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# How ad hoc coalitions deinstitutionalize international institutions

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# How ad hoc coalitions deinstitutionalize international institutions

MALTE BROSIG AND JOHN KARLSRUD*

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The global marketplace for peace operations is undergoing rapid change. Since 2014 the United Nations has closed or scaled down numerous peace operations, and has not deployed any new ones. The number of UN peacekeepers is in decline. Concurrently, multiple ad hoc and regional operations have been deployed. Ad hoc coalitions (AHCs) can be defined as autonomous arrangements, which are set up outside established institutions on short notice and with a task-specific mandate for a limited time.[1] The Regional Cooperation Initiative for the elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA) was formed by Uganda and neighbouring states in 2011. In 2013 the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB)—composed of troops from Malawi, South Africa and Tanzania, and developed by the Southern African Development Community (SADC)[2] to fight the M23 rebel group in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)—was included in MONUSCO (the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo).[3] In 2014 the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), comprising troops from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, was mandated to fight the Boko Haram insurgency in the Lake Chad region. The Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel) Joint Force, consisting of troops from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauretania and Niger, was established in 2017 to fight terrorists in the participant countries. In 2021, the SADC established the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) to support the fight against terrorism in northern Mozambique.[4] In 2022 the East African Community deployed a Regional Force (EACRF) to eastern DRC to fight rebel groups in the region. Finally, the Multinational Joint Task Force of the Accra

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1 Yf Reykers, John Karlsrud, Malte Brosig, Stephanie C. Hofmann, Cristiana Maglia and Pernille Rieker, 'Ad hoc coalitions in global governance: short-notice, task- and time-specific cooperation', *International Affairs* 99: 2, 2023, pp. 727–45 at p. 728, https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiac319.

2 Southern African Development Community, 'Communiqué of the extra-ordinary Organ Troika Summit, plus SADC Troika and Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs)', 8 May 2023, https://www.sadc.int/latest-news/communique-extra-ordinary-organ-troika-summit-plus-sadc-troika-and-force-intervention. (Unless otherwise noted at point of citation, all URLs cited in this article were accessible on 18 Dec. 2023.)

3 UN Security Council Resolution 2098, 'The situation in Democratic Republic of the Congo', 28 March 2013, http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2098.

4 SAMIM consists of troops from Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Rwanda has also deployed 2,000 troops in a bilateral agreement with Mozambique.

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Initiative (MNJTF/AI) was set up by Ghana and neighbouring countries in 2022 to fight terrorism in their countries.[5] Likewise, European Union member states established AHCs such as Operation Takuba in Mali, a special forces operation announced in 2019, and Operation Agenor, a maritime surveillance operation in the Strait of Hormuz. Most recently, on 2 October 2023 the UN Security Council (UNSC) authorized the Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission for Haiti, to be led by Kenya.[6] AHCs have in general become a visible and important part of the global peace and security architecture since the end of the Cold War.[7]

The deployment of AHCs represents a robust trend on the African continent and beyond, and they are becoming the preferred format for interstate security cooperation.[8] AHCs align more easily with national interests; they allow for bilateral agreements to enable states to deploy troops to their own and neighbouring territories rapidly and without the need of going through tedious bureaucratic procedures and supervision by multilateral organizations.[9] Most often AHCs seek recognition from regional organizations and/or the UNSC—often post hoc. In turn, UN or regional recognition facilitates financial, material and training support. Compared with UN peace operations, AHCs can be fielded with a lighter human rights accountability framework (or without one entirely). AHCs thus represent a challenge to the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), which was designed (among other goals) to respond to Africa's security challenges. However, as warfighting coalitions AHCs are also functionally different from classical peacekeeping, which actively involves the UN and regional organizations in mandating and supervising.[10] While AHCs do not directly compete with existing institutionally deployed peacekeeping missions, their use marks a trend away from institutionalized responses to security crises.

Given the proliferation of AHCs, especially on the African continent, two questions emerge. First, what consequences do they bring about for the existing institutional security landscape? And second, how can the new trend of AHCs operating alongside—instead of inside—regional organizations be captured and explored conceptually? To answer these questions, we closely examine the MNJTF fighting the Boko Haram insurgency.

The article proceeds as follows. The first section lays out the conceptual framework focusing on processes of deinstitutionalization. Central to this section is the exploration of what deinstitutionalization is, how it can be assessed and characterized, and what conditions contribute to it within a dense institutional landscape. We identify three features of deinstitutionalization: AHCs bypass standard procedures for decision-making processes, whittle down established

[5] The force is intended to comprise troops from Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo.
[6] UN Security Council Resolution 2699, 2 Oct. 2023, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4022890.
[7] Reykers et al., 'Ad hoc coalitions in global governance'.
[8] Denis Tull, *Ad-hoc-Koalitionen in Europa: Der Sahel als Katalysator europäischer Sicherheitspolitik?*, SWP-Studie 8 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2022).
[9] Malte Brosig, 'Ad hoc coalitions in a changing global order', *GIGA Focus Global*, vol. 4, 2022, https://doi.org/10.57671/gfgl-22042.
[10] Malte Brosig, 'Military ad hoc coalitions and functional differentiation in inter-organisational relations', *European Journal of International Security*, publ. online 17 March 2023, https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2023.5.



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institutional scripts and shift resource allocations. Furthermore, the article finds that a lack of problem-solving capacity, slow adaptation to external changes and the implicit path dependency which is built into formal international institutions provide opportunities for AHC to fill functional gaps. We then move on to the single case-study of the MNJTF to show in detail how AHCs are involved in processes of deinstitutionalization by focusing on the task force's relationships to the APSA. In the analytical section which follows next, we argue that AHCs are part of a trend towards deglobalization by contributing to incipient processes of deinstitutionalization. We reveal how AHCs contribute to changing practices of financing international peace and security operations, with an examination of EU and UN policies and practices. The article's final section presents our conclusions. In sum, the article unwraps the processes of deinstitutionalization and identifies conditions fostering this process. In the end, AHCs shift the focality and implementation of policy goals from established institutions to more transient forms of international cooperation, relegating global and regional institutions to a more normative role.

## Deinstitutionalization of global crisis response

With few exceptions, the term 'deinstitutionalization' is new to the study of international institutions and global governance.[11] Classical International Relations scholarship is interested in exploring how international institutions are set up and how they operate. In an ever more globalized world, international institutions were seen as essential cooperation hubs of growing importance. The institutionalist turn has occupied a dominant position explaining various effects of (mostly) international organizations (IOs). These have been explored through a variety of theoretical perspectives—the most prominent being of neo-liberal, historical, functionalist, constructivist and rationalist orientation, in addition to regional integration theories.[12] Despite existing theoretical diversity, the literature has in common that its main focus is on the 'building-up'—and often expanding—operational phase of international institutions, explaining how they come about, are internally designed (i.e. how they function) and are maintained. Implicitly the liberal paradigm, which has inspired the literature, assumes that the role international institutions are playing is fairly stable. Historical institutionalists understand them as 'sticky' and recalcitrant to change once in place.[13] For a long time,

[11] Jonathan White, 'The de-institutionalisation of power beyond the state', *European Journal of International Relations* 28: 1, 2022, pp. 187–208, https://doi.org/10.1177/13540661211053683.

[12] Martha Finnemore, 'Norms, culture, and world politics: insights from sociology's institutionalism', *International Organization* 50: 2, 1996, pp. 325–47, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300028587; Orfeo Fioretos, 'Historical institutionalism in International Relations', *International Organization* 65: 2, 2011, pp. 367–99, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818311000002; Robert O. Keohane, *After hegemony: cooperation and discord in the world political economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Jonas Tallberg, 'Delegation to supranational institutions: why, how, and with what consequences?', *West European Politics* 25: 1, 2002, pp 23–46, https://doi.org/10.1080/713601584; Frank Schimmelfennig, 'Regional integration theory', in *Oxford research encyclopedia of politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.599.

[13] Paul Pierson, 'The path to European integration: a historical institutionalist analysis', *Comparative Political Studies* 29: 2, 1996, pp. 123–62, https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414096029002001.



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the general trend was following a progressive tone emphasizing increasing degrees of institutionalization, meaning a continuing proliferation of international institutions and the extension of their activities.[14] These are classically understood in terms of their outputs and constitutive qualities for the international system. Duffield defines them as 'relatively stable sets of related constitutive, regulative, and procedural norms and rules that pertain to the international system'.[15] Nearly all aspects of interstate relations, it seems, are affected one way or the other by international institutions.

This increasing institutional density gave rise to the research theme of regime complexity and inter-organizational relations.[16] Reverse institutionalization processes often fall outside the analytical and empirical focus. Certainly, this is linked to convincing evidence that international governance institutions were indeed expanding further during the post-Cold War period, resulting in institutional overlap.[17] However, with the profound crisis of liberal multilateralism and return of great power politics, the situation has changed.[18] Processes of deglobalization and a receding willingness to cooperate within established institutions are becoming more perceptible.[19]

Although the often-criticized liberal international order is under stress, experiencing real transitions, it has not fallen apart and international institutions have not become dysfunctional, abandoned, or even disappeared.[20] However, the crisis of liberal multilateralism gives rise to a scholarship which is more reflective on the limitations international institutions are experiencing.[21] Scholarship now more prominently explores internal gridlock, state withdrawal from IOs and the

[14] Andrew Hurrell, *On global order, power, values, and the constitution of international society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 59–62.

[15] John S. Duffield, 'What are international institutions?', *International Studies Review* 9: 1, 2007, pp.1–22 at p. 2, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2486.2007.00643.x.

[16] Rafael Biermann and Joachim Koops, eds, *Palgrave handbook of inter-organizational relations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Malte Brosig, 'Overlap and interplay between international organisations: theories and approaches', *South African Journal of International Affairs* 18: 2, 2011, pp. 147–67, https://doi.org/10.1080/10220461.2011.588828; Amandine Orsini, Jean-Frederic Morin and Oran Young, 'Regime complexes: a buzz, a boom, or a boost for global governance?', *Global Governance* 19: 1, 2013, pp. 27–39, https://doi.org/10.1163/19426720-01901003.

[17] Stephanie C. Hofmann, 'Why institutional overlap matters: CSDP in the European security architecture', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 49: 1, 2011, pp. 101–20, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2010.02131.x; Diana Panke and Sören Stapel, 'Exploring overlapping regionalism', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, vol. 21, 2018, pp. 635–62, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41268-016-0081-x.

[18] Amitav Acharya, 'After liberal hegemony: the advent of a multiplex world order', *Ethics & International Affairs* 31: 3, 2017, pp. 271–85, https://doi.org/10.1017/S089267941700020X; G. John Ikenberry, 'The end of liberal international order?', *International Affairs* 94: 1, 2018, pp. 7–23, https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix241; Stewart Patrick, 'Multilateralism à la carte: the new world of global governance', *Valdai Papers*, no. 22 (Moscow: Valdai Club, 2015), https://valdaiclub.com/files/11399.

[19] Markus Kornprobst and T. V. Paul, 'Globalization, deglobalization and the liberal international order', *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1305–16, https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiab120.

[20] Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni and Stephanie C. Hofmann, 'Of the contemporary global order, crisis, and change', *Journal of European Public Policy* 27: 7, 2020, pp. 1077–89, https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2019.1678665.

[21] Tanja Börzel and Michael Zürn, 'Contestations of the liberal international order: from liberal multilateralism to postnational liberalism', *International Organization* 75: 2, 2021, pp. 282–305, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818320000570; David A. Lake, Lisa L. Martin and Thomas Risse, 'Challenges to the liberal order: reflections on international organizations', *International Organization* 75: 2, 2021, pp. 225–57, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818320000636.



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lifespan or even death of IOs.[22] The loosening of liberal internationalism on a greater scale has led scholarship to shift its focus from traditional forms of international governance, such as international regimes or intergovernmental organizations, to increasingly more attractive alternatives.

Examples of such alternatives include low-cost institutions, informal intergovernmental organizations and AHCs.[23] What these alternative forms of international governance have in common is that they are exploring processes of reverse institutionalization, but without explicitly identifying this process. Consequently, processes of deinstitutionalization remain under-conceptualized and insufficiently studied empirically. Thus, this section aims at clarifying the notion of deinstitutionalization in order to make it a viable analytical tool, helping us to understand the consequences of the post-liberal multilateral order of which the frequent use of AHCs is one manifestation.

What is deinstitutionalization? By deinstitutionalization, we do not mean the absence of institutions in international governance—on the contrary, they continue to exist and to remain relevant. Rather, deinstitutionalization describes a process of weakening of these institutions and restructuring of global governance through bypassing established rules of procedure enshrined in international institutions. When acting through institutions means following bureaucratic procedures—for example in the form of adhering to collective decision-making processes, such as for the passing of resolutions or the execution, implementation and supervision of policy programmes—then deinstitutionalization refers to processes circumventing these institutionalized forms of action. In such cases some decision-making power is transferred away from institutions. The consequence is that previously institutionalized power becomes informalized.[24] In order to assess processes of deinstitutionalization empirically, we propose three indicators for measurement.

First, AHCs bypass standard procedures for decision-making processes. The use of AHCs instead of established institutions changes the sequence and relevance of decision-making processes within institutions. While in an institutionalized process decision-making predates action, in a deinstitutionalized setting decision-making organs come into play post hoc, authorizing, endorsing or recognizing

[22] Maria Josepha Debre and Hylke Dijkstra, 'Institutional design for a post-liberal order: why some international organizations live longer than others', *European Journal of International Relations* 27: 1, 2021, pp. 311–39, https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066120962183; Thomas Hale, David Held and Kevin Young, *Gridlock: why global cooperation is failing when we need it the most* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2013); Inken von Borzykowski and Felicity Vabulas, 'Hello, goodbye: when do states withdraw from international organizations?', *The Review of International Organizations*, vol. 14, 2019, pp. 335–66, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11558-019-09352-2; Hylke Dijkstra and Maria J. Debre, 'The death of major international organizations: when institutional stickiness is not enough', *Global Studies Quarterly* 2: 4, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1093/isagsq/ksac048.

[23] Kenneth W. Abbott and Benjamin Faude, 'Choosing low-cost institutions in global governance', *International Theory* 13: 3, 2021, pp. 397–426, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752971920000202; Felicity Vabulas and Duncan Snidal, 'Organization without delegation: informal intergovernmental organizations (IIGOs) and the spectrum of intergovernmental arrangements', *The Review of International Organizations*, vol. 8, 2013, pp. 193–220, https://doi.org./10.1007/s11558-012-9161-x; Reykers, et al., 'Ad hoc coalitions in global governance'; Oliver Westerwinter, Kenneth W. Abbott and Thomas Biersteker, 'Informal governance in world politics', *The Review of International Organizations*, vol. 16, 2021, pp. 1–27, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11558-020-09382-1.

[24] White, 'The de-institutionalisation of power beyond the state'.



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action after it has already been initialized. This leads inevitably to a shift in power away from the institution, as the decision to take action originated outside the institutional framework. In the worst case, the established institution is degraded to conducting 'rubber-stamping' exercises.[25] In similar developments in other domains, international institutions compete to be tasked by clubs such as the G7 and G20 in a quid pro quo to show relevance while offering legitimacy.[26]

Second, in cases of deinstitutionalization and following a post hoc, minimal or even absent involvement of institutionalized decision-making, the implementation of policy action tends to deviate from established scripts of international institutions. In other words, there is no—or limited—supervision and control if the applied action is congruent with policy frameworks developed by institutions. In situations in which AHCs become focal points for action, such a tendency can weaken the trust in institutional policy planning and execution if its application is watered down or ignored. In the end, institutionally derived policy programmes are a form of bureaucratic (impersonal) rule; circumventing formalized action equates to the informalization and therewith the deinstitutionalization of power.[27]

A third indicator for measuring deinstitutionalization is how resource allocations are shifted. Most international institutions are dependent on the transfer of resources from their stakeholders and private or public donors.[28] Resources (the means to reach an end) are generated outside an institution. As resources are principally finite goods, shifts in their allocation not only affect the receiving end (enabling effect) but also affects the non-receivers (disabling effect). In short, resources spent for AHCs might not be available for other institutions and cannot simply be substituted from other sources. The consequence is that established institutions are able to act procedurally but are incapacitated operationally.

In the empirical analysis we will use the above indicators for analysing how AHCs are contributing to processes of deinstitutionalization. Forms of deinstitutionalization do not necessarily lead to the death of an institution, but they certainly contribute to a rearrangement—if not a relegation—of the role these institutions are playing with reference to a specific policy area. In the end, the skimming of multilateral decision-making and implementation procedures and practices away from international institutions marks a shift in the focality of these institutions when addressing a pertinent issue. Not only is decision-making power transferred away from international institutions, but the character of the response to an international issue is changing from a secretariat-led and -administered approach, within the confines of a rules-based structure, to a bottom-up ad

[25] Frank Mattheis, Dimpho Deleglise and Ueli Staeger, *African Union: the African political integration process and its impact on EU–AU relations in the field of foreign and security policy* (Brussels: European Parliament, 2023), p. 56, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/702587/EXPO_STU(2023)702587_EN.pdf.

[26] Ole Jacob Sending, *The war in Ukraine and multilateralism as we know it* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2022), https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/the-war-in-ukraine-and-multilateralism-as-we-know-it.

[27] White, 'The de-institutionalisation of power beyond the state'.

[28] Rafael Biermann and Michael Harsch, 'Resource dependency theory', in Rafael Biermann and Joachim Koops, eds, *Palgrave handbook of inter-organizational relations in world politics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 135–55.



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hoc process based on more sporadic and informal action. Direct and fast action is preferred over satisfying the institutional need for procedural integrity, especially in situations of crisis which exert a degree of urgency.

In this context we argue that AHCs are contributing to processes of deinstitutionalization. Their very nature of being set up at short notice leads to a power transition away from international institutions, bypassing procedural requirements within institutions allowing for fast action confined to a specific field and on a temporary basis.[29] From this perspective, AHCs are a response to the possibly too high institutional threshold, meaning an institutionalized response to a crisis regularly involves a set of institutions, increasing coordination and transaction costs. Given the existing high institutional density of regime complexes and widely proliferated organizational overlap, the choice for AHCs also signals a preference for shorter institutional 'supply' lines favouring direct and fast action. The use of AHCs is a form of deinstitutionalization not only because existing international institutions are bypassed and a power transfer is taking place, but also because AHCs are operating with a very light institutional infrastructure. Their sporadic emergence and task-specific temporary nature allows them to operate with minimal degrees of bureaucratization. For example, AHCs usually operate without a foundational treaty and central executive structure.

What conditions influence the emergence and course of processes of deinstitutionalization? As AHCs do not exist in isolation from international institutions, we are interested in how existing institutions are influencing the emergence and operations of AHCs and therewith deinstitutionalization. Although the main momentum for setting up AHCs rests on state actors and their individual motivations within a highly specific context, their preferences are acted out within the background of already existing dense institutional spaces. Thus, we are interested in examining how existing institutions are contributing to the emergence of AHCs.

Building on institutionalist approaches, we come up with three arguments. First, along the lines of rational institutionalism, the attractiveness of an institution for its stakeholders depends on its problem-solving capacity. Power is delegated to solve collective action problems.[30] While institutions are not simply operating as functional transmission belts, there are hardly any institutions which exist without promising some kind of policy impact. If there are doubts as to whether the institution is capable of addressing the issue effectively, the use of it is disincentivized. In other words, if there is a deepening mismatch between the resource endowment of an institution and its ability to address mandated tasks, the institution is functionally inadequate or even obsolete. In such cases, functional gaps emerge and can be occupied by AHCs.

Second, AHCs are more likely to appear when existing institutional structures display limited adaptability to external changes. Here, we argue that the supposed

[29] Reykers et al., 'Ad hoc coalitions in global governance', p. 728.
[30] Arthur Stein, 'Neoliberal institutionalism', in Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal, eds, *The Oxford handbook of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 201–21.



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stickiness of institutions—as identified by historical institutionalism as providing them with influence—can turn out as a disadvantage.[31] Because international institutions experience lock-in effects in terms of historically agreed doctrines, concepts, structures and procedures, which are difficult to change, they run the risk of an increasing mismatch between institutionalized capacities and real-life needs. Put simply, if the operational environment changes faster than the institutional structures designed to tackle an issue, deinstitutionalization can be the consequence. Such situations provide incentives for stakeholders to circumvent these institutions and to look—on an ad hoc basis—for alternative collective ways for action.

Third, and linked to the second condition, existing institutional structures reflect both historic and current interests.[32] Vested interests of key stakeholders not only are entrenched in how the institution operates and what functional rewards it can distribute to its members, but they also inform internal organs and their influence. Responding to suddenly erupting crises by displaying a high degree of institutional adaptation is likely to upset the established balance of interest, resource allocation and influence, with no guarantee that there will be a return to the status quo ante once a crisis is over. This makes established institutions reluctant to endorse fast adaptation and leaves functional spaces for AHCs. Institutions cannot simply leave the established path dependency that is enshrined in their operation.

In sum, we argue that AHCs and subsequent processes of deinstitutionalization are fostered by the existing institutional landscape if this proves inadequate for addressing a collective action problem. In this regard, AHCs are emerging in functional niches that the existing institutional landscape is leaving behind.[33] The specific nature of AHCs as quick-response instruments in cases of emergency explains the preferences for ad hoc solutions instead of setting up new and better fitting institutions, which would require long-term-orientated negotiations of treaty-based organizations and alter the established balance of interests within institutions.

Methodologically, we have opted for a single case-study of the Multinational Joint Task Force of the Accra Initiative (MNJTF/AI). A single case allows us to comprehensively and closely observe how processes of deinstitutionalization unfold. Working with a variety of cases would not allow the same detail of analysis. Our emphasis is on presenting a comprehensive empirical story of how AHCs are contributing to deinstitutionalization; we do not engage in classical theory testing, which would warrant the selection of a larger number of cases. While the MNJTF is only one example of an AHC within the security sector, it is the most advanced one on the African continent in this field and has inspired the establishment of other AHCs. It is thus not a lone case, but stands for a wider category of AHCs and is a role model for later AHCs.

[31] Pierson, 'The path to European integration: a historical institutionalist analysis'.
[32] Kenneth A. Shepsle, 'Rational choice institutionalism', in R. A. W. Rhodes, Sarah A. Binder and Bert A. Rockman, eds, *The Oxford handbook of political institutions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 23–38.
[33] Brosig, 'Military ad hoc coalitions and functional differentiation in inter-organisational relations.



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AHCs are also no marginal phenomenon but can be found globally. However, Africa hosts a higher number of them than any other continent, as could be shown by the recent presentation of a dataset on AHCs.[34] We do not claim that all AHCs are the same, but we hold that their main characteristics of short-notice establishment, task-specific orientation and non-permanent character have similar effects which are relevant across regions and policy fields. Thus, the selected case is not an isolated one. Naturally, more systematic theory testing is required in future research to solidify our findings, which should be read as first steps conceptualizing processes of deinstitutionalization within the context of proliferating AHCs.

Empirically, the article is based on a review of existing policy documents as well as interviews conducted with MNJTF, AU and UN officials during fieldwork in N'Djamena, Chad, and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 2022 and in New York in 2023. The subsequent empirical analysis has two aims. First, it is an illustration of deinstitutionalization alongside the three mentioned indicators. Second, it shows how existing institutional structures are making their contribution to the emergence of AHCs and deinstitutionalization.

## A case-study of the MNJTF

The MNJTF has long historical antecedents. It was first established in 1994 by the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), at that time consisting of Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. The Central African Republic joined the LCBC in 1996 and Libya in 2008. The mandate was limited to counter criminal activities, and was expanded to include cross-border insecurity in 1998. For a long period, Nigeria saw the Boko Haram threat as a domestic issue. However, as the insurgent group expanded its control of the north-eastern corner of Nigeria across the borders to Cameroon and Chad, the MNJTF was reactivated in 2012 to counter the insurgency and stabilize the areas affected by Boko Haram, bordering Lake Chad in western/central Africa. However, only four of the six LCBC member states—Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, joined by Benin, a non-member—currently participate in the task force. The result is an AHC that is operating outside the official APSA structures.

In 2014 the AU announced its support for the MNJTF.[35] In January 2015 Boko Haram overran the MNJTF headquarters in Baga, northern Nigeria. This episode vividly demonstrated that Nigeria was not able to contain the threat from the terrorist group on its own, but needed the support of an international instrument. The MNJTF was given a mandate by the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) on 29 January 2015[36] and a new headquarters was established in N'Djamena, the capital of Chad. In 2015, it was revived and developed into a counter-terrorism

[34] Cristiana Maglia, Yf Reykers and John Karlsrud, 'Adhocism dataset: an introduction', paper presented at the 64th annual convention of the International Studies Association, Montreal, 15–18 March 2023.

[35] African Union, *Communiqué of the 469th meeting of the Peace and Security Council, on the Boko Haram terrorist group*, PSC/PR/COMM.(CDLXIX), 25 Nov. 2014, https://oau-aec-au-documents.uwazi.io/en/document/6x631sq4dcwa6rbls7opggy14i.

[36] African Union, PSC/AHG/COMM.2(CDLXXXIV), 29 January 2015, https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/psc-484.com.boko.haram.29.1.2015.pdf, para. 11.



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force in response to the Boko Haram insurgency. The task force was subsequently authorized by the AU PSC[37] and became fully operational in 2016.

Although the MNJTF was initially set up as a local initiative without the formal authorization and support of the AU, close cooperation developed relatively quickly. The formal support and subsequent authorization by the AU increased pressure on the UNSC to follow suit in adopting a resolution endorsing the MNJTF. However, by the end of 2015 the UNSC had merely issued a presidential statement commending countries for operationalizing the MNJTF.[38] Although two years later the UNSC adopted a resolution, it again failed to officially endorse or authorize the MNJTF.[39] This is likely because the MNJTF is treated as a mission in terms of article 51 of the UN Charter (which deals with self-defence).[40] More important is the official authorization by a continental body for the unlocking of western donor funding. Securing stable funding enabled the AU to become more involved in distributing this funding, and supporting the preparation and operationalization of the force.

## Deinstitutionalization through poor institutionalization

Processes of deinstitutionalization are logically not thinkable without prior processes of institutionalization. Exploring deinstitutionalization principally happens within a pre-existing institutional environment. Thus, the institutional environment in place also forms and shapes deinstitutionalization. Consequently, an important part of research consists of exploring the institutional landscape in which AHCs are set up. Accordingly, we expect AHCs to emerge in the functional spaces that existing institutions are leaving behind. Were previously existing institutions perfectly fitted to addressing an issue adequately, there would be no need for AHCs. From the perspective of missing institutional capability, this section explores what institutional space the APSA leaves for the MNJTF to thrive, as well as the types of deinstitutionalization that can be witnessed in our case-study. Foregrounded in the analysis are the character and operation of the MNJTF, and the extent to which it is operating differently, in comparison to APSA structures.

The mandate and Concept of Operations (CONOPS) of the MNJTF have evolved since its inception. In 2015 the AU PSC mandated it to provide 'a safe and secure environment', 'significantly reduce violence against civilians', 'facilitate the implementation of … stabilization programmes in the affected areas, including the full restoration of State authority and the return of … refugees', and to 'facilitate … humanitarian operations'.[41] Furthermore, disarmament, demobilization and rein-

[37] African Union, PSC/AHG/COMM.2(CDLXXXIV).
[38] UN, S/PRST/2015/14, 28 July 2015, https://undocs.org/S/PRST/2015/14.
[39] UN, S/RES/2349, 31 March 2017, https://undocs.org/S/RES/2349(2017).
[40] Cedric de Coning, Andrew E. Yaw Tchie and Anab Ovidie Grand, 'Ad-hoc security initiatives, an African response to insecurity', *African Security Review* 31: 4, 2022, pp. 383–98, https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2022.2134810.
[41] African Union, *Communiqué of the 484th meeting of the PSC on the Boko Haram terrorist group*, PSC/AHGCOMM.2(CDLXXXIV), 29 Jan. 2015, https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/psc-484.com.boko.haram.29.1.2015.pdf.



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tegration (DDR) of combatants is mentioned in addition to freeing abductees held by Boko Haram ('young girls abducted in Chibok, Borno State, in April 2014') and preventing the transfer of arms and ammunition.[42] A troop size of 7,500 soldiers was authorized and later increased to 10,000 troops.[43] While the written mandate contains elements of standard peacekeeping operations such as DDR, the main emphasis in practice was placed on militarily pushing back Boko Haram.

The composition and operation of the MNJTF varies significantly from the existing peacekeeping approaches that the UN and the APSA have offered. Traditional peacekeeping missions integrate multinational troops under a single command and political supervision of the UN or the APSA. Troops are deployed to a foreign country and most peacekeeping missions are rather defensively using force, or are using it tactically, but not primarily or exclusively as their chief instrument at a strategic level. Force integration of the MNJTF is minimalistic, and in principle troops are operating on their national territory. The intergovernmental element is at the centre in opposition of international oversight coming from a regional or global institution. The MNJTF operates across borders in an entire region but with minimal participation of foreign troops as in most cases troops are deployed at home. Technically the MNJTF only foresees the operation across borders within a 50-kilometre radius. Military AHCs are in general task-specific. In the case of the MNJTF, the latter is concentrating on exerting military pressure on Boko Haram. This marks a considerable contrast to UN and AU peacekeeping missions, which are regularly operating with comprehensive mandates that also include political, economic and social goals. In other words, standard peacekeeping has a strong political/civilian component. Thus, the instrument of the MNJTF does not resemble any existing instrument which the APSA can currently provide.

Furthermore, in the case of Boko Haram the APSA displays some design flaws, such as geographical rigidity and lack of flexibility, which facilitate the emergence of an AHC. Boko Haram's activities are not confined to a single regional economic community (REC). However, the APSA's main peacekeeping instrument, the African Standby Force (ASF), is constituted by five RECs and associated mechanisms (regional mechanisms—RMs), each with their own subregional standby force. In fact, the Boko Haram insurgency affects several RECs to varying degrees. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) can both legitimately claim to organize a response to the threat from Boko Haram. In contrast to previous conflicts like those in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia or Sierra Leone, the regional affiliation is not automatically clear. The countries most affected by Boko Haram—Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger—belong to two different RECs. However, most of the group's operations affect Nigeria, which is a member of ECOWAS. Despite Nigeria's clear regional affiliation and a Ghanaian initiative to organize an

[42] African Union, *Communiqué of the 484th meeting of the PSC on the Boko Haram terrorist group*, para. 12.
[43] African Union, *Communiqué of the 489th PSC meeting on Boko Haram terrorist group*, PSC/PR/COMM.(CDLXXXIX)-REV.1, 3 March 2015, https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/psc-489-comm-boko-haram-03-03-2015-doc.pdf.



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ECOWAS response, Nigeria prevented the establishment of an ECOWAS force.[44] This can be explained by two factors. First, as regional hegemon, Nigeria deemed it inappropriate that either a neighbouring country or regional organization would lead a multinational force in operations on Nigerian territory.[45] Second, there were political considerations. When Boko Haram became a considerable threat, then-president of Nigeria Goodluck Jonathan downplayed the situation, keeping it out of his re-election campaign in 2015.[46] Thus, the preferred option for Nigeria was the MNJTF, which allowed military action against Boko Haram under article 51 of the UN Charter and which technically did not require a mandate or authorization from a regional or global IO. Chad, the other militarily capable actor whose territory was under threat from Boko Haram, came to similar conclusions. Not being a member of ECOWAS, Chad could not be expected to activate the west African REC against the will of Nigeria; conversely, Nigeria could hardly be expected to follow the lead of Chad and bring in an extraregional REC like ECCAS (of which Chad is a member).[47] Thus, the most attractive option was to set up and use a non-APSA solution—the MNJTF. In the context of the Boko Haram uprising, the APSA, which was designed as the 'go-to' mechanism for issues of peace and security, was simply not in a position to offer an adequate response. The conflict did not neatly fall into the area of any one of the APSA-recognized RECs/RMs, and west Africa's largest countries showed no inclination to activate or reject the involvement of regional organizations.

In November 2013, just prior to the deployment of the MNJTF, the AU set up a rapid-intervention instrument, the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC). The ACIRC operated separately from both the ASF and the REC/RM-based institutional structure of the APSA, but was also intended as an interim 'stopgap' instrument, accelerating the further operationalization of the ASF and its rapid deployment capability.[48] In theory, the ACIRC would have been better tailored than the ASF to respond to the Boko Haram crisis. It did not need to operate within the confines of a single REC, and was a military instrument designed to fend off insurgents.[49] However, it proved to be a short-lived project—initiated by South Africa and perceived as a South African instrument, it lacked the support of key African countries, including Nigeria. One underlying reason was that—despite being functional, complementary and capable of addressing some of the APSA's institutional shortcomings—its implementation would have altered the

[44] John Dramani Mahama, 'Boko Haram: President Mahama discusses efforts to stand in solidarity with Nigeria', *Joy Online*, 15 May 2014, https://www.myjoyonline.com/boko-haram-president-mahama-discusses-efforts-to-stand-in-solidarity-with-nigeria.

[45] Interview with senior MNJTF official, 22 Nov. 2022, N'Djamena, Chad.

[46] Habibu Yaya Bappah 'Nigeria's military failure against the Boko Haram insurgency', *African Security Review* 25: 2, 2016, p. 154, https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2016.1151799.

[47] Elysée Martin Atagana, 'The underlying reasons for the emerging dynamic of regional security cooperation against Boko Haram', *Africa Review* 10: 2, 2018, pp. 206–15, https://doi.org/10.1080/09744053.2018.1485257.

[48] Kasaija Phillip Apuuli, 'The African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC) and the establishment of the African Standby Force (ASF)', *Journal of African Union Studies* 2: 1–2, 2013, pp. 63–88, https://journals.co.za/doi/abs/10.10520/EJC143074.

[49] Malte Brosig and Norman Sempijja, 'From idea to practice to failure? Evaluating rapid response mechanisms for African crises', in Francois Vreÿ and Thomas Mandrup, eds, *The African Standby Force: quo vadis?* (Stellenbosch: African Sun Media, 2017), pp. 123–40.



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balance of power and interests within the organization. The ACIRC was technically an innovative instrument, demonstrating some institutional adaptation to the changing character of many newer African conflicts, but because it lacked support notably from Nigeria, this made it politically impossible for the AU to use it in the fight against Boko Haram. Equipping the AU with a headquarters-based military intervention tool, instead of the REC/RM-based ASF, would have changed power dynamics within the APSA diminishing the role of RECs/RMs and regional hegemons in crisis response. Thus, in the end, the APSA could not offer an institutional response to the crisis, which opened up space for AHCs. The MNJTF offered a bureaucratically leaner and faster response, without either unwanted external supervision or direct control by Nigeria, which is financing a significant part of the AHC. Furthermore, the AU displays substantial inertia in adjusting the dated ASF deployment scenarios and an ongoing extensive reform of the APSA is slow.

The choice to establish an AHC instead of activating the APSA resulted in a form of deinstitutionalization. Had either the AU or ECOWAS/ECCAS deployed a mission to fight against Boko Haram, the response to the crisis would have been guided by the internal decision-making procedures of these bodies, based on a well-established set of policy documents and concepts, with secretariats and decision-making organs being involved in supervision. A fully integrated multinational mission would have resulted. The choice of regional lead states for an AHC resulted in the significantly lighter institutional engagement.[50]

The AU PSC has a choice of four different modalities when engaging with African-led interventions. It can mandate, authorize, endorse or recognize an operation. As per the ASF doctrine, it is only the mandated missions that are under full control of the AU and can be called AU Peace Support Operations (PSOs).[51] Currently, the only mandated AU PSO is the African Union Transition Mission (ATMIS) in Somalia. AHCs are distributed between the other three modalities of engagement. As Gnanguênon argues, the current situation can be described as 'Africa à la carte' where 'political leaders take advantage of a patchwork institutional landscape' to deploy coalitions outside of the APSA framework.[52] Although AHCs are encouraged to inform and coordinate with the AU PSC and the AU Commission (AUC), this is not something that they necessarily do on a regular basis. In the ongoing process of revising the ASF, there is a suggestion that this should be changed so as to include AHCs as AU PSOs, if a number of other conditions also are met.[53] These conditions are still under discussion, but tentatively include four criteria:

[50] On 8 May 2023, SADC 'approved [not mandated] the deployment of a SADC Force within the framework of the SADC Standby Force', but without specifying the time-frame or any other details: see Southern African Development Community, 'Communiqué of the extra-ordinary Organ Troika Summit, plus SADC Troika and Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs)'.

[51] African Union, *African Union Doctrine on Peace Support Operations* (Addis Ababa: African Union, 2021).

[52] Amandine Gnanguênon, 'Understanding the inner life of African regional coalitions: a survey method proposal', in Katharina P. W. Döring, Ulf Engel, Linnéa Gelot and Jens Herpolsheimer, eds, *Researching the inner life of the African Peace and Security Architecture* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), pp. 226–46.

[53] African Union, 'Draft background paper on the African Standby Force' [Unpublished, on file with the authors].



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(i) that it is authorized, endorsed and/or recognized by the AU PSC – including its oversight, in line with the AU Doctrine on PSO;

(ii) that it utilizes capabilities of Member States that meets the ASF criteria and Table of Organisation and Equipment (to be revised and aligned to the new ASF Concept);

(iii) that it utilises ASF policies and guidelines, implements the AU Compliance Framework for for PSOs and submits regular reports to AU PSC as part of AU PSC's oversight; and,

(iv) that it is coordinated by a REC/RM or coalition of AU Member States and receives technical, financial and/or material support from the AU directly or through partner support.[54]

This shows that the AU is in a process of reframing the ASF to fit an evolving reality, where AHCs are becoming the main form of intervention in African conflicts. It is not likely that the AU will be successful in integrating AHCs, as there will be little appetite to engage in additional compliance and accountability structures if these are not matched with increased funding. Instead of occupying a central and leading role, the AU now operates within the functional niches which are left by the AHC, constituting an example of deinstitutionalization. Consequently, the AU was merely involved in authorizing the MNJTF and developing its CONOPS. It motivated the UNSC to endorse the mission and initially was central in organizing and distributing international donor support.[55] Furthermore, the AU contributed to the drafting of the regional stabilization strategy; provided operational support in areas such as administrative and financial management, information technology and communications resources, logistics, health services and infrastructure; and implemented the AU doctrinal framework on, for example, conduct and discipline, protection of civilians and human rights.[56] As the EU African Peace Facility (APF) was set up to provide support to the APSA, and not directly to the LCBC nor to individual states, the AUC was delegated with the responsibility to manage the funds donated by the EU. This led to tensions, as there were significant delays on the AUC's part in the procurement of 'the equipment and services urgently needed'.[57] While these activities are anything but unimportant, they are a consequence of countries' decisions to use the MNJTF. The APSA simply was not able to provide the institutional response which was preferred by those countries affected by Boko Haram. The limitations of the existing APSA design opened the door for the use of AHCs. This becomes even more obvious when exploring the financing of the MNJTF.

[54] African Union, 'Draft background paper on the African Standby Force', p. 11.
[55] African Union, *Communiqué of the 469th meeting of the Peace and Security Council, on the Boko Haram terrorist group*.
[56] Olawale Ismail and Alagaw Ababu, *Ad-hoc regional security arrangements and APSA* (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2021).
[57] European Union External Action Service, 'EU statement on MNJTF', 15 Sept. 2017, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/32228_en.



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## The role of international financing of the MNJTF

An examination and comparison of financing mechanisms is central to unearthing how AHCs emerge and are maintained. In principle and in practice, neither the AU nor the RECs are able to provide sufficient funds for the MNJTF. In this context access to international funds is crucial. The evolution of the MNJTF's relationship to the AU and the EU is thus illustrative of larger trends and changes in the peace and security institutional landscape on the African continent and beyond. Due to the increasing prominence of AHCs, international donors have reconsidered their support to the APSA and its peacekeeping element, the ASF.[58] Between 2016 and 2021, MNJTF received support from the APF, with all the funding being routed through the AU. In March 2021, the EU replaced the APF and the Athena mechanism, its financial instruments for prevention, peace operations and international security, with the European Peace Facility (EPF).[59] With the EPF, the EU could support AHCs and bilateral partners directly, increasing the competitive relationship between the AU and AHCs on the continent.[60] For the MNJTF, this meant that two-thirds of the funding from the EU was shifted to more direct support through COGINTA,[61] an NGO headquartered in Geneva providing technical assistance and material support in the areas of security sector reform and policing.[62]

The establishment of the EPF followed a period of increasing tensions between the EU and the AU, culminating in a European Court of Auditors' report published in 2018 titled *The African Peace and Security Architecture: need to refocus EU support*. The report assessed that the APF support for the APSA was focused on operational costs such as salaries rather than building long-term capacity, suffered from slow implementation, entailed risks such as weak financial ownership of the APSA by the AU, lacked coherence with other financing instruments, and suffered from inadequate monitoring and evaluation.[63] On the basis of these findings, the report argued that there was a threat to the sustainability of the results due to a lack of vision for the long-term evolution of the support and concluded that 'the EU's support for the APSA has had a poor effect and [needs] refocusing'.[64]

[58] Cedric de Coning, John Karlsrud and Linnéa Gelot, eds, *The future of African peace operations: from Janjaweed to Boko Haram* (London: Zed Books, 2016); John Karlsrud and Yf Reykers, eds, *Multinational rapid response mechanisms: from institutional proliferation to institutional exploitation* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2019).

[59] European Council, 'European Peace Facility', 2021, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-peace-facility.

[60] International Crisis Group, *How to spend it: new EU funding for African peace and security*, Africa Report no. 297 (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2021); European Council, 'Timeline—European Peace Facility', 2023, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-peace-facility/timeline-european-peace-facility. The shift was not only in terms of which actors the EU could fund, but also in terms of making the funding available for lethal equipment and ammunition, in contrast to the African Peace Facility, which was only for non-lethal support. Partly due to this shift, more than 50 per cent of the European Peace Facility has been used to support Ukraine in the aftermath of the Russian invasion in 2022.

[61] Interview with COGINTA official, 23 Nov. 2023, N'Djamena, Chad.

[62] COGINTA, 'COGINTA', https://coginta.org/. COGINTA was not among the recognized implementation partners in the original EU Council funding decision of 21 April 2022, but was included in an amendment on 7 March 2023, i.e. long after COGINTA had started the implementation on the ground.

[63] European Court of Auditors, *The African Peace and Security Architecture: need to refocus EU support* (Luxembourg: European Court of Auditors, 2018).

[64] European Court of Auditors, *The African Peace and Security Architecture*, p. 2.



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The EPF enabled the recommendations to be actioned upon, but also created new challenges. While the EPF provided more direct support from the EU to African states participating in AHCs such as the MNJTF and the G5 Sahel Joint Force, the transition also undermined efforts to find a common AU position on advocating for further EU financing of the APSA. According to Woldemichael:

> Countries in these regions believe [the EPF] helps eliminate bureaucratic delays and overhead costs incurred by AU financial oversight. They also argue that the EPF will give African military missions more funds, modern technology, capacity building and infrastructure.[65]

The transition to the EPF also undermined the relationship between the RECs/RMs—the building blocks of the ASF—and put them in direct competition with the AU. According to Fabricius, 'a REC security official welcomed the changes, saying if a significant portion of the support came directly to regional bodies, it would avoid "transaction costs, bureaucracy and unnecessary delays"'.[66]

The shift from the APF to the EPF has thus been the single most important change in the financial architecture of the APSA, causing it to incur a financing shortfall. This has spurred an intensified discussion around the need to enlarge and start spending the money from the AU Peace Fund and to continue to press for accessing UN-assessed contributions to finance AU PSOs and AHCs on the African continent.[67] UN financing of African peace operations has been a continuous issue between the AU and the UN for more than a decade, but has been difficult to realize for several reasons. The AU has argued that it should have access to UN-assessed contributions on a case-by-case basis as it deploys peace support operations on behalf of the UNSC. This request was first made in 2007.[68] Since then, some progress has been made, with the UNSC recognizing the need for predictable, sustainable and flexible financing,[69] but also requiring that the AU establish suitable compliance and accountability frameworks that should guide and monitor the implementation of AU PSOs implemented with UN funding.[70] These frameworks have also become a standard requirement for UN support of AHCs on the continent, although their efficacy remains elusive in terms of limiting human rights violations.[71] The UN Secretary-General continued to press

[65] Shewit Woldemichael, 'Africa should be better prepared for Europe's security funding shift', *ISS Today*, 12 April 2022, https://issafrica.org/iss-today/africa-should-be-better-prepared-for-europes-security-funding-shift.

[66] Peter Fabricius, 'EU peace and security funds can now bypass the African Union', *ISS Today*, 5 Feb. 2021. https://issafrica.org/iss-today/eu-peace-and-security-funds-can-now-bypass-the-african-union.

[67] African Union, *Communiqué: the 1175th meeting of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), at the ministerial level, on 23 Sept. 2023, on financing AU Peace Support Operations (PSOs)*, 2023, https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-the-1175th-meeting-of-the-peace-and-security-council-psc-of-the-african-union-au-at-the-ministerial-level-on-23-september-2023-on-financing-au-peace-support-operations-psos.

[68] African Union, 'Assembly/AU/Dec.145 (VIII), Addis Ababa, 2007, https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/assembly-au-dec-145-viii-e.pdf, para. 20.

[69] UN Security Council Resolution 1809, 'Peace and security in Africa', S/RES/1809 (2008), 16 April 2008, http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1809.

[70] UN, *Report of the Secretary-General on options for authorization and support for African Union peace support operations*, 2017, https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N17/135/13/PDF/N1713513.pdf; UN, Security Council Resolution 2378, 'United Nations peacekeeping operations', S/RES/2378 (2017), 20 Sept. 2017, http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2378.

[71] John Karlsrud, '"Pragmatic peacekeeping" in practice: exit liberal peacekeeping, enter UN support missions?',



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for further financing of AU and subregional operations in a report on the issue in May 2023, arguing that 'standard United Nations logistical and administrative arrangements should be adapted to meet the demands of the high operational tempos and robust mandates of African Union peace support operations',[72] and in December 2023, the UN Security Council passed a resolution on the topic of UN financing of African-led peace support operations.[73] The resolution opened up for financing of African-led peace support operations, on a case-by-case basis and on a number of conditions. Both the EU and UN have thus widened the playing field for AHCs, and the AU is trying to change the conceptualization of the ASF in a rapidly changing context. For states seeking swift and effective action to manage escalating crises, AHCs present an attractive option, albeit one which risks triggering processes of deinstitutionalization.

## Conclusion

With multilateralism experiencing its deepest crisis in decades, intergovernmental organizations are confronted with new challenges. One of these is the more frequent use of AHCs. In this article we have explored how AHCs are contributing to processes of deinstitutionalization, and what consequences this brings about for established institutions. Because the literature on global governance has concentrated mostly on the creation, operation and relevance of international institutions, cases of reverse institutionalization have received little attention. Only recently has the focus started to shift. Looser and more informal practices of international institutions are now gathering more scholarly interest. Still, theory development regarding these processes is in its infancy. In this context, this article is one of the first which conceptualizes deinstitutionalization. We aimed to make a foundational contribution to theorizing processes of deinstitutionalization, as well as mapping and discussing the practical consequences this brings about for established institutions.

Deinstitutionalization refers to circumventing institutionalized forms of action, bypassing established rules of procedure, informalizing previously institutionalized power and bringing about a transfer of decision-making power away from established centres. We explored these consequences using the case of the MNJTF, established to fight against the Boko Haram insurgency, and its relationship to the APSA. By the decision of national governments to act through the MNJTF instead

*Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 17: 3, 2023, pp. 258–72, https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2023.2198285; Stephanie C. Hofmann, John Karlsrud and Yf Reykers, 'Ad hoc coalitions: from hierarchical to network accountability in peace operations?', *Global Policy*, publ. online 28 Nov. 2023, http://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.13305.

[72] UN, S/2023/303, *Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2320 (2016) and 2378 (2017) and considerations related to the financing of African Union peace support operations mandated by the Security Council*, 2023, https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/reports-submitted-transmitted-secretary-general-security-council-2023. The *New agenda for peace*, launched by the UN Secretary-General in July 2023, includes multinational forces and subregional organizations as possible receivers of UN support and financing: UN, *Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9, A new agenda for peace*, 2023, https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-new-agenda-for-peace-en.pdf.

[73] UN, S/RES/2719, 21 Dec. 2023, http://www.undocs.org/en/S/RES/2719(2023).



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of the APSA, the latter was relegated to an auxiliary role. APSA decision-making mechanisms and protocols were only activated post hoc. The EU shifted its main funding instrument substantially, with the consequence that resource allocation now circumvents the APSA. In combination, these events resulted in deinstitutionalization, as the centre of activity moved from an international multilateral body to a group of activist countries and their ad hoc arrangement. This does not make the APSA superfluous, but reduces its role to the more normative side of action, providing international legitimacy and recognition by authorizing and supporting the MNJTF through the adoption of resolutions.

Further to connoting the existence of an emerging trend—deinstitutionalization—we are also interested in those conditions which facilitate it. We found that a lack of problem-solving capacity in established institutions and limited institutional adaptability to respond to a crisis, as well as institutional path dependency, are contributing to the emergence of AHCs initiating processes of deinstitutionalization. In the case of the MNJTF, we could observe that the APSA was institutionally not well placed to respond to the challenge of Boko Haram. Its institutional structure was not designed to respond to the threat effectively, as well as displaying little adaptability to change the situation. As a legal entity, the AU needs to adhere to its foundational treaty and subsequent decision-making procedures and existing executive bodies which are not designed for spontaneous changes, adapting to the crisis needs. The consequence is that key players (Nigeria in particular) 'opted out' and shifted their attention and resources to a better fitting instrument, the MNJTF. This opened the door for the establishment of AHCs, and subsequent processes of deinstitutionalization began to set in.

The study of the MNJTF represents a large set of cases. First of all, AHCs are a global phenomenon and share a number of key characteristics such as their temporary nature, task-specificity and short-notice creation. The African continent hosts a high number of AHCs in the security field and there is a robust trend away from deploying fully integrated missions administered by multilateral organizations. Thus, what we can explore in this case is likely to represent other cases too—at least concerning AHCs in the field of security and crisis response. However, more research is needed to further explore the consequences of AHCs and the phenomenon of deinstitutionalization across continents and policy areas. Future research should further develop the concept of deinstitutionalization to enable more mid-range theorizing and explore scope conditions by assessing a larger number of case-studies.

Processes of deinstitutionalization raise a number of policy implications which also need further inquiry. To what extent the frequent use of AHCs at the expense of established institutions is a welcome or problematic trend needs further exploration. One can argue both ways. On the one hand, AHCs and subsequent deinstitutionalization can be seen as a form of innovation and specialization, addressing functional gaps of existing institutions which they cannot fill with the necessary speed and focus. Here, the argument in favour of AHCs and deinstitutionalization would be focused on functionality. From a purely pragmatic standpoint, it rarely



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matters who responds to an issue, as long as it is addressed properly. A diversity of actors might be better placed to respond to an issue than a large but slow bureaucratic entity. Seen from this perspective, AHCs offer an additive response instrument, for example as part of security regime complex. However, it is unclear if AHCs are really the more effective option.

On the other hand, processes of deinstitutionalization bear considerable consequences for established institutions. Dislocating the implementation from institutions risks a shift in stakeholder and donor attention away from institutionalized responses to a more fragmented, piecemeal and only temporary form of action. This might even weaken established institutions beyond the narrow task-specificity of AHCs. It also weakens the authority of the normative scripts, policies and action plans of these institutions if implementation takes place outside of their administrative ambit. Multipurpose international organizations like the AU or UN are central for the liberal international order, as they are focal institutions embodying liberal norms. Military AHCs, such as those referred to in this article, display little attachment to institutionalized concepts such as protection of civilians or other norms. In any case, processes of deinstitutionalization are gaining ground, and are posing a challenge for both scholars and practitioners of global governance.

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