operations were partly sold politically to EU governments as an instrument for border control and migration management. In principle, it is a welcome move that the EU and its member states are reacting to internal threats that are being instrumentalised by populists throughout Europe in a targeted and destabilising manner. However, using CSDP – whether civilian or military operations – to address internal political dynamics is frankly problematic as it is not suited as a tool for this purpose.

131 Thierry Tardy (2015): EUFOR RCA: tough start, smooth end, EUISS Alert 17. [Link].

132 For example, the Commission's PARSEC project in Mali was of similar size, budget and structure to the parallel CSDP mission EUCAP Sahel Mali.

133 Tynne Karjalainen, Ville Savoranta (2021): The EU's strategic approach to CSDP interventions: Building a tenet from praxis, FIIA Analysis, p. 14. [Link].

134 Steven Blockmanns (2016): New Thrust for the CSDP from the Refugee and Migrant Crisis. [Link].

135 Nicoletta Pirozzi (2018): The Civilian CSDP Compact – A success story for the EU's crisis management Cinderella?, EUISS, [Link]; Tobias Pietz (2018): The Civilian CSDP Compact: Strengthening or Repurposing EU Civilian Crisis Management?, IAI. [Link].

Overall, CSDP has gathered important experiences in 20 years as an instrument for external crisis management and more than 40 missions. During that time, it has been able to establish important partnerships with other multilateral actors.[136]

Covid-19 and the Russian war of aggression as pointers for the future?

The waning interest of member states in some CSDP missions – as well as their shrinking importance in the eyes of some host countries relative to larger UN peace operations in the same mission area or even compared to financially more attractive bilateral projects – was also evident at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020. With few exceptions, staffing levels were halved in less than eight weeks through repatriation, and the implementation of mandates was largely halted.[137] In UN peace operations, too, programmatic work temporarily came to a standstill, but the stabilisation tasks continued to be carried out. Compared to the European missions, though, hardly any personnel were withdrawn from UN peace operations. By the end of April 2020, those EU missions with a focus on training and advisory services had ended all training activities, largely due to host countries ceasing cooperation in these areas. Individual member states even unilaterally withdrew their uniformed personnel from smaller and medium-sized EU missions, while leaving corresponding contingents in UN peace operations.

The Russian war of aggression on Ukraine led to a reassessment of where and how EU member states want to engage through CSDP.

Four of the 17 missions and operations did prove resilient in the sense that they were able to retain at least the majority of their personnel and thus fulfil their core functions. These include the two military operations EUNAVFOR Atalanta and EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the civilian missions EULEX Kosovo and EUMM Georgia. What do they have in common? They are large and almost all member states are strongly committed to them. For the most part, they are geographically close to Europe. They focus less on training and capacity building and more on stabilisation and monitoring. Downsizing or freezing their activities could have had serious consequences. In the case of the EUMM, the Georgian government feared Russian aggression if the EUMM stopped its monitoring activities. EUFOR troops in Bosnia and Herzegovina also continue to play an important role in maintaining security there.

More recently still, the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine led to a reassessment of where and how EU member states want to engage through CSDP. Back in 2014, the EU had opposed the police mission requested by Ukraine and instead launched the EUAM. Now, since February 2022, the EU has expanded military support to Ukraine through the European Peace Facility (EPF) and in November 2022 launched the European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine).[138]

Some member states have already signalled that they would also like to enlarge the civilian CSDP mission EUAM in Ukraine beyond the mandate that was already extended in April 2022. Here though, civilian CSDP is severely constrained: unlike EU military operations, which have been financed through the EPF as a new financing instrument outside the EU budget since 2021, the budget for civilian CSDP is fixed until 2027 through the EU's multi-year financial framework and is already stretched. After opening EUM Armenia, and soon EUPM Moldova, the EU now has to substantially cut or even close other existing civilian missions. This situation, which has been unsustainable for years, has already resulted in other missions being shut down – irrespective of their impact or the results of internal evaluations.

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136   After various conventions and two action plans, the EU and the UN alone are now in the third period for which concrete priorities for cooperation in peace operations and crisis management have been agreed upon.

137   For more see Tobias Pietz (2021): The Impact of COVID-19 on CSDP. Forging Opportunity out of Crisis?, EUISS. [Link].

138   European Council (2022): Ukraine: EU launches Military Assistance Mission, Press release. [Link].

The extreme geopolitical rivalry poses another question for peace operations that may prove decisive for the near future: What happens if the UN Security Council cannot agree on mandates for new UN peace operations? So far, Russia and China have only modified their voting behaviour for ongoing missions from approval to abstention in 2022, but vetoes are conceivable – especially with regard to new emerging crises. EU missions could be an alternative in some cases, as they can be authorised without a UN mandate but with host nation consent, as was the case for EUMM Georgia or at present EUM Armenia. Realistically though, the EU would not be in a position to even partially replace a planned UN peace operation that had been blocked in the Security Council.

Compass and Compact as renewal processes

Two documents are intended to make CSDP fit for the future: The 2018 Compact for a Civilian CSDP and the 2022 Strategic Compass.[139] In the case of the Compact, member states are currently drafting a new version, which above all should clarify the level of ambition for civilian CSDP missions. This new Compact is to be adopted in May 2023 during the Swedish EU Presidency.[140]

The previous Compact (at least temporarily) generated greater attention for civilian CSDP. This did not, however, entail greater participation by those member states that have so far shown little interest in the missions. Still, it triggered important discussions, especially at the technical-operational level, such as on making mandates and missions more flexible and adaptable.

EU operations could play a key role if the UN Security Council is blocked.

Issued in March 2022, the content of the Strategic Compass was strongly influenced by the Russian attack and clearly prioritises defence.[141] While this is understandable, more concrete statements on the future of EU crisis management missions would have been desirable. The document talks of "strengthening" and "expanding" crisis management missions, but also suggests "ad hoc missions under European leadership" under Article 44 of the EU Treaty rather than within the CSDP framework. The Strategic Compass also continues to call for flexible and modular mandates. Clearly, domestic political dynamics still shape how areas of work of the civilian CSDP are outlined in the Strategic Compass. This, in turn, indicates that the priorities set in the 2016 Global Strategy, including closer cooperation with FRONTEX and EUROPOL, are to be continued.

And yet, both processes lacked a critical element, namely a structured and independent impact analysis of the operations. Initial analyses of EU military training missions by the Stockholm Peace Research Institute SIPRI show that this concern is not unfounded.[142] If an organisation is to learn and develop further, it is indispensable to acknowledge shortfalls and deal with them constructively. The December 2022 European Council conclusions on civilian CSDP instils some hope for a new approach. On that occasion, the Council announced an "independent evaluation of the impact and performance of missions on the basis of an options paper to be presented by the European External Action Service (EEAS) by early 2023, which will feed into the strategic reviews of the missions."[143]

139   Council of Europe (2018): 14305/18, Outcome of Proceedings. [Link]; Council of Europe (2022): A Strategic Compass for a stronger EU security and defence in the next decade. [Link].

140   Timo Smit (2022): Delivering the Compact: Towards a More Capable and Gender-balanced EU Civilian CSDP. [Link].

141   For a detailed analysis see Nicole König (2021): From Strategic Compass to Common Course: Key deliverables and implementation paths, Hertie School. [Link].

142   Van der Lijn et. al. (2022): EU Military Training Missions: A Synthesis Report, SIPRI. [Link].

143   Council of the EU (2022): Council approves conclusions calling for a renewed impetus towards the civilian Common Security and Defence Policy. [Link].

Timeline of key CSDP documents

Joint Declaration
on UN-EU Cooperation
in Crisis Management

European Security
Strategy

Civilian CSDP
Compact

Council Conclusions
on EU-UN Strategic
Partnerships
(Priorities 2019–2021)

Joint Statement
on EU-UN Cooperation
in Crisis Management

EU-NATO Joint
Declaration

Capability Development
Plan Review

Helsinki
Headline Goal

Capability Development
Plan Review

New Compact
for Civilian
CSDP

2002 **2004** **2008** **2016** **2022**

1999 **2003** **2007** **2014** **2018** **2023**
May

Berlin Plus
Arrangements

Headline
Goal 2010

Capability
Development Plan

A Strategic Compass
for the EU

European Defence
Action Plan

Council Conclusions
on EU-UN Strategic
Partnership
(Priorities 2022–2024)

Implementation Plan
on Security and Defence

EU-NATO Joint
Declaration

European Union
Global Strategy

Source: ZIF 2023

The future: Need for focus and ambition

Even small and medium-sized CSDP deployments can provide meaningful support. However, the question remains as to whether it would be preferable to implement advisory and training initiatives (or activities in the area of migration management and border control) within a different framework and primarily use CSDP missions as an instrument for more ambitious EU crisis management. This is especially true in situations where the EU is the only actor capable of taking action. A prerequisite is that missions are backed by all member states; another that missions focus on the conflict-reducing needs on the ground rather than EU domestic policy. Finally, this also requires the above-mentioned independent impact analysis.

> One result could be to refrain from smaller and medium-sized missions, which mainly train and advise.

One option could be to move away from smaller and medium-sized missions that primarily train and advise. Especially the mandated tasks of civilian missions could easily be covered by the European Commission as the examples of EUBAM Moldova and Ukraine illustrate. Here, since 2005, the Commission has been carrying out acitivities that resemble, among others, those of CSDP missions in the Palestinian territories or Libya. Since Commission projects such as EUBAM Moldova and Ukraine are framed as medium- to long-term support from the outset and – unlike CSDP missions – have direct access to Commission funds, they are also more reliable and ensure greater planning security for host countries.

Such a reform would pave the way for trimming down to perhaps half a dozen military and civilian missions in which all member states are engaged. At present, these would mainly be deployed in the European neighbourhood, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Georgia, Armenia and Ukraine.

Effective European engagement outside of this regional focus could then also be channelled through modular contributions to UN peace operations, for example in Mali, which currently hosts several EU missions in parallel. There is still significant room for improvement when it comes to the complementarity between EU and UN missions, which has been a central goal for a long time. The two CSDP missions in Niger could also be a good model for the future. Neither the UN nor the AU have deployed missions there, allowing the EU to play a central and preventive role, including in the coordination and implementation of bilateral assistance from other European states.

Furthermore, civilian CSDP crisis management should be placed on a solid and flexible financial basis.

The recently authorised CSDP mission between Armenia and Azerbaijan, EUM Armenia, highlights the need for more resources (especially a budget increase for civilian CSDP operations). Alongside existing missions in Ukraine and Georgia, this new civilian mission also suggests that there may be a greater peacebuilding role for CSDP missions in the post-Soviet space – and one that does not focus on training and capacity building.[144] Against the backdrop of the decision to carry out an independent impact assessment, the political discussions around the new Compact and the further implementation of the Strategic Compass, there is hope that 2023 will provide an opportunity to agree on substantial reforms of the Common Security and Defence Policy.

Ideally, EU civilian and military missions would finally merge instead of being deployed in parallel. Multidimensional UN peace operations (typically led by a civilian head of mission) could serve as a model. Most importantly, civilian CSDP crisis management has to be put on a sound and flexible financial footing. Either future missions are also financed by the EPF or through another financing instrument outside of the Multiannual Financial Framework for civilian CSDP. A "business as usual" approach is simply not workable.[145]

At the *Zeitenwende,* it should not be forgotten that the EU needs sustainable and common crisis management. The pressure to reform European foreign and security policy which has been generated by the Russian war of aggression presents an opportunity for big decisions and structural changes rather than the small steps of recent years.

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144 On the structure and implementation of EUM Armenia, see Maili Negi, Tobias Pietz (2023): EUMA Armenien: Chance oder Risiko? ZIF kompakt. [Link].

145 In order to achieve this, however, member states would have to adapt Article 41.2 of the Lisbon Treaty, which regulates funding via the MFF.

6. OSCE field operations: Under pressure

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) appears to be the multinational organisation most seriously affected by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The war of aggression is a blatant breach of the organisation's founding principles by a key participating state. This presents an immense challenge to the existence of the organisation as such. At the annual OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting 2022 in Łódź, Germany's Foreign Minister, Annalena Baerbock, stressed the continued relevance of the organisation and went on to argue that the threat against Ukraine "is also about the destruction of the European peace order, of international law and this our common organisation, the OSCE."[146]

This rupture also impacts on the field operations, as peace operations are dubbed in OSCE speak. In the first instance, the international staff of the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) and the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine had to be evacuated at the end of February 2022. In March and June, the extension of their mandates failed due to the Russian *njet*.

The Russian war on Ukraine has also affected OSCE field operations.

On the first anniversary of the Russian attack on Ukraine, however, it seems that the worst case scenario has so far failed to materialise. The OSCE Chair and the Secretariat have jointly managed to avert the most acute threats to the organisation and its field operations. To replace the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine, the OSCE devised a creative solution in the shape of the Support Programme for Ukraine (SPU), which is funded through voluntary contributions from individual OSCE participating states. How this all unfolds in the end, depends on the political dynamics of the coming months and the outcome of the war in Ukraine.

The framework for OSCE field operations: From Helsinki to Minsk

In August 1975, the US, Canada, the Soviet Union and 32 European states signed the Helsinki Final Act within the framework of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).[147] In the ten principles of the Final Act, the signatory states pledged, among other things, mutual respect for each other's sovereignty (including the free choice of alliances), inviolability of borders, renunciation of violence and the peaceful settlement of conflicts, non-interference in internal affairs and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Further negotiations led to the Charter of Paris for a New Europe in 1990, at the end of the Cold War. In it, the participating states committed to promoting a "new era of Democracy, Peace and Unity."[148]

When the Soviet Union dissolved, the Russian Federation assumed its seat in the CSCE as its legal successor. Other former Soviet republics joined the Conference as new members. At the Budapest Summit in December 1994, participating states decided to transform the CSCE into a permanent organisation, the OSCE. The organisation adopted a comprehensive concept of security with three dimensions: the politico-military, the economic and environmental, and the human dimension, the latter referring to human rights, minority rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Following the end of the Cold War (and the Warsaw Pact), the OSCE was soon marginalised. Eastern European states took their right, guaranteed in Helsinki, to freely choose their alliances seriously and applied for membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the European Union (EU).

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146 German Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the OSCE Vienna (2022): Declaration of the Foreign Minister oft he Federal Republic of Germany, Annalena Baerbock, at the 29. OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting in Łódź, 01 December 2022 [Link].

147 CSCE (1975):Conference on security and co-operation in Europe final act. [Link].

148 CSCE (1990): Charter of Paris for a New Europe. [Link].

They considered being firmly anchored in the West as a security guarantee against revisionist currents in Russia. When Russia formulated the claim to a "sphere of privileged interests" beyond its borders in 2008, it confirmed the fears of its neighbours.[149] In response to the 'Euro-Maidan' protests in Ukraine, Russia occupied Crimea in February 2014, annexed the peninsula and then supported the violent establishment of pro-Russian "people's republics" in eastern Ukraine.

The OSCE response was comprehensive. A Special Envoy and a Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) were to contribute to de-escalation. With the Minsk ceasefire agreements in September 2014 and February 2015, the SMM was also tasked with monitoring the implementation of the agreement and verifying storage sites for weapons. The political track was pursued by an OSCE-chaired Trilateral Contact Group which included Russia and Ukraine. A second, smaller monitoring mission on Russian territory observed the movement of people and goods at the border checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk, in Rostov oblast.

In the field: CSCE and OSCE field operations

As early as 1992, the CSCE mandated its first field operations in disintegrating Yugoslavia and in Georgia. In the OSCE, field operation mandates are decided by consensus and are typically renewed annually. They also require the consent of the host country, which in turn lends them a high degree of legitimacy.

The majority of OSCE field operations adopts a long-term approach to supporting host countries in their efforts to implement OSCE principles. Examples are the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, which focuses on democratisation and human rights, and the multitude of programme and project offices in South Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia. The Moscow Mechanism allows an individual, directly concerned state or a group of interested OSCE participating states to request the deployment of a short-term expert mission on Human Dimension issues. This mechanism was activated several times in 2022 after the Russian attack on Ukraine.[150]

The mandates of the field operations must be adopted by consensus and are mostly renewed annually. They also require the consent of the country of deployment.

Far less frequently, the OSCE has deployed missions to observe ceasefires – as in Kosovo and Georgia. Even the SMM Ukraine only became involved in monitoring activities after the ceasefire negotiated in Minsk for eastern Ukraine contained an agreement to this effect. With 1,000 mandated personnel, the mission became the largest OSCE field operation since the Kosovo Verification Mission in 1998. Considerations for more robust, military OSCE operations have been under discussion for years, but never took concrete shape. As a result, all OSCE field operations to date have been unarmed, civilian missions.

As of late 2022, 13 OSCE field operations were still deployed and 21 CSCE and OSCE field operations had been closed.[151] In some cases these operations had successfully fulfilled their mandate, in others they fell victim to political resistance. In particular, the focus on the human dimension became increasingly contentious in the post-Soviet space. Several field missions were therefore wound up or had to be re-mandated – with a more restricted set of tasks.

149 BBC (2008): New Russian world order: the five principles. [Link].

150 OSCE (1991): Moscow Mechanism. [Link].

151 OSCE (2022): Where We Are. [Link].

Map of ongoing OSCE field operations, 2023

OSCE Participating States (57)

● Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office (CiO)   ▢ OSCE Field Operation

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M. Schoppa, February 2023

Design: INFOGRAFIK PRO
Sources: EUROSTAT (2020); OSCE (2023)

The boundaries and names
shown and the designations
used on this map do not imply
official endorsement
or acceptance by ZIF.

1,000 km

**Bosnia and
Herzegovina**
OSCE Mission to BiH
Since 12/1995
Int. personnel **26**

Kosovo
OSCE Mission
in Kosovo
Since 06/1999
Int. personnel **83**

Moldova
OSCE Mission
to Moldova
Since 02/1993
Int. personnel **12**

Turkmenistan
OSCE Centre
in Ashgabat
Since 01/1999
Int. personnel **5**

Uzbekistan
OSCE Project
Coordinator in
Uzbekistan
Since 06/2006
Int. personnel **3**

Kazakhstan
OSCE Programme Office
in Astana
Since 07/1998
Int. personnel **3**

Montenegro
OSCE Mission
to Montenegro
Since 06/2006
Int. personnel **9**

Serbia
OSCE Mission to Serbia
Since 01/2001
Int. personnel **18**

Ukraine
Special Representative
of the CiO - Project
Coordinator in Ukraine
Since 11/2022
Int. personnel **n.a.**

Georgia (location)
Personal Representative
of the CiO on the
Conflict Dealt with by the
OSCE Minsk Conference
(Nagorno-Karabakh)
Since 08/1995
Int. personnel **5**

Tajikistan
OSCE Programme
Office in Dushanbe
Since 07/2008
Int. personnel **22**

Kyrgyzstan
OSCE Programme Office
in Bishkek
Since 07/1998
Int. personnel **14**

Albania
OSCE Presence
in Albania
Since 03/1997
Int. personnel **17**

North Macedonia
OSCE Mission to Skopje
Since 12/1992
Int. personnel **36**

Where Russia was directly involved in conflicts, the extension of field operations failed several times. The OSCE Mission in Georgia, for instance, which monitored the ceasefire on the administrative boundary line with South Ossetia, had to suspend its activities in 2008, after the Georgian-Russian 'Five-Day War.' The monitoring missions to deal with the conflict in eastern Ukraine, in contrast, initially met with Russian approval. It was not before the summer of 2021 that Moscow refused to extend the Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk, on Russian territory. Then, after the attack on Ukraine, Russia blocked the mandate extension for the SMM in March and for the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine in June 2022.

Poland's legacy, North Macedonia's task: The chairmanship year 2023

The war against Ukraine also dominated the annual Ministerial Council meeting in Łódź in early December 2022. Referring to the EU sanctions list, the Polish Presidency had refused the Russian Foreign Minister entry into the country. Russia strongly condemned this move, but nevertheless sent its OSCE ambassador to represent Russia at the meeting. Russia and Belarus circulated a joint statement, stressing "the importance of preserving the OSCE as a regional European forum based on consensus." They also underlined the "fundamental principle of equal and indivisible security," according to which "no State, group of States or organization [...] will not strengthen their security at the expense of the security of other States."[152] All this demonstrates that Russia continues to attach importance to the OSCE at present. Russia is also aware of how valuable its veto is and will not let it be snatched away by a 'Polish provocation.'

The outgoing OSCE Chairman, Poland's Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau, summed up the fundamental dilemma: "The OSCE is not a wartime Organization. [...] And, of course, consensus-based decision-making is sadly only workable in times of peace."[153] He defended the principled stance of his chairmanship, as he saw no alternative than to

- adhere to the principles and commitments of the OSCE,
- defend the institutions that were created on that basis, and
- find solutions to preserve the organisation's capacity to act.[154]

The overwhelming majority of participating states supported this defence of the OSCE principles and condemned the Russian war of aggression – albeit with varying nuances.

As a result of the division between the vast majority of participating states on the one side and Russia and Belarus on the other, the 2022 Ministerial Council meeting ended without a joint final declaration. While this circumstance is primarily significant as a political symbol, other decisions that require a consensus are much more critical for the OSCE's ability to function. The consensus rule has only been circumvented once in the past, when the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (consisting of Serbia and Montenegro) was suspended in 1992 by a "consensus-minus-1 decision."[155] In the current situation, this is hardly an option, as Russia can reliably call on its ally Belarus.

In mid-December, shortly after the Ministerial Council meeting, the mandates of ten field operations that were up for renewal were extended by consensus, although the mission in Moldova was only given six months at Russia's insistence. In the last 15 years, Moscow has succeeded in either winding down most of the missions in which Russia itself is a party to the conflict, including the observation missions in Georgia (covering the administrative border with South Ossetia), in Ukraine and in Russia (at the border checkpoints with Ukraine), or in imposing restrictions on them as with the Mission to Moldova, which facilitates in the Transdniestrian conflict.

In January 2023, North Macedonia took over the rotating OSCE Chairmanship from Poland. The new Chair, Foreign Minister Bujar Osmani, stressed the need to defend OSCE principles and commitments, while simultaneously creating space for applying all of the organisation's diverse toolbox. This includes the field operations that deal with conflicts in the OSCE area. Despite the ambitious rhetoric, the Chairmanship faces the challenge of maintaining the essential functions and activities of the organisation.[156]

The overwhelming majority of OSCE participating states support the defence of OSCE principles and condemn the Russian war of aggression.
Ten field operations were extended by consensus.

152 OSCE (2022): Joint Statement by the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation on security crisis and co-operation in the OSCE. [Link].

153 OSCE (2022): Address by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Zbigniew Rau, Opening Session of the 29th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council. [Link]; see also OSCE (2022): Address by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Zbigniew Rau, Closing Session of the 29th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council. [Link].

154 OSCE (2022): Concluding Press Conference, 29th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council. [Link].

155 OSCE (1992): Serbia and Montenegro suspended as a participating State. [Link].

156 OSCE (2023): Chairman-in-Office Bujar Osmani presents North Macedonia's 2023 priorities to OSCE Permanent Council. [Link].

By the time the baton was handed over, the participating states had not been able to agree on the Chairmanship for 2024, even though the designated state would normally have been part of the leadership Troika, consisting of the former, current and future Chairmanships, from January 2023. Further leadership contests are on the horizon, with the Secretary General and the heads of the three OSCE special institutions dealing with democracy and human rights set to be appointed over the course of the year. Another difficult task will be to adopt the OSCE budget for 2023. The participating states already failed to agree on a budget in 2022, at the time due to the lack of consent from Armenia and Azerbaijan. As a result, the organisation had to operate with an emergency budget.

Outlook: Defending principles, seizing opportunities

At present, the basis for constructive cooperation with Russia and Belarus appears to have broken down. And yet, it remains important to preserve the established structures for cooperative security policy and relations of trust that have been fostered among OSCE participating states over decades, and to consolidate them wherever possible. The fact that several post-Soviet states also feel directly threatened by Russian neo-imperialism might even open up new space for cooperation. The field operations in Central Asia are contributing to this.

It is important to consolidate the security policy cooperation, to preserve the instruments for conflict management to the maximum, and at the same time to defend the agreed fundamental principles of the organisation.

Although it cannot be ruled out that new field operations are mandated, it seems highly unlikely at present. In fact, most participating states currently consider this undesirable, as initiating such processes would allow Russia too much of a say. In the long term, the future of field operations largely depends on the outcome of the war against Ukraine. In the short term, new avenues must be explored on a case-by-case basis to circumvent a potential lack of consensus and secure ongoing activities.

Not least due to the commitment of Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid, the Polish OSCE Chairmanship appointed a Special Envoy to lead the Support Programme for Ukraine (SPU) with extra-budgetary funds after the forced closure of the office of the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine.[157] In the long run, though, the OSCE cannot operate in an emergency mode. A "return to business as it was" is not an option either.[158]

Everything therefore points towards pragmatism, using diplomatic opportunities and creative workarounds, in order to preserve the OSCE instruments and structures for conflict management to the maximum possible, thus defending the agreed basic principles of the organisation. For as an old eastern European proverb says: It is easier to turn an aquarium into fish soup than fish soup into an aquarium.

157   OSCE (2022): New donor-funded Support Programme for Ukraine. [Link].

158   OSCE (2022): Address by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Zbigniew Rau, Opening Session of the 29th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council. [Link].

7. NATO in international crisis management: A clear change of direction

Due to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, some international organisations face an uncertain future when it comes to their room for manoeuvre and their ability to act. In contrast, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) as a central security institution in the Euro-Atlantic area has been significantly strengthened. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 had begun a process of strategic reorientation. Then, 24 February 2022 marked another turning point which has now led the Alliance to return to its primary founding objective.[159] In its new Strategic Concept of June 2022, NATO clearly commits to collective defence as its key purpose and to deterrence and defence as prioritised core tasks.[160] The poor track record of past out-of-area missions, most notably in Afghanistan, has produced a continuing intervention fatigue among NATO members that now raises important questions about NATO's future role in international crisis management.

NATO's international crisis management

From its origins as a collective defence alliance, NATO expanded its field of activity to include crisis prevention and management in the early 1990s.[161] On the one hand, this derived from a changed threat perception, which downgraded the danger of a military confrontation with Russia after the end of the Cold War. On the other, NATO widened its understanding of security, recognising the destabilising effects of regional conflicts and non-traditional dangers to transatlantic security.

NATO's strategic reorientation manifested itself in the first out-of-area missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina (from 1993)[162] and Kosovo (from 1999), which – with the exception of Operation Allied Forces (OAF) in Kosovo[163] – acted under a mandate of the UN Security Council. At the end of the 1990s, crisis management was explicitly identified as a "fundamental security task" of the Alliance for the first time.[164]

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, NATO further expanded its military crisis interventions. In the face of globalised threats, the organisation deployed operations with a broad spectrum of remits and without territorial restrictions. Examples are NATO's security and reconstruction missions in Afghanistan from 2001 and anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden and elsewhere from 2008. The 2010 Strategic Concept reflected this development and defined crisis prevention and management – alongside collective defence and cooperative security – as three core tasks, which remain valid today.[165] However, NATO's orientation and deployment were not uncontroversial within the Alliance. Individual operations, such as the "humanitarian intervention" in Libya in 2011,[166] were not supported by all members and depended on a "coalition of the willing" for their implementation.

159 The North Atlantic Treaty, Washington DC, 04. April 1949 [Link].

160 NATO Strategic Concept 2022 [Link].

161 On the development of the NATO: Sven Morgan (2019): Die NATO. Deutschland im Bündnis, bpb. [Link]; Heinrich Brauß (2021): NATO 2030. Erfahrung. Herausforderung. Zukunft, Deutsche Atlantische Gesellschaft. [Link].

162 From April 1993 to December 1995, NATO conducted Deny Flight, its first military operation outside its territory, initially to enforce a no-fly zone over Bosnia and Herzegovina. [Link]. From 1995-1996 NATO was involved in the Implementation Force (IFOR) to monitor and enforce the military aspects of the Dayton Agreement signed in 1995 (Res. 1031 UN Security Council) and from 1996-2004 it led the follow-up Stabilisation Force (SFOR) (Res. 1088 UN Security Council).
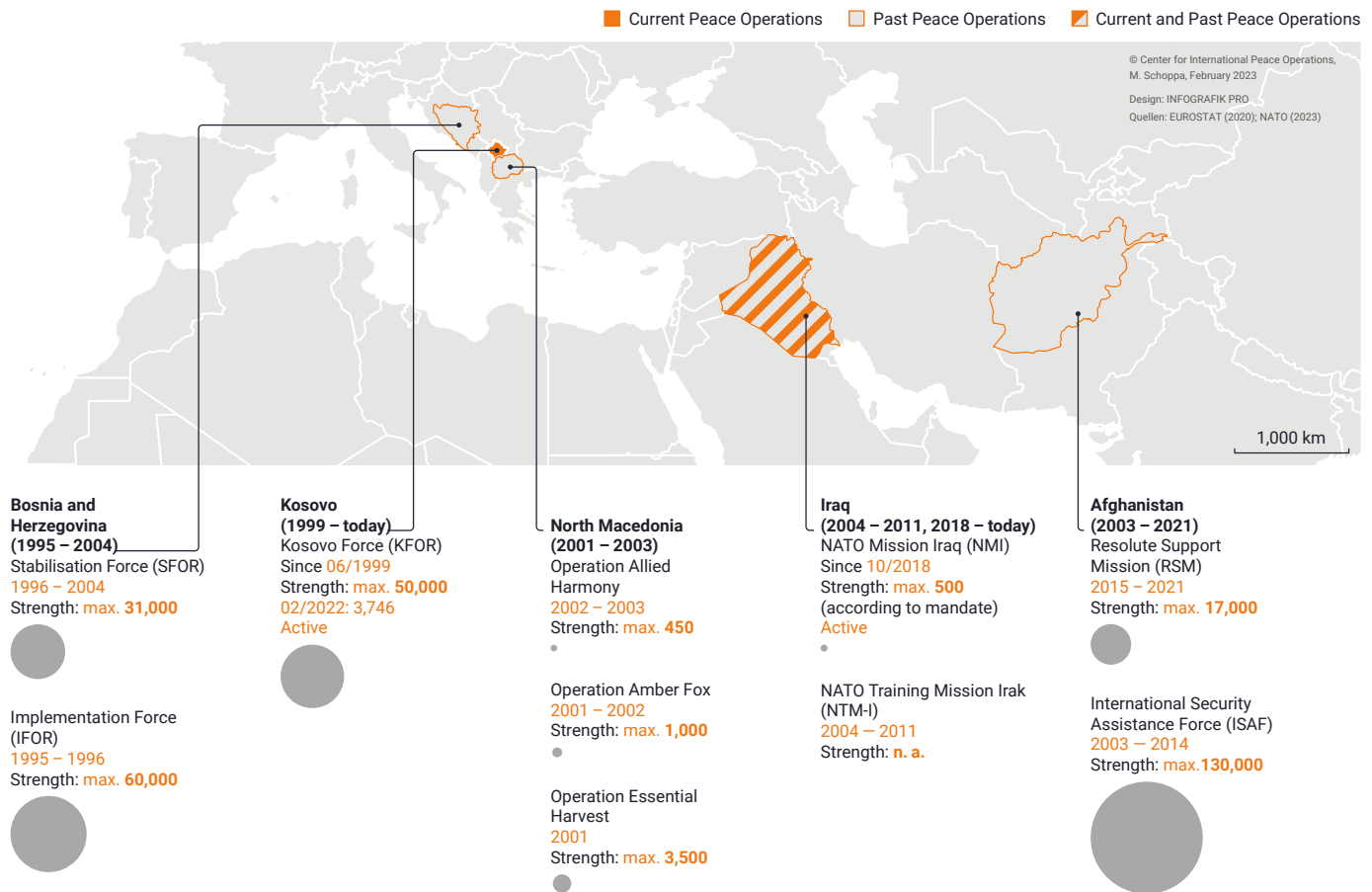
163 There was no UN resolution for the NATO operation OAF (beginning March 1999) in Kosovo. NATO's justification was that it was a humanitarian intervention and that it was fulfilling its responsibility to protect the civilian population. On 10 June 1999, the Security Council passed UN Resolution 1244 establishing KFOR.

164 NATO Strategic Concept 1999 [Link].

165 NATO Strategic Concept 2010 [Link].

166 Peter Rudolf (2013): Schutzverantwortung und humanitäre Intervention. Eine ethische Bewertung der "Responsibility to Protect" im Lichte des Libyen-Einsatzes, SWP Berlin, p. 7ff. [Link].

Map of ongoing and completed NATO crisis management operations[167]

Legend: ■ Current Peace Operations □ Past Peace Operations ▨ Current and Past Peace Operations

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Design: INFOGRAFIK PRO
Quellen: EUROSTAT (2020); NATO (2023)

1,000 km

Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995 – 2004)
Stabilisation Force (SFOR)
1996 – 2004
Strength: max. 31,000

Implementation Force (IFOR)
1995 – 1996
Strength: max. 60,000

Kosovo (1999 – today)
Kosovo Force (KFOR)
Since 06/1999
Strength: max. 50,000
02/2022: 3,746
Active

North Macedonia (2001 – 2003)
Operation Allied Harmony
2002 – 2003
Strength: max. 450

Operation Amber Fox
2001 – 2002
Strength: max. 1,000

Operation Essential Harvest
2001
Strength: max. 3,500

Iraq (2004 – 2011, 2018 – today)
NATO Mission Iraq (NMI)
Since 10/2018
Strength: max. 500
(according to mandate)
Active

NATO Training Mission Irak (NTM-I)
2004 – 2011
Strength: n. a.

Afghanistan (2003 – 2021)
Resolute Support Mission (RSM)
2015 – 2021
Strength: max. 17,000

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)
2003 — 2014
Strength: max.130,000

In Afghanistan, NATO carried out its most demanding, most extensive and most cost intensive out-of-area engagement to date, which ultimately became a test of the organisation's crisis management capabilities. NATO had invoked the Article 5 mutual defence clause in October 2001 and deployed the military Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Once the Taliban had fallen, the UN Security Council set up the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in December 2001 to secure reconstruction efforts (UN Res. 1386). NATO took over the command of ISAF, which at times comprised up to 130,000 personnel, in August 2003.[168] In practice, the operation gradually evolved from a peacekeeping mission to a combat mission until it was converted into the training, advisory and assistance mission Resolute Support (RSM) in 2014. When NATO and its partners withdrew in the summer of 2021, the Taliban swiftly returned to power. The trying course of the missions in Afghanistan led to a "disillusionment with the effectiveness of military crisis management and stabilisation" among some NATO members."[169]

167 NATO subsumes under "crisis response operations" all missions that do not fall under Article 5 ("A 'crisis response' or 'peace-support operation' are generic terms that may include conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peacemaking, peace building, peace enforcement and humanitarian operations"); NATO, Crisis Management, A wide range of crisis management operations – definitions [Link].

168 Military operations within the framework of the OEF also took place in other regions of the world. The US had declared a worldwide "war on terror" after the attacks of 11 September 2001. In Afghanistan, the US officially declared the end of the OEF mission in December 2014. [Link]; bpb (2021): Vor 20 Jahren: NATO beschließt Bündnisfall. [Link].

169 Claudia Major (2019): Die Rolle der NATO für Europas Verteidigung, SWP Berlin, p. 19. [Link].

The Strategic Concept 2022: Back to geopolitics, back to reality

From the early 1990s until 2014, NATO's main focus – aside from the cooperation with countries and organisations outside the Alliance – was on crisis management.[170] The annexation of Crimea and Russia's destabilisation of Ukraine shattered the notion of a largely peaceful, cooperative European security order that had dominated narratives since the 1990s. At the Wales Summit in September 2014, NATO launched a process of refocusing on territorial defence and decided on a comprehensive strengthening and adaptation of its defence capabilities (Readiness Action Plan).[171] The Strategic Concept adopted at the most recent NATO Summit in Madrid – the organisation's most important policy document after the North Atlantic Treaty – outlines how dramatically the security environment had changed since the start of the war in Ukraine in February 2022 and provides important insights into the Alliance's direction in the coming decade:

NATO's focus is shifting back to collective defence and military deterrence.

- Russia is declared the most significant and direct threat to allied security;
- Terrorism is defined as the most direct asymmetric threat;
- In light of its pursuit of an increasingly global agenda, China is named as a strategic challenge for the first time in a NATO strategic document.

In addition, the Alliance will focus on transnational challenges that affect the security of all NATO members, such as climate change, energy security, critical infrastructure protection and the race for emerging and disruptive technologies. Strengthening the individual and collective resilience of NATO members and their partners in these and other areas including cyber and hybrid threats, is considered fundamental to achieving the Alliance's three core tasks of collective defence, cooperative security, and crisis prevention and management.

In line with its 2010 predecessor ("the last post-cold war strategic concept"),[172] these core tasks remain unchanged, but the focus has clearly shifted to collective defence and deterrence. In the run-up to the summit, the debate on NATO's future role in international crisis management was strongly affected by the experiences of past missions, most notably Afghanistan and Libya,[173] and the resulting intervention fatigue among many members.[174]

Nonetheless, the Madrid Summit affirmed that NATO will seek to remain capable of deploying multinational crisis response operations in the coming decade.[175] Accordingly, the organisation will maintain its capabilities and capacities for military and civilian crisis management as well as for stabilisation and counter-terrorism at strategic distance.[176]

However, the ambition for larger interventions remains moderate.[177] In the future, the Alliance will most likely focus on prevention to foster stability outside its area.[178] In this regard, NATO will strengthen its cooperation with selected partners and international organisations, as established since 1990 within various frameworks, among them the United Nations, the European Union (EU), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the African Union (AU).

170 NATO has established four partnership programmes with 40 non-NATO countries since 1990: Partnership for Peace (PfP), Mediterranean Dialogue (MD), Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), Partners across the Globe (PAG); NATO (2022): Partners. [Link].

171 Claudia Major (2014): Der NATO-Gipfel 2014 im Schatten der Ukraine-Krise, SWP-Aktuell. [Link]; Claudia Major (2014): NATO-Gipfel: Der notwendige Spagat zwischen Bündnisverteidigung und Krisenmanagement, Kurz gesagt, SWP. [Link]; Claudia Major (2015): NATO's Strategic Adaption. [Link].

172 Benedetta Berti (2022): NATO's Strategic Concept, LSE Event. [Link].

173 Filip Bryjka (2022): New NATO Strategy Reshapes the Future of Crisis Response, PISM. [Link]; Henrik Larsen (2022): Afghanistan's Significance for NATO Strategy, The RUIS Journal. [Link].

174 Pierre Morcos, Luis Simon (2022): NATO and the South after Ukraine, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), p. 2. [Link].

175 Strategic Concept 2022, para. 35.

176 Strategic Concept 2022, para. 36.

177 Henrik Larsen (2022): NATO's Strategic Concept: Tempered Ambitions, CSS ETH Zürich. [Link].

178 Benedetta Berti (2022); Strategic Concept 2022/Nr. 38 ("We will increase our efforts to anticipate and prevent crises and conflicts"); NATO, Crisis Management/ NATO's Strategic Concepts: "emphasis on crisis prevention." [Link].

EU-NATO cooperation in focus

The EU, in particular, is designated as NATO's "unique and essential partner"[179] in the context of cooperative security. The complementary role of both organisations in the field of peace and security is also reflected in the EU Strategic Compass, adopted in March 2022.[180] The strategic importance of the partnership is based on the shared security interests of its members. In fact, 22 of 31 NATO members are also a part of the European Union. NATO's northern expansion in April 2023 has further contributed to this.

EU-NATO cooperation is to be taken to a "new level" in 2023.

Both organisations had already formalised their cooperation in the early 2000s, when the EU began to shape its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CSDP). According to the 1992 "Petersberg tasks," western European states wanted to develop own operational capabilities for "humanitarian and rescue tasks; peacekeeping tasks; (and) tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking."[181] Even though European powers expressed their willingness to take on greater responsibility in crisis management after the end of the conflicts in the Balkans in 1999, the EU still lacked the necessary capacities and structures.[182]

From the outset in the early 2000s, member states recognised the need not to duplicate existing NATO structures when building these capacities, and to foster close cooperation and linkages between EU and NATO capabilities. For this purpose, the "Berlin Plus" agreement (2003) provided the EU access to NATO's collective assets and capabilities for EU-led crisis management operations.[183] So far, only two missions have been deployed under the arrangement: the first EU military mission "Operation Concordia" in North Macedonia, 2003, and EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina, active since 2004.[184]

This is mainly due to the fact, that approval is needed by both the North Atlantic Council and the European Council, and the support of non-EU NATO members has proven difficult. Since the accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the EU in 2004, NATO member Turkey has rejected increased military cooperation with the EU.[185] This has since left the "Berlin Plus" agreement and EU-NATO cooperation more broadly in a political stalemate. Although informal cooperation occurs at the operational level, formal cooperation was only re-established following the changes in the security environment from 2014 onwards and remains difficult today.[186] In joint declarations in 2016 and 2018, the EU and NATO identified specific areas for enhanced operational and thematic cooperation.[187]

These are also reflected in the 2022 Strategy Concept.[188] Moreover, against the backdrop of Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine, the third joint declaration of January 2023 states that EU-NATO cooperation should be taken to a "new level" by addressing "growing geostrategic competition, resilience issues, protection of critical infrastructures, emerging and disruptive technologies, space, the security implications of climate change, as well as foreign information manipulation and interference."[189]

179 Strategic Concept 2022, para. 43.

180 EU Strategic Compass for Security and Defence 2022. [Link].

181 WEU Council of Ministers (1999): Petersberg Declaration.

182 Brauß (2021), p. 30.

183 Berlin Plus Agreement 2003. [Link].

184 In the case of EUFOR Althea, NATO-EU cooperation primarily manifests at the command level. The EU Operation Commander for EUFOR Althea is also Vice Chief of Staff of NATO's "Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe" (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium.

185 Detlef Puhl (2022): Deutschland, die Zeitenwende und die Zukunft der NATO, p. 20. [Link].

186 Nina Græger (2017): Grasping the everyday and extraordinary in EU-NATO relations: the added value of practice approaches, in European Security, 26:3, p. 340-358.

187 Joint declaration on EU-NATO cooperation by President of the European Council Donald Tusk, President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, and Secretary General of NATO Jens Stoltenberg, 10 July 2018. [Link].

When it comes to external crisis management, the EU and NATO intend to use their political, economic and military instruments jointly and in a complementary, coherent and mutually reinforcing manner.[190] Their cooperation is to be guided by principles and recognise each other's strategic autonomy. A division of tasks has emerged in some cases, such as in Iraq, where the EU concentrates on the civil security sector (EUAM Iraq), while NATO contributes to defence capacity building (NATO Mission Iraq, NMI). In the Horn of Africa, too, the EU provides financial resources to the AU Transition Mission to Somalia (ATMIS) within the framework of the European Peace Facility (EPF), while NATO supports the mission logistically and operationally by airlifting troops.[191]

Partnership and cooperation as modus operandi for the southern neighbourhood

In order to strengthen its southern flank, NATO also supports selected partners in the southern neighbourhood independently of the EU. At the Wales Summit in 2014, it added the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative to its Mediterranean Dialogue with Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative with Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, which have existed since 1994 and 2004 respectively as part of its intensified non-military stabilisation efforts.[192] Within the framework of the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative, which intends to reduce the need for major interventions, Jordan, Tunisia and Mauritania, among others, were specifically promoted.[193] NATO subsequently adopted the concept of "projecting stability" at the 2016 Warsaw Summit, which aims to support selected partners on Europe's periphery by enhancing their own security and defence capacities (Iraq 2018, Afghanistan since 2021).[194]

In November 2019, NATO and the AU also concluded an agreement to deepen their political and operational partnership.[195] Cooperation is to cover three areas: (1) operational support, (2) training of AU personnel and (3) structural support. In addition to the operational support provided to ATMIS, a limited number of AU personnel are being trained annually at NATO training sites in Germany and Italy. In addition, NATO sends experts to AU headquarters in Addis Ababa for a period of six to twelve months and is providing training and expertise to support the establishment of the African Standby Force (ASF), which is to conduct independent peacekeeping operations on behalf of the AU. A NATO liaison office in Addis Ababa contributes to the coordination of activities.

Outlook: "A stronger but less ambitious NATO"[196]

For now, the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and invasion of Ukraine in 2022 have put an end to the debate around NATO's legitimacy and direction. Regardless of how the war in Ukraine evolves, NATO considers Russia the most direct threat to European security. The Allies' attention and resources are therefore focused on its eastern flank and on strengthening the Alliance's deterrence and defence capabilities. In short, they realise "We have to rebuild what we lost."[197]

188 Strategic Concept 2022, para. 43.

189 Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation, 10 January 2023 [Link].

190 Ibid., Article 9.

191 Brauß (2021): NATO (2022): Cooperation with the African Union. [Link].

192 NATO on the Map [Link]; NATO (2022): Partnerships: projecting stability through cooperation [Link]; Matthias Dembinski, Caroline Fehl (2021): Atlantische Zukünfte. A Comparative Analysis of National Debates on NATO Reform, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. p. 10. [Link].

193 Lara Marthino (2020): NATO's Defence And Related Security Capacity Building (DCB) Initiative, Draft Report, p .6. [Link]; Jean-Charles Larsonneur (2022): The Evolving Terrorist Threat: Adapting the Allied Response, Draft Report, p. 17. [Link].

194 Dembinski, Fehl (2021), p. 10; NATO Summit Declaration Warsaw 2016, para. 80ff. [Link].

195 NATO (2019): NATO–African Union plan closer collaboration. [Link].

196 Thibault Muzergues, Kenneth M. Pollack (2022): A Stronger but Less Ambitious NATO, IRI. [Link].

197 Benedetta Berti (2022).

The planned military reconfiguration requires considerable time and effort.[198] This is also true of NATO members' endeavours to develop their individual and collective resilience with regard to new and transnational challenges.[199]

And still, the continued conflicts and instabilities in the so-called crisis arc south of Europe, which includes the Sahel as well as North Africa and the Middle East, do not allow NATO to withdraw completely from external crisis management. Moreover, the economic effects of the war in Ukraine are also being felt in these regions. Economic inequality and fragile statehood are fuelling the emergence of extremism and terrorism on the Alliance's southern border and increasingly in West and Central Africa.[200] The strategic confrontation with Russia and China also plays out in this new geographic space.

The 2022 Strategic Concept therefore made quite clear that counter-terrorism and stabilisation of the southern neighbouring region remain of central importance. This was a major concern for NATO members Italy, Spain and not least Turkey.[201] At the same time, the US – despite its current increased commitment in the European Alliance area – will continue its strategic shift towards the Indo-Pacific. As a result, Europeans will be forced to assume a greater share of crisis prevention efforts in their southern neighbourhood.

While this creates potential for strengthening NATO-EU cooperation, it also highlights differences in the strategic prioritisation of NATO members, in particular between the US and Europe.[202] At present, how ambitious NATO's engagement in the south will be and which form it will take in the future remains unclear. In any case, there is less unity within the Alliance on this question than there is with regard to its eastern flank.

After Afghanistan, the hurdle for the implementation of large-scale stabilisation missions is high.

In light of the experiences in Afghanistan, the hurdle for the implementation of extensive stabilisation missions is likely to be high in the future. Experts declare that in Afghanistan the Alliance's attempts to export stability into non-European regions have failed and consequently question the value of any such future efforts.[203] The US in particular has become sceptical of military interventions as a means of combating terrorism and promoting political stabilisation.[204]

However, external crisis management does not necessarily require large-scale troop deployments and NATO has other instruments at its disposal.[205] Smaller missions with specific mandates in the field of capacity building and training as well as bilateral cooperation within the framework of the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative can target selected partner states and organisations and thus generate a stabilising effect. The current engagement in Iraq and the cooperation with the AU are examples of this. With regard to NATO's southern neighbourhood, cooperation and partnership appear the instruments of choice, not least as only a few actors on the ground wish for NATO to become directly involved.[206]

Therefore, the Alliance will probably not assume a leading role in international crisis management in the near future, even if the Strategic Concept calls for the required capabilities to be maintained.

198 Claudia Major, Göran Swistek (2022): Die Nato nach dem Gipfel von Madrid, SWP-aktuell, p. 6. [Link].

199 Jonny Hall, Hugh Sandeman (2022): NATO's Resilience: The first and last line of defence, LSE IDEAS. [Link].

200 Tricia Bacon, Jason Warner (2021): Twenty Years After 9/11: The Threat in Africa—The New Epicenter of Global Jihadi Terror, Counter Terrorism Center at West Point. [Link].

201 Major (2019), p. 8. [Link].

202 Markus Kaim, Angela Stanzel (2022): Der Aufstieg Chinas und das neue strategische Konzept der Nato, SWP Aktuell. [Link].

203 Brauß (2021), p. 47-48.

204 Dembinski, Fehl (2021), p. 22. [Link].

205 Antoine Got (2021): Global NATO: What Future for the Alliance's Out-of-Area Efforts? Strategic Security Analysis, No.18, p. 9. [Link].

206 Major (2019), p. 9.

8. African peace operations: Subsidiarity and empty coffers

At first glance, African (sub-)regional organisations appear to be relatively unaffected by the Russian attack on Ukraine. After all, Russia is neither a member of one of these organisations – as is the case for the United Nations (UN) or the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) – nor is the conflict unfolding in their immediate neighbourhood – as is true of the European Union (EU) or the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). But this impression is deceptive. Africa and its various (sub-)regional organisations are coming under considerable additional pressure as a result of the conflict in Europe, especially due to a potential deadlock in the UN Security Council and a shift in the EU's focus to its eastern neighbourhood. At the same time, the number of crises on the continent caused by political instability, social inequality – exacerbated by the shortfall in food exports from Ukraine and Russia –, poor governance and religious extremism is more likely to increase in the near future.

African security architecture

The African security architecture consists of a multi-layered network of actors, including a continental regional organisation (the African Union/AU) and a host of sub-regional organisations with partially overlapping memberships, different capabilities and ambitions, and unclear responsibilities.

The first African regional organisation was the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). Founded in 1963 with the aim of strengthening cooperation among African states, it gave the continent a voice externally and helped overcome colonialism. It guaranteed the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its member states and pursued a strict policy of non-interference in their internal affairs.[207] For this reason, cynics sometimes referred to it as the "Club of Dictators." Following the genocide in Rwanda and the conflicts in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a reform movement developed from the late 1990s onwards that sought a more active role for the OAU in continental crisis management and the protection of human and civil rights in its member states.[208]

In July 2002, at a summit of African heads of state and government in Durban, the OAU was replaced by the AU. The AU Constitutive Act states that its objectives include "to […] promote peace, security, and stability on the continent; promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance; promote human and peoples' rights." And in Article 4(h) it establishes "the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State […] in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity."[209]
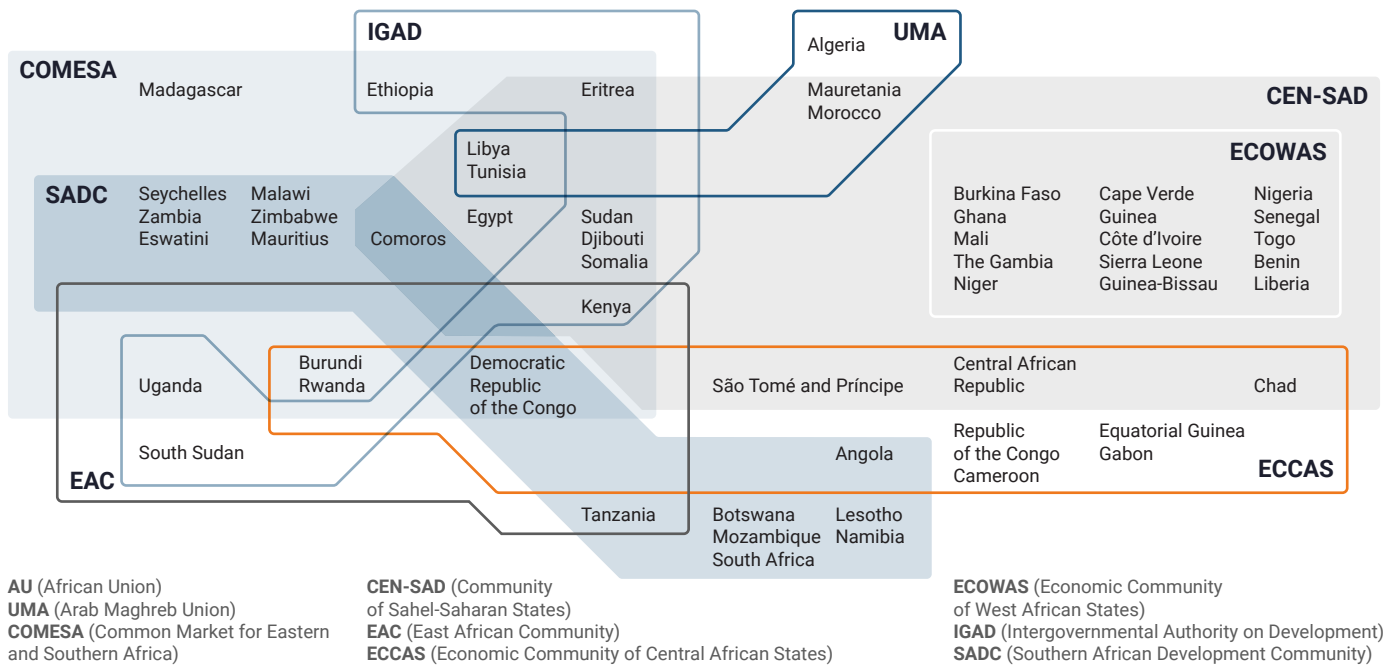
As an international organisation with a strong security component, the AU shares a number of features with the UN and the EU. The AU, like the EU, is led by a Commission, in its case consisting of ten members, and has a rotating chairmanship, albeit in the AU case it rotates annually. In contrast to the conditional admission process of the EU, however, AU membership is automatic for every internationally recognised state on the African continent.

207   However, in 1981 the OAU made an unsuccessful attempt to intervene in the Chadian civil war with the so-called Inter-African Force. Comfort Ero (2000): ECOMOG: A Model for Africa? Building Stability in Africa, Monograph 46. [Link].

208   Alhaji Sarjoh Bah et. al. (2014): The African Peace and Security Architecture – A Handbook, Chapter II, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. [Link].

209   Constitutive Act of the African Union, Article 3-4. [Link].

Regional Economic Communities in Africa

AU (African Union)
UMA (Arab Maghreb Union)
COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa)

CEN-SAD (Community of Sahel-Saharan States)
EAC (East African Community)
ECCAS (Economic Community of Central African States)

ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States)
IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development)
SADC (Southern African Development Community)

Source: Asgedom (2019) [214] updated by ZIF 2023

In 2003, the AU established a Peace and Security Council (PSC) with similar functions to those of the UN Security Council. Like its counterpart in New York, it consists of 15 members elected according to a regional key, but with two crucial differences: there are no permanent members and there is no veto.[210]

Unresolved subsidiarity

The most acute problem of the African security architecture is the unresolved "subsidiarity," i. e. the delimitation of responsibilities among the AU and the considerable variety of sub-regional organisations on the continent. These predate the AU and their founding documents therefore contain no references to an overarching AU role. Due to their history in sub-regional economic cooperation, many of them are called Regional Economic Communities (RECs) or Regional Mechanisms (RMs). Eight of these RECs/RMs are recognised by the AU as official partner organisations.[211] Although the PSC Protocol establishes the primacy of the AU in matters of peace and security in Africa,[212] the competences of the AU and RECs/RMs are so broadly defined that delineating them is practically impossible. At the end of the day, therefore, the competence of each is always the result of a political negotiation process between the regional and sub-regional levels – or levels.[213]

To complicate matters further, the division of responsibilities is not only undefined between the AU and the RECs/RMs, but also among the various sub-regional organisations. The source of this additional layer of complexity is the fact that they have multiple and overlapping memberships: the AU has 55 members, the RECs/RMs together add up to about 110.[215] The Democratic Republic of the Congo, for instance, is a member of four sub-regional organisations (COMESA, EAC, ECCAS and SADC). This enables member states to go "forum shopping," i. e. turn to the organisation among their several memberships from which they expect a decision or intervention in their favour.

210 Of the 15 members, ten are elected for two years, but five are elected for three years; immediate re-election is possible. North Africa has two members, East Africa three, Southern Africa three, West Africa four and Central Africa three: Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (2002) [Link]. See also [Link].

211 Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) und Southern African Development Community (SADC). [Link].

212 Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (2002), Article 16: [Link].

213 Félicité Djilo, Paul-Simon Handy (2021): Unscrambling Subsidiarity in the African Union, Institute for Security Studies (ISS Africa). [Link].

214 Messay Asgedom (2019): The African Union (AU) and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Partnership in Peace and Security: Achievements and Challenges, Journal of Citizenship and Morality, 2(1)

215 Liesl Louw-Vaudran (2022): Africa's Mishmash of Regional Blocs Doesn't Add Enough Value, ISS Africa. [Link].

This jumble is also the reason the African Standby Force (ASF) has remained largely ineffective. The ASF was created by the AU in 2003 as a multidimensional intervention force[216] that was to deploy quickly in crisis situations following a decision of the AU PSC within the framework of a Peace Support Operation (PSO), and do so with units organised by the five sub-regions (North, East, South, West and Central Africa).[217]

Despite considerable international support, a lack of resources and disputes over competencies between the AU and RECs/RMs combined to prevent the ASF from achieving official operational readiness for over a decade until 2016.[218]

As a consequence, it is unsurprising that a significant proportion of past and present operations in Africa have not been conducted by the AU itself or by RECs/RMs under the ASF. Instead, many are organised either by RECs/RMs acting alone or by ad hoc coalitions of crisis-affected states.

African peace operations

Since its creation, the AU has mandated or subsequently authorised 13 PSOs.[219] By far the largest and longest-running endeavour is the AU mission now known as the AU Transition Mission to Somalia (ATMIS) that has been operating since 2007.[220] The mission was only made possible by continuous logistical support from the UN and NATO and funding from the EU.[221] AMISOM was successful in implementing its main task to fight the Islamist terrorist group al-Shabaab in the first few years – while suffering considerable losses of its own. Since then, however, it has neither succeeded in overcoming the political deadlock among the political elites in Somalia nor in gaining a decisive military victory over al-Shabaab.[222]

Current missions with a similar AU mandate are the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which is fighting Boko Haram in the region around Lake Chad, and the Joint Force of the G5 Sahel (JF-G5S), which is targeting various Islamist militias in the Sahel region, especially in the border areas of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.[223] Both are good examples of a trend towards ad hoc coalitions of willing neighbours within the framework of either newly founded[224] or re-purposed organisations,[225] but outside the structures of the African Standby Force. Both missions suffer from a lack of financial resources and military capabilities, even though both have been or are being financially supported by the EU.

The REC that has the most experience in peace operations is the West African ECOWAS. Even before peace support operations were introduced across the continent with the creation of the AU in 2002, ECOWAS deployed its intervention force, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to end civil wars in Liberia (1990) and Sierra Leone (1997) as well as to Guinea-Bissau (1999).[226] Further missions followed in Côte d'Ivoire (2003), Liberia (2003), Guinea-Bissau (2012) and Mali (2013). Currently, ECOWAS is conducting two missions: ECOMIG in The Gambia since 2017[227] and MASGB since June 2022 – once again – in Guinea-Bissau.[228]

216   Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force and the Military Staff Committee 2003. [Link].

217   Significantly, however, only three of these five standby forces (ECCAS, ECOWAS and SADC) are identical to the AU-recognised RECs for the sub-region; the other two (Eastern African Standby Force/EASF and North African Regional Capability/NARC) were created specifically for the ASF. [Link].

218   Meressa Dessu, Dawit Yohannes (2022): Can the African Standby Force Match Up to Current Security Threats? ISS Africa. [Link].

219   AU Handbook 2022, p. 84. [Link].

220   ATMIS took over from the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in 2022. Its troop strength is about 19,000. [Link].

221   Paul Williams (2017): Paying for AMISOM: Are Politics and Bureaucracy Undermining the AU's Largest Peace Operation?, IPI Global Observatory. [Link].

222   Paul Williams et al. (2018): Assessing the Effectiveness of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON). [Link].

223   MNJTF, since 2015, troop strength 15,000; JF-G5S, since 2017, troop strength 5,000.

224   Like the G5 Sahel, founded in 2014 by Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad. [Link].

225   Like the MNJTF, within the framework of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, established in 1964 by Benin, Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria and Chad for the purpose of economic cooperation. [Link].

226   Ero (2000).

227   ECOWAS Mission in The Gambia, troop strength about 1,000.

228   ECOWAS Stabilization Support Mission in Guinea-Bissau, troop strength about 650.

An ECOWAS mission also represents the first of several cases in which the UN took over from an operation originally deployed by one of the RECs/RMs, usually re-hatting a substantial share of the African troops in the process. In 1999, this occurred when ECOMOG became the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and in 2013 in Mali when MINUSMA replaced the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA).[229] An unprecedented case was the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), which the AU and the UN led jointly and which succeeded the AU Mission in Darfur (AMIS) in 2007. The hoped-for advantage of this approach – i.e. increased legitimacy of the mission by a continued AU participation in an operation with access to UN funds and logistics – was hardly realised as the two organisations struggled to coordinate effectively.[230] Still, in situations where there is sufficient political will for joint planning and coordination, hybrid missions could remain an option in the future.

For years, African member states and the AU have been calling for a mechanism to financially support African peace operations from mandatory contributions to the UN budget.

Two other recent peace operations are symptomatic of the challenges that the African security architecture currently faces, in particular with regard to the relationship between the AU and some RECs/RMs. Without consulting the AU, SADC decided in July 2021 to deploy a peace operation to stabilise the situation in northern Mozambique (SAMIM).[231] It was not until six months later, in January 2022, that SADC sought official approval from the regional organisation, probably driven by the desire to tap into the AU's greater financial resources.

Then, in April 2022, the DRC government asked the East African Community (EAC), which it had joined only a short time before, to deploy an intervention force to the east of the country that had suffered from instability for decades, again without AU participation.[232] Whether this Joint Regional Force (JRF) will also be authorised by the AU after the fact is an open question in early 2023. In the case of both SAMIM and the EAC JRF, it is also unclear how both missions will cooperate with other international presences on the ground. In Mozambique, these consist of Rwanda's bilateral anti-terrorism mission and the EU training mission EUTM Mozambique, in the DRC, it is the UN mission MONUSCO.[233]

Who pays for African peace operations?

The African Peace Fund is the designated source of funding for AU operations and reached an all-time high of around USD 295 million this year. But external partners still finance two-thirds of the AU budget.[234] For years, African member states (especially the so-called A3 in the UN Security Council),[235] sub-regional organisations and the AU in New York have therefore repeatedly called for a mechanism to finance African peace operations authorised by the UN under Chapter VIII of the Charter from the assessed contributions to the UN budget,[236] in accordance with UN Resolutions 2320 (2016) and 2378 (2017).[237] Just as regularly as it is put forward, this proposal fails due to the opposition of some permanent members of the UN Security Council, above all the US and the UK. They justify their action by pointing to the fact that AU PSOs do not fully adhere to UN standards in terms of human rights and international humanitarian law. They also criticise the weak oversight and a lack of transparency of AU finances. The UN, the EU and the AU are working together on improvements, but progress is unlikely before a report by the UN Secretary-General on options for implementation, scheduled for April 2023, is published.[238]

229   David Ambrosetti, Romain Esmenjaud (2014): "Whose Money Funds African Peace Operations" in Thierry Tardy , Marco Wyss, (2014): Peacekeeping in Africa, Routledge.

230   Ralph Mamiya et al. (2020): Assessing the Effectiveness of the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON). [Link].

231   SADC Mission in Mozambique, troop size about 2.000.

232   Nelleke van de Walle (2022): East Africa's DRC Force – A Case for Caution, International Crisis Group. [Link].

233   ISS Africa (2022): Resolving the African Standby Force's Identity Crisis. [Link]; s. ZIF kompakt "Déjà vu congolais: Die M-23 Rebellion und der geplante Abzug von MONUSCO." [Link].

234   On the African Peace Fund [Link] and the last report of the African Peace Fund (2020) [Link]. Approximately USD 436 million out of USD 655 million, including all PSO expenditure of USD 252 million. Peace and Security Council Report 153, December 2022/January 2023, p. 17.

235   The three non-permanent African members of the UN Security Council since February 2023 are Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique.

236   Most recently in the Joint Communiqué of the UN Security Council and the AU PSC after their meeting on 14 October 2022, p. 4-5 [Link].

237   On cooperation with the AU: [Link]; on peacekeeping reform: [Link].

238   Report of the General Secretary (2022): Strengthening the Partnership between the UN and the AU on Issues of Peace and Security in Africa, Including the Work of the UN Office to the African Union. [Link]; Security Council Report (2022): Cooperation between the UN and Regional and Sub-Regional Organisations: Debate on the Partnership with the AU. [Link].

The second important external source of funding for African peace operations – namely the EU – is unlikely to step into the breach. Since 2004, it has provided around EUR 2.68 billion for African PSOs through the African Peace Facility (APF).[239] In March 2022, however, the European Peace Facility (EPF) replaced the APF after 17 years. The EPF, unlike the APF, is not specifically focused on Africa, which, in light of a perceived shift in EU focus from Africa to the EU's eastern border, has given rise to concerns that Africa will now receive significantly less support.[240] The AU in particular also fears a loss of control, as it no longer holds sole responsibility for distributing EU support to RECs/RMs and individual states, as it did under the APF. The military focus of the EPF also means that funding for non-military activities – such as the police and civilian components of ATMIS – is left in limbo. Finally, the fact that the EU has not clearly defined possible partners in Africa fuels fears that the EU could also support opposition groups in their fight against unpopular governments. Here, echoes of Europe's role in overthrowing the Gaddafi regime in Libya in 2011, which are still strong in Africa, are obviously having an effect.[241]

African peace operations and the West

It is not only worries over money and the aftermath of the Libya intervention that are straining relations between Africa and the West. African governments and public opinion complain about the hoarding of Corona vaccines, the so far uncompensated consequences of climate change, unresolved issues around colonialism and, last but not least, "Western double standards." For many in Africa, the West's quick and massive reaction to the invasion of Ukraine compared to its leisurely penny-pinching in African crises proves the point. Nor did it go unnoticed that in the first days after the Russian attack refugees of African origin were treated less courteously than Ukrainians at Ukraine's border with various EU states.

Western countries, for their part, apparently expected African states to side with them on the Ukraine conflict – and reacted with incomprehension, if not indignation, when this did not materialise. Indeed, a significant proportion of African states abstained in the four UN General Assembly votes so far on the Russian invasion in Ukraine.[242] In fact, many voices in Africa welcome the chance to tip the scales for once on an increasingly multipolar world stage between Europe, the US, China and Russia, with supporting roles for Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Iran. And indeed, a flurry of diplomatic visits to Africa has developed in recent months, with Western governments heavily courting their respective African hosts.[243]

But what do these developments mean for peace operations in Africa? Probably very little. Most African governments understand that a seesaw policy with changing partners has its limits when it comes to sustainably managing protracted, cross-border conflicts with a multitude of actors involved. The vast majority of non-Western partners have neither the experience nor the willingness to commit their own troops or financial resources to the extent that is needed to manage conflicts on the continent.

> So far, the Russian government has not blocked any mandate extensions of UN missions in Africa, probably because it is aware that most African states want them to continue.

239 Plus various special programmes for individual states and regions in Africa and numerous bilateral payments from individual EU member states; Shewit Woldemichael (2022): Africa Should be Better Prepared for Europe's Security Funding Shift, ISS Africa. [Link]; ICG (2021): How to Spend It: New EU Funding for African Peace and Security. [Link].

240 Indeed, some EU assistance to Ukraine has already been funded through the EPF.

241 Woldemichael (2022).

242 On 2 March 2022 on condemnation of the invasion, on 7 April on exclusion of Russia from the Human Rights Council, on 12 October on condemnation of the annexation of the four Ukrainian oblasts and on 14 November on Russian reparations to Ukraine; for a detailed breakdown see [Link] and [Link].

243 By Olaf Scholz (Senegal, Niger, South Africa), Sergei Lavrov (Egypt, Ethiopia, Uganda, DRC), Emmanuel Macron (Cameroon, Benin, Guinea-Bissau), Antony Blinken (South Africa, DRC, Rwanda) and Dmytro Kuleba (Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya); Priyal Singh (2022): Africa Has a Rare Chance to Shape the International Order, ISS Africa. [Link].

Outlook: African peace operations and the *Zeitenwende*

The future of peace operations in Africa continues to be in the hands of four actors: the AU, the African RECs/RMs, the UN and the EU. As for the EU, it should continue to promote conflict transformation in Africa through its own operations, ideally in even closer coordination with African partners. In particular, it should continue to support various forms of crisis management in Africa through the European Peace Facility – despite the understandable desire to refocus on the Eastern European neighbourhood. According to its own statements, the EU is prepared to do just that.[244]

Despite the rising tensions in connection with the conflict in Ukraine, the Russian government has so far not blocked any mandate extension of UN peace operations in Africa (or elsewhere), probably because it is aware that most African states want these operations to carry on. MINUSMA in Mali is a special case. Here, the Malian government's obstructive attitude has led most European troop contributors to withdraw from the mission. Germany has also announced its "entry into the exit."[245] This increases the chances somewhat that the long-discussed proposal to replace MINUSMA with an AU mission will become reality.[246] Most of the African troop contributors to MINUSMA in principle appear ready to take this on, but there is still great uncertainty surrounding financing and logistics.

> **The future of peace operations in Africa continues to be in the hands of four actors: the AU, the African RECs/RMs, the UN and the EU.**

In addition, African actors must do their homework. This includes finalising the reform of the AU Commission, setting up the secretariat of the African Peace Fund and concluding the Memorandum of Understanding between the AU and the RECs/RMs regarding the ASF, which has been under discussion for some time. The present draft provides the necessary definition of AU PSOs in the narrower sense on the one hand and AU-authorised operations conducted by the RECs/RMs on the other. Before it can be signed, however, the fundamental political tensions between the AU and the sub-regional organisations, which have hindered the functioning of the African security architecture since its inception 20 years ago, need to be resolved.

244   Chapter 5 in this study.

245   Thomas Wiegold (2022): Merkposten Mali: Einstieg in den Ausstieg der Bundeswehr bei MINUSMA, Augen geradeaus! [Link].

246   Radio France Internationale (2022): UN Chief Wants African Union Force with Tougher Mandate for Mali. [Link].

# 9. Germany, peace operations and the *Zeitenwende*

International organisations undeniably depend on the active engagement of their member states. The below offers suggestions as to how Germany might play its part; many of the recommendations will apply equally to other countries keen to safeguard, enhance and reform the international multilateral order. This is critical in the face of an intense geopolitical competition that renders it more difficult for the international community to react jointly or at least coherently to conflicts. At the same time, state fragility – coupled with multiple crises – will probably continue to generate a considerable amount of conflict in the coming years. Even more so, conflicts worldwide are increasingly becoming pawns in a geopolitical chess game where players each seek to assert their own interests.

That is why Germany, together with its partners, must significantly strengthen **conflict prevention** approaches. Alas, experience shows that faced with a multitude of possible conflict accelerators and limited international resources, a preventive approach is not always possible and not always successful.

A focus on **secondary prevention** is therefore all the more important, i.e. the prevention of a flare-up of conflicts that on the surface had appeared to be mitigated or resolved. Preventing a recurrence of conflict is certainly the essence of international peace operations. At the same time, the success of peace operations is contingent upon a supportive environment, which is becoming increasingly central in difficult circumstances. To foster such an environment that allows space and time to promote peace processes, Germany can use the convening power that derives from its economic potential and political reputation.

> The success of peace operations depends on a supportive environment, which is becoming increasingly important.

German participation in international peace operations by organisation
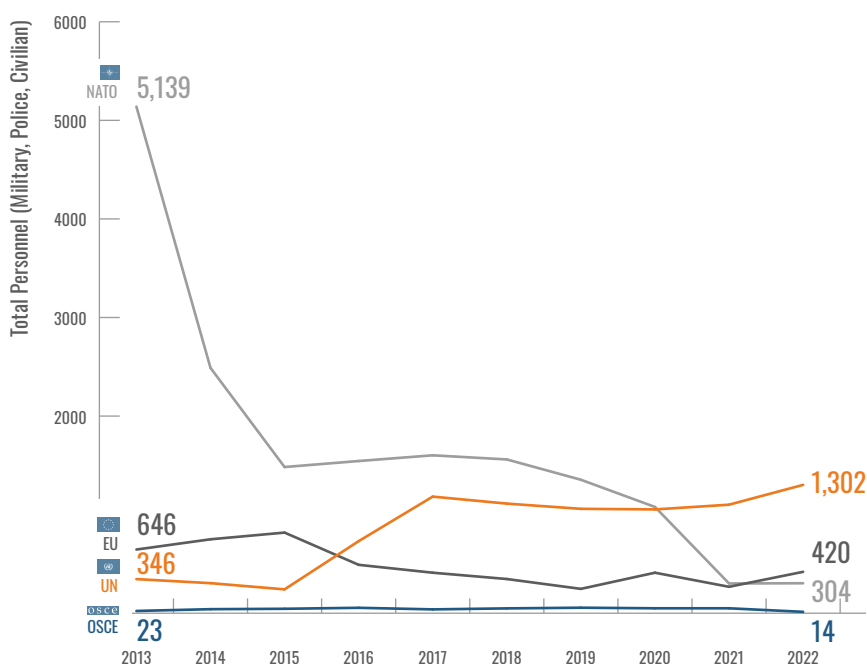
Source: ZIF 2013-2022

Peace operations face the **triple challenge** of adopting appropriate mandates, generating legitimacy and assertiveness on the ground, and applying effective approaches to managing conflict.

- **United Nations:**
  Despite the challenges described above, the UN remains the most significant actor in peace operations, with a broad range of instruments at its disposal. As a major donor, Germany should play an active role in shaping the development of relevant UN policies and instruments. The emerging New Agenda for Peace is an especially important forum to do just that. In the foreseeable future, large multidimensional UN peace operations will be rare. Instead, the focus will be on developing realistic and pragmatic mandates for future missions and on making Chapter VIII cooperation with regional organisations, such as the African Union, more effective.

- **Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe:**
  The OSCE's structures, in spite of all difficulties, are to be preserved to the maximum. Even if mandating new field operations is highly unlikely at present, all attempts should be made to ensure existing ones can continue. Where consensus is lacking in individual cases, pragmatic, short-term work arounds should be created. The German government should support such approaches diplomatically, financially and with personnel. In uncertain times, combining all constructive political forces in order to preserve the organisation's instruments, defend their principles and maintain the working relations that have been developed over the years is absolutely essential.

> Peace operations face the challenge of adopting appropriate mandates, developing legitimacy and assertiveness, and applying effective approaches.

- **European Union:**
  More than in the past, the EU could be called upon to react independently to conflicts including with Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operations. In support of an expanded EU role, Germany should press for refocusing CSDP missions on the basis of an analysis of their impact and effectiveness, and continue to promote a variety of configurations, including stabilisation. For instance, CSDP missions should deploy where they can make a difference and a sufficient number of member states are substantially committed – politically and with personnel and resources. Where a UN peace operation is mandated, CSDP could provide modules within the UN mission rather than establishing parallel missions. Another option is for the EU to contribute financially to other missions deployed by other organisations, as in the case of the AU mission in Somalia.

- **Strengthening alliances:**
  The growing geopolitical conflict heightens the need for thoroughly coordinated approaches to peace operations and conflict management with partners in EU and NATO. Germany should assume a stronger role in both alliances by leading political initiatives and providing capabilities. Above all, Berlin can contribute to the EU becoming a more effective geopolitical actor in integrated crisis management. Discussions on the new Compact and the implementation of the Strategic Compass provide a good framework to do so.

- **Multilateral coalitions:**
  Mobilising sufficient support for necessary crisis interventions within existing organisations might not always be possible. On a case-by-case basis, a peace operation might therefore also be mandated within the framework of a coalition of the willing, for instance, within OSCE structures. As a rule, an intervention by a coalition of the willing still requires an invitation from the host country.

- **Civilian and military capacities:**
  Germany must maintain sufficient civilian and military capacities to fulfil its required and desired contribution to conflict management and conflict prevention. Staffing relevant embassies and further developing civilian crisis intervention capabilities are therefore just as necessary as implementing the ambitious reinvigoration of the *Bundeswehr*. Germany – bilaterally or within an EU context – can also make an impor-

tant contribution to the effective implementation of peace operations by building the capacity and equipping other troop contributors.

- **Integrated approach:**
  The growing complexity of peace operations, but also of foreign and security policy more generally, requires relevant German instruments and institutions to further improve their coordination and coherence. A National Security Council, as discussed in connection with the National Security Strategy, offers one sensible solution. Ultimately, the top priority must be to achieve joint impact**.**
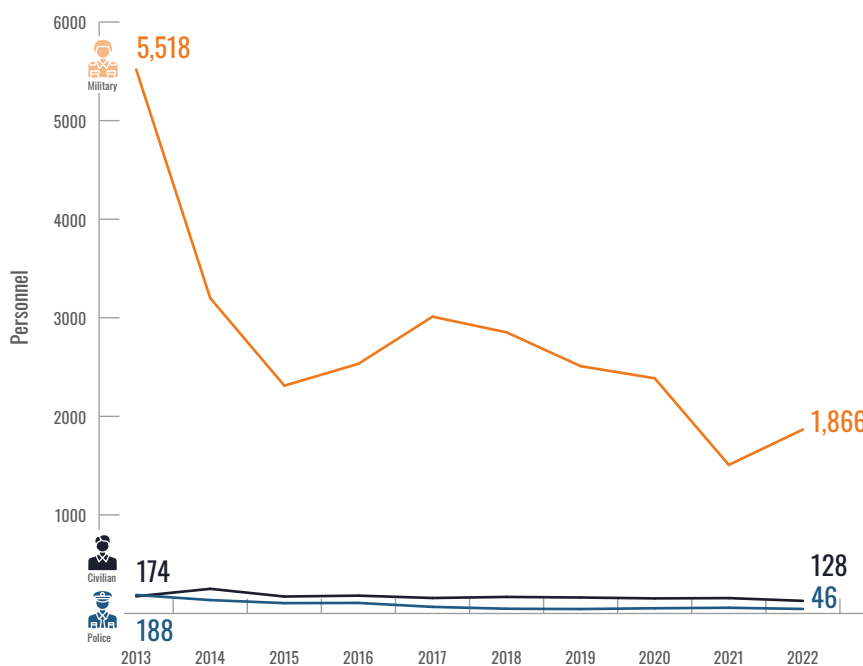
- **Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus:**
  In the future, the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDP Nexus) is likely to gain further relevance, given the fact that wher-ever peace operations are deployed, there are also humanitarian, developmental and peacebuilding actors. Their relative weight grows when mandates for peace operations are less comprehensive. The HDP Nexus should be cultivated both in the transition from short-term stabilisation to sustainable development and in the transition of peace operations, i.e. their withdrawal and the transfer of their competences, to other actors. Together with its partner countries, Germany should advance the HDP Nexus processes in the UN and the OECD and underpin them with financial incentives. In a domestic context, peace operations and their support should be a standing item in Germany's joint inter-ministerial approach and in the Joint Anal-ysis and Agreed Planning (GAAP) between the Federal Foreign Office and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.[247]

The growing complexity in foreign and security policy needs effective coordination, both in German policy and among international actors.

German participation in international peace operations
by component (UN, EU, OSCE and NATO)

Source: ZIF 2013-2022

247 Carina Böttcher, Andreas Wittkowsky (2021): Give "P" a Chance: Peacebuilding, Peace Operations and the HDP-Nexus. Berlin: Center for International Peace Operations, ZIF Study, December 2021. [Link].

- **Public diplomacy and strategic communication:**
Competing narratives, disinformation and hate speech play a major role in current conflicts. To tackle this challenge, Germany must expand its instruments for promoting (its own) narratives oriented towards democracy and human rights and for limiting the spread of disinformation, and do so together with like-minded partners worldwide. The work of the *Deutsche Welle* broadcasting company is a good starting point for this. Germany could also significantly expand the use of social media and the inclusion of influencers in their own communication strategy.

- **Public strategic debate in Germany:**
The German government's ability to reach and implement political decisions is significantly enhanced, when it can lean on a democratic majority that has confidence in the ability of the government and parliament to act. Strategic debates on German foreign and security policy, such as the National Security Strategy, should therefore be conveyed even more vigorously into the public space in order to raise awareness and understanding of necessary difficult decisions. This applies both to the deployment of soldiers and civilian experts into dangerous contexts and to the considerable financial efforts that will be required for national security in the years to come and that will partly come at the expense of other public goods.

- **Context analysis and impact measurement:**
In addition to providing resources, more emphasis needs to be placed on generating knowledge about the effects and chances of success of crisis interventions. This requires a thorough evaluation of previous interventions as well as precise analyses of root causes, conflict triggers and actors in current conflicts. In turn, this calls for an increase in the necessary personnel, skills and institutional capacities.

Abbreviations

AFISMA	African-led International Support Mission to Mali
AMIS	AU Mission in Darfur
AMISOM	AU Mission in Somalia
APF	African Peace Facility
ASF	African Standby Force
ATMIS	AU Transition Mission to Somalia
AU	African Union
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BINUH	UN Integrated Office in Haiti
CAR	Central African Republic
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DPO	Department of Peace Operations
DPPA	Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EAC	East African Community
EEAS	European External Action Service
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
EUAM Iraq	EU Advisory Mission in Iraq
EUBAM Moldova and Ukraine	EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine
EUCAP Sahel Niger	EU Capacity Building Mission in Niger
EUFOR Althea	EU Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina
EUFOR CAR	EU Mission in Chad and the Central African Republic
EULEX	Rule of Law Mission of the EU
EULEX Kosovo	EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo
EUMA	EU Mission in Armenia
EUMAM Ukraine	EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine
EUMM Georgia	EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia
EUNAVFOR Atalanta	EU Naval Force - Somalia
EUNAVFOR Med Operation SOPHIA	EU Naval Force - Mediterranean
EUROPOL	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation

EUTM Mozambique	EU Training Mission in Mozambique
EPF	European Peace Facility
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
ESS	European Security Strategy
FIMI	Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference
FRONTEX	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
GAAP	Joint Analysis and Agreed Planning (*Gemeinsame Analyse und abgestimmte Planung*)
GSI	Global Security Initiative
HDP Nexus	Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
JF-G5S	Joint Force of the G5 Sahel (Mauretania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad)
JRF	Joint Regional Force
KFOR	Kosovo Force
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
MINURSO	UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara
MINUSMA	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali
MINUSTAH	UN Stabilisation Mission in Haiti
MNJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
MONUSCO	UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MPF	Migration Partnership Framework
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NMI	NATO Mission Iraq
OAF	Operation Allied Forces
OAS	Organisation of American States
OAU	Organisation for African Unity
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OCST	Organisation of the Collective Security Treaty
POC	Protection of Civilians
PSC	Peace and Security Council

PSO	AU Peace Support Operation
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
RMs	Regional Mechanisms
RSM	Resolute Support Mission
SADC	South African Development Community
SAMIM	SADC Mission in Mozambique
SFOR	Stabilisation Force
SIPRI	Stockholm Peace Research Institute
SMM	Special Monitoring Mission
SPM	Special Political Mission
SPU	Support Programme for Ukraine
SSR	Security Sector Reform
T/PCCs	Troop/Police-contributing Countries
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNAMI	UN Assistance Mission for Iraq
UNAMID	AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNAMSIL	UN Mission in Sierra Leone
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNFICYP	UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus
UNIFIL	UN Interim Force in Lebanon
UNISFA	UN Interim Security Force for Abyei
UNITAF	Unified Task Force in Somalia
UNMISS	UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan
UNOCA	UN Regional Office for Central Africa
UNOWAS	UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel
UNRCCA	UN Regional Centre for Preventative Diplomacy for Central Asia
UNTAC	UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia
UNTSO	United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

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