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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Military ad hoc coalitions and functional differentiation in inter-organisational relations

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Abstract
The emergence of military ad hoc coalitions (AHCs) in Africa as a tool for conflict management outside established institutional frameworks brings about a number of questions: are they undermining existing security structures such as the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) or are they contributing to further regime complexity? In order to answer these questions, the article applies the logic of functional differentiation as it is used in the literature on regime complexity and inter-organisational studies. Scope conditions are developed exploring when and how functional differentiation operates and what consequences it brings about for interacting institutions. Empirically the example of military ad hoc coalitions in the Lake Chad Basin and Sahel is at the centre of analysis. It will be argued that ad hoc coalitions are part of a functionally differentiated system response within the African Security Regime Complex and not in direct competition to the APSA.

Keywords: Ad Hoc Military Coalitions; APSA; Boko Haram; Functional Differentiation; Regime Complexity; Sahel

Introduction

The institutional security landscape in Africa continues to evolve and develop dynamically. Despite the setting up of the APSA since 2002 and its gradual emergence over two decades new security arrangements keep on appearing. Recently military ad hoc coalitions (AHCs) emerged operating outside established frameworks and are contributing to institutional proliferation. It is increasingly difficult to localise a single institution that is coherently and permanently involved in managing Africa's security business just on its own. For example, in the Sahel there are several multilateral missions deployed, from the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), and regional African organisations in addition to bilateral military engagement of France or the US (Figure 4). This accumulation of actors is a recurring feature and is forming a security regime complex. While the African Union (AU) is a central actor as the only organisation of Pan-African reach, it is not a sufficient agent on its own but relies heavily on external cooperation. Rather than having a single dominant institution that can monopolise activities under its leadership, authority is dispersed among various centres. The APSA, although occupying a central position, was never designed to centralise African security governance at the level of the AU or Regional Economic Communities (RECs).[1] While it was designed as a focal institutional framework through which to address conflict, it was clear from the beginning, that it also displays significant limitations. Until today it is not

[1]Ulf Engel, 'The African Union finances: How Does it Work?', University of Leipzig, Working Paper Series of the Centre for Area Studies, No. 6 (University of Leizpig, 2015).

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able to self fund its Peace Support Operations (PSOs) and relies heavily on international donors. Not all existing RECs are officially recognised and integrated into the APSA. The African Standby Force (ASF) was only designed to be around 25,000 troops strong in total.[2] This is only at the level of a single larger UN peacekeeping mission. Thus, the APSA always left room for other institutions to grow.

An important accelerator for the continued actor proliferation is the appearance of military AHCs.[3] In 2022 there are six such AHCs either deployed or in planning. The most prominent ones remain the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) fighting Boko Haram and the G5 Sahel Joint Force (G5S-JF). Both institutions were reactivated and/or established in an ad hoc manner and are operating outside the formal APSA framework, despite being mandated by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the AU. Because of the decentralised character in which security matters are dealt with, the notion of an African Security Regime Complex was introduced highlighting the inter-institutional manner in which security issues are approached.[4] The African Security Regime Complex encompasses all those institutional actors that are involved in responding to armed conflict. In this context inter-institutional relations are central to understanding the system response to conflict. As there is no central authority that is assigning roles and action, the regime complex displays elements of self-organisation. In terms of actors, it encompasses the APSA but also reaches beyond the continent. In contrast, the APSA as a formally designed construct includes the AU and a select group of RECs.[5] Because military AHCs emerged in the fight against Boko Haram and in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel but are not formally included in the APSA, the question emerges are AHCs contributing to the further development of a system response in the form of the African Security Regime Complex adding more functionality or are they responsible for institutional fragmentation and competition as they deviate resources otherwise available for the APSA? The article aims at answering this question by using and further developing the concept of functional differentiation, which emerged as a key theoretical finding in the regime complexity literature. The APSA is one of the flagship projects of the AU and as such bears significant political meaning. It was set up to play a central role in conflict resolution in Africa, if it is accommodating or losing this role is of great political relevance for the continent.

The aims of this article are twofold: First it further popularises conceptual thinking in the field of African security institutions, which transcends the analysis of single institutions as sole bearers of authority. Here the goal is to encourage analysis that moves beyond actor-centred approaches. In this context reference to regime complexity is the most relevant with its emphasis on actor proliferation and institutional overlap. Research on regime complexity is a helpful analytical toolkit for better understanding and exploring AHCs as being part of a system-response to crisis.[6] This article explores the emergence of AHCs not as individual and isolated phenomenon but examines them as a wider system response, which is guided by functional differentiation.

Second, the article further develops research on functional differentiation within inter-organisational relations and regime complexity. It has been argued that institutional competition is commonly avoided by the creation of functional differences. In our context of AHCs this means they are making a constructive contribution to the African Security Regime Complex if their operation is functionally different from existing structures. The presence of functional differentiation means institutions are not in competition. A system response is expected to be based on complementary contributions. However, it remains unclear in the literature what the scope conditions

[2]Jakkie Cilliers, 'The African Standby Force: An Update on Progress', ISS Paper 160 (March 2008).

[3]John Karlsrud and Yf Reykers, 'Ad hoc coalitions and institutional exploitation in international security: Towards a typology', *Third World Quarterly*, 41:9 (2020), pp. 1518–36.

[4]Malte Brosig, 'The African Security Regime Complex: Exploring converging actors and policies', *African Security*, 6:3–4 (2013), pp. 171–90.

[5]Ulf Engel and Joao Gomes Porto (eds), *Africa's New Peace and Security Architecture: Promoting Norms, Institutionalizing Solution* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate 2010).

[6]Karen Alter and Kal Raustiala, 'The rise of international regime complexity', *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 14 (2018), pp. 329–49.

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for differentiation are. The conceptual part of the article discusses a number of those conditions providing a framework for when and how differentiation emerges.

The article proceeds as follows. The subsequent section provides a short non-comprehensive introduction into the literature on regime complexity and inter-organisational relations with a focus on functional differentiation. The section thereafter offers an introduction into the APSA before exploring two case studies. The examples of the MNJTF and G5S-JF will be used to explore the relationship between the APSA and AHCs. The concluding section reassesses to which extent functional differentiation has occurred and how competitive or complementary inter-institutional relations appear.

Regime complexity and inter-organisational relations

The international community regularly responds to armed conflict through the use of multilateral institutions. There is hardly a conflict on the African continent that is entirely left behind, in most instances there is, maybe insufficiently so, an international institutional response. It is also accepted knowledge that institutional responses are frequently not concentrating on single institutions. Although the setting up of the APSA has boosted African agency it has also contributed to actor proliferation, a trend that continues until today and towards which AHCs are further contributing to.

For around two decades the regime complexity literature has produced a wealth of studies and a solid body of empirical and conceptual knowledge across policy fields and regions. Commonly agreed is that regime complexity produces causal effects on its component units and targeted policy field.[7] However, there is no agreement on whether overlap and interaction are generally only beneficial or costly for either individual institutions or the policy field. A key characteristic of regime complexity is that it can produce ambiguous results.[8] The fact that regimes and organisations are overlapping tells us relatively little about the exact consequences of the phenomenon. Therefore, the literature has explored diverse phenomena such as, regime shifting, forum shopping, hostage taking, brokering, enhanced cooperation, competition, or division of labour.[9] Independent of technical differences between them, most of these categories occupy a broad nexus between greater cooperation facilitating a system response that is built on complementarity or institutional fragmentation and frictions in ever denser institutional spaces.

Classically regime complexes have been defined as 'collective of partially overlapping and nonhierarchical regimes'.[10] This definition has been widened by Amandine Orsini, Jean-Frederic Morin, and Oran Young who connote that regime complexes consist of more than two institutions that 'relate to a common subject matter; exhibit overlapping membership; and generate substantive, normative, or operative interactions recognized as potentially problematic'.[11] Research on the African Security Regime Complex widens the perspective beyond just regulatory regimes and speaks about 'convergence as a process of alignment in which actors together occupy a common field to reach a common goal resulting in a more unified system of complex but also dispersed responsibilities and tasks'.[12] The regime complex thus consists not just of regimes or organisations

[7]Thomas Gehring and Sebastian Oberthür, 'The causal mechanisms of interaction between international institutions', *European Journal of International Relations*, 15:1 (2009), pp. 125–56.

[8]Daniel Drezner, 'The power and peril of international regime complexity', *Perspectives on Politics*, 7:1 (2009), pp. 65–70.

[9]Malte Brosig, 'Governance between international institutions: Analysing interaction modes between the EU, the Council of Europe and the OSCE', in David Galbreath and Carmen Gebhardt (eds), *Cooperation or Conflict? Problematizing Organizational Overlap in Europe* (London, UK: Ashgate (2010), pp. 29–58; Karen Alter and Sophie Meunier, 'The politics of international regime complexity', *Perspectives on Politics*, 7:1 (2009), pp. 13–24; Stephanie Hofmann, 'The politics of overlapping organizations: Hostage-taking, forum shopping, and brokering', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 26:6 (2019), pp. 883–905.

[10]K. Raustiala and David Victor, 'The regime complex for plant genetic resources', *International Organization*, 58:2 (2004), pp. 277–309.

[11]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 (p. 29).

[12]Brosig, 'The African Security Regime Complex', p. 179.

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but of those actors that converge around a security issue and therewith contribute to the emergence of a system-like response. A key characteristic of actors within the regime complex is their partial convergence and decentred operation. This allows the regime complex to function as a system while component units remain individual actors.

At the centre of analysis is the institutional structure, which influences a particular policy field. In this context complexity refers primarily to actor proliferation and the consequences for these. In the security field outside of Africa overlap and interaction have often been explored within the related field of inter-organisational relations in which dyadic relations are at the centre.[13] The literature on inter-organisational relations and regime complexity are co-evolving and explore very similar phenomena.[14] The former displays a stronger emphasis on the system of interacting regimes while the latter tends to explore intergovernmental organisations in a smaller setting.

Both streams of research have produced a set of theory-like statements. Within regime complexity maybe the most important discovery is the observation that overlap leads to functional differentiation.[15] The argument is based on earlier research done by population ecologists.[16] It is argued that institutional overlap creates conditions for competition that institutions tend to avoid in order to increase their chances of survival and impact. The resulting product is functional differentiation.[17] While institutions do overlap and might compete over resources, this is treated as a temporary and rather unwanted occurrence.

Differentiation is seen by some scholars are a desirable result: 'A greater choice of institutions does not only enable tailored responses by specialized institutions; it also makes it easier for states to coordinate international action despite interest heterogeneity.'[18] Thus, a large toolbox of institutional choices is functionally attractive as it better corresponds to specific needs for solutions but also reflects on a diversity of interests that don't always resonate well with existing institutions. Most importantly differentiation can be seen as the *sine qua non* without which regime complexes cannot acquire a meaningful system character. Population ecology explains this niche selection as a system function. The division of tasks that results from it produces an additive system value. From this perspective, exploring degrees of differentiation is important as it indicates the existence of a system.

However, the literature has so far not developed scope conditions that would enable us to better understand how and when differentiation is emerging and operating. It can be assumed that functional differentiation is not a unitary coherent effect of overlap but varies with a number of external conditions. Overlap itself is no fixed condition bringing the same consequences. To understand functional differentiation comprehensively it requires more detailed operationalisation.

At least four dimensions frame the conditions in which differentiation is played out. First, institutions can display differentiation if they exhibit diverting intentions towards a similar issue. These intentions are often spelled out in the form of declarations, mandates, treaties, or policy programmes. A certain degree of formalisation can be assumed and the comparison of formal documents discovers potential overlay or division of tasks. However, just comparing formal mandates has its own limitations.

[13]Rafael Biermann, 'Towards a theory of inter-organizational networking, The Euro-Atlantic security institutions "interacting"', *Review of International Organization*s, 3 (2008), pp. 151–77; Stephanie Hofmann, 'Overlapping institutions in the realm of international security: The case of NATO and ESDP', *Perspectives on Politics*, 7:1 (2009), pp. 45–52.

[14]Rafael Biermann and Joachim Koops (eds), *Palgrave Handbook of Inter-organizational Relations* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017).

[15]Florian Ries, 'Population ecology: How the environment influences the evolution of organizations', in Biermann and Koops (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Inter-Organizational Relations in World Politics*, pp. 157–68.

[16]Glenn Caroll, 'Organizational ecology', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 10 (1984), pp 71–93; Michael Hannan, and John Freeman, 'The population ecology of organizations', *American Journal of Sociology*, 82:5 (1977), pp. 929–64.

[17]Thomas Gehring and Benjamin Faude, 'The dynamics of regime complexes: Microfoundations and systemic effects', *Global Governance*, 12:1 (2013), pp. 119–30.

[18]Benjamin Faude, 'International institutions in hard times: How institutional complexity increases resilience complexity', *Governance & Networks*, 6:1 (2020), pp. 46–54 (p. 51).

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Second, not all institutions follow their proclaimed intention word by word. An equal emphasis should be placed on behavioural action. Here institutional competition occurs if two or more actors are operationally similar. If they have the same formal intentions but follow different operational goals, they are functionally different.

Third, institutional competition might only emerge when actors operate with the same intentions using the same instruments in exactly the same timeframe. If they do not and act in sequences differentiation emerges. The ability to act within a specified timeframe is key. Having the same intentions to act and operational capabilities to do so does not automatically mean the involved actors can respond in exactly the same timeframe. If their response time varies differentiation is more likely to occur.

Fourth, the same is true with regard to geography. Even if actors display the same intentions, follow the same goals operationally concurrently this does not need to lead to competition if the actors are separated geographically. In other words, competition only exists if institutions intent and perform the same task, at the same time in the same geographical area. If they do vary in one or more of the four categories they display differentiation. The strongest form of differentiation is reached if all four conditions are met; it is the weakest if only one can be identified.

In the case of the African Security Regime Complex, the key question is if AHCs are functionally different to existing institutional structures the APSA is offering or if they produce deliberate replication and therewith institutional competition? The empirical analysis will use the four scope conditions mentioned above: formal mandate, behavioural action, time, and geographical location to evaluate if functional differentiation exists. If AHCs are functionally different and are operating outside existing institutional security frameworks they do not directly undermine the APSA. Instead, it can be argued that because of their functionally different character and the high institutional density in which they are operating they are contributing to the further development of a system response.

Differentiation is ideally not only preventing institutional competition but is having a positive system effect. The argument is that a system response that is built on complementarity of its component units requires differentiation to operate. However, as differentiation is no fixed category it might vary between higher or lower degrees depending on the four scope conditions. Either extreme differentiation or a very weakly developed one would be harmful for system creation. If actors are completely differentiated, they are lacking a basis for connection and coordination; if they are only superficially different, institutional competition might still occur. A mid-level degree of differentiation that allows actors to connect with one another but also leaves room for difference can be assumed to provide the potentially best system results.

To which extent advanced degrees of differentiation further fragmentation instead of system integration and effectiveness still needs to be evaluated empirically. We should not *a priori* assume that when we find differentiation inter-institutional relations are unproblematic, free from tensions or are generally accepted.

The inter-organisational turn and resource exchange theory can also help us to conceptualise the character of functional differentiation. An actor-centred and rational choice perspective prevails in this research. Organisations are assumed to operate under resource scarcity but their complementary exchange provides opportunities for synergies.[19] Resource exchange theory explains differentiation as a result of individual actor properties, which, if complementing each other, create a larger system of interconnected organisations.

In this context the question emerges what are the limits of differentiation? Resource exchange theory argues that pooling resources is not only a beneficial exercise but also creates dependencies. The limits of resource exchange (differentiation) are reached when institutional autonomy

[19]Rafael Biermann and Michael Harsch, 'Resource dependency theory', in Biermann and Koops (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Inter-Organizational Relations in World Politics*, pp. 135–56.

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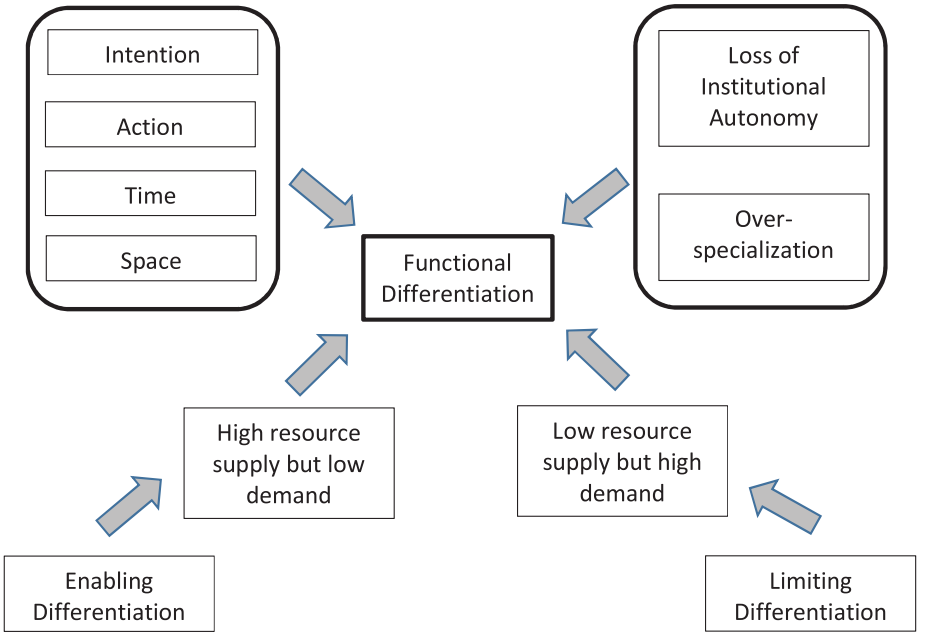


Figure 1. Operating conditions for functional differentiation.

is in danger and the operation of the organisation is determined by external conditions.[20] More interconnected actors simply mean less individual autonomy.

Research on the African Security Regime Complex has conceptualised resource exchange using a supply and demand model in order to explore inter-organisational relations.[21] This model can also be linked to the severity of the conflict demanding an international response (demand) and the ability (supply) of the international community to successfully engage with the crisis at hand. The size and demand of resources influence differentiation and competition in inter-institutional relations. In situations in which the demand for crisis response outstrips the supply, actors can perform the same tasks without necessarily competing against each other. The pressure for differentiation is rather low. While in the opposite case (high supply but low demand) differentiation is needed to avoid harmful competition.

The population ecology approach also produces conditions limiting differentiation through the creation of it. Institutional differentiation can be assumed to halt at a tipping point by which actor proliferation and specialisation start weakening the system's ability to perform the expected role in the targeted policy field. This might happen as a consequence of over-specialisation leading to too many component units that cannot be linked up effectively to form a system anymore. Differentiation is purpose driven and not an end in itself. If it leads to compartmentalisation it rather creates system dysfunctionality. In the end, functional differentiation is problematic if it compromises actor autonomy substantially and if it leads to compartmentalisation through over-specialisation depriving the system, as well as individual actors from responding effectively. Furthermore, the pressure for differentiation is the greatest when resource supply is extensive and demand is limited. Incentives for differentiation are reduced when resource demand is high while supply is limited (Figure 1).

What does this mean for the analysis of AHCs? The question how military AHCs are impacting on the institutional security set up in Africa might best be answered with reference to functional

[20] Joseph Galaskiewicz, 'Interorganizational relations', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 11 (1985), pp. 281–304 (p. 282).
[21] Malte Brosig, *Cooperative Peacekeeping Exploring Regime Complexity* (London, UK: Routledge, 2015), pp. 27–8.

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differentiation as summarised in Figure 1. In the end, if AHCs are functionally different from existing institutions along the four indicators (intention, action, time, space) they are rather complementing them and therewith contributing to the further development of the African Security Regime Complex. If they are displaying functional overlap with the intention to duplicate efforts of existing actors such as the APSA, and are mostly standalone instruments, this would potentially weaken not only the APSA but the entire regime complex. Functional differentiation is rather unproblematic when it does not infringe on individual actor's autonomy substantially, and specialisation does not lead to institutional fragmentation. However, differentiation implies a territorial separation of tasks and thus cements current and future territories. Functions 'lost' to other actors are not likely to be recovered soon.

The APSA, ad hoc coalitions, and regime complexity

With the establishment of the APSA, the AU emerged gradually as the prime security organisation on the continent. Although it has often been criticised for its slow operationalisation and lack of resources, in the last two decades it was often at the forefront of managing Africa's armed conflict.[22] It deployed peace support operations to Burundi, Sudan, Somalia, the Central African Republic (CAR), and Mali. The APSA, which is often narrowly defined in terms of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), the five African Standby Forces (ASF), the Peace Fund (PF), Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), Panel of the Wise (PoW), and eight recognised RECs with their security organs has demonstrated real activism in its formative decade (2002–12).[23] A wider definition might also encompass other AU organs such as the Commission or Assembly, as well as the normative body of procedures, policy documents, and the practices that result from them.[24] As this article concentrates on military AHCs, the main APSA reference institutions are the ASF and PSC.

The APSA construct formally builds on close cooperation with RECs. While more than a dozen exists, eight are officially recognised. These are: CEN-SAD, COMESA, EAC, ECCAS, ECOWAS, IGAD, SADC, and UMA. Some of these organisations are hosting regional ASFs (ECCAS, ECOWAS, EAC, SADC), in other cases so-called Regional Mechanisms (RMs) have been set up if no REC could be found to manage the regional APSA components. Over the years the APSA has consolidated institutionally and developed a dense policy framework covering a comprehensive area stretching from conflict prevention, crisis and conflict management to post-conflict reconciliation and peacebuilding.[25] The protocol on, the establishment of the PSC forms the conceptual basis on which the APSA is built.[26]

Massive international donor support helped to operationalise its policy programmes. Peace operations are predominantly financed through international funds. In 2015 the ASF was declared fully operational, although some of its components remain weakly developed and regional preparedness varies significantly.[27] Even though the ASF has not been deployed, building the institutional framework has facilitated inter-operability among African armed forces, which enabled the AU to send missions.

[22] African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) Assessment Report, Addis Ababa (October 2010), available at: {https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/report-of-the-apsa-assessment-study-july-oct-2010-eng.pdf}.

[23] APSA Impact Report, Addis Ababa: Institute for Peace and Security Studies (October 2017), available at: {https://slidelegend.com/apsa-impact-reportindd-the-institute-for-peace-and-security-studies_5b0eb4467f8b9a1a828b457a.html}.

[24] Katharina Döring and Jens Herpolsheimer, 'Introduction: Researching the inner life of the African peace and security architecture', in Katharina Döring, Ulf Engel, Linnea Gelot, and Jens Herpolsheimer (eds), *Researching the Inner Life of the African Peace and Security Architecture APSA Inside-Out* (Leiden and London, UK: Brill, 2021), p. 4.

[25] African Union (AU), Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) Roadmap: 2016–2020, Addis Ababa (December 2015).

[26] AU-PSC, Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, Durban (9 July 2002).

[27] AU Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security (STCDSS), 9th meeting, Addis Ababa (6 June 2016).

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The APSA established itself as the most central institutional framework through which African countries and international donors would cooperate for conflict management. However, this has changed in the last decade. African countries increasingly decided to use other institutional frameworks such as AHCs. These are defined as autonomous arrangements, which are set up outside established institutions on short notice and with a task-specific mandate for a limited time.[28] The phenomenon of military AHCs is not confined to the African continent but is also used by European countries.[29] However, AHCs are the most proliferated in Africa.[30] As of today, six AHC have been deployed or are in planning.

In order to fight the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) in Eastern Africa, the Regional Co-operation Initiative for the elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA) was set up in 2011.[31] It consisted of troops from CAR, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan, and Uganda. In 2013 the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) was established in order to counter rebel activities in the East of the country, in particular M23 rebels.[32] The FIB was mainly staffed by troops from South Africa, Tanzania, and Malawi. While its formation was initiated within SADC (an APSA REC), it was integrated into the UN mission in the DRC but operating alongside it. In 2012 the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) agreed to reactivate the MNJTF in order to combat Boko Haram.[33] In 2015, it finally took shape. Institutionally it is associated with the LCBC, which is not recognised under the APSA. The MNJTF consists of troops from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. In 2017 the G5 Sahel (not recognised under the APSA) set up a military component the G5S-JF.[34] The Joint-Force consists of Burkina-Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. It was set up primarily as a regional counterterrorism unit. In 2022 Mali left the G5S-JF, which plunged it into a serious crisis.

In 2022, two new AHCs were in planning. These are the Accra-Initiative (AI) and East African Regional Force to the DRC. The former is targeting 'spill-over' terrorism in Western African emanating from the Sahel, while the latter concentrates on pushing back M23 rebels in the eastern DRC. What is evident from the listing of AHCs is that within a fairly short period of time (2011–22), six such configurations have been established presenting a robust trend across the African continent.

All these six military missions have in common that they are formed or initiated by a group of often neighbouring countries facing a military threat through militias, rebel groups, or terrorists. Because of the spontaneous emergence of these configurations and their often rather loose association with regional organisations, they have been categorised as military AHCs.[35] All of the mentioned coalitions are working outside the framework of the APSA. This means they are not part of a formally recognised REC and do not use the infrastructure of the existing regional ASFs. They are also different from traditional AU PSOs. While AU PSOs are structured as multinational forces being deployed jointly into a host nation and under direct administration of the AU, in AHCs, countries do not deploy jointly outside their own territory but stay within their borders. Technically they also do not need approval from the AU PSC as they are operating in self-defence covered by the UN Charter. The ASF deployment scenarios foresee either the sending of regional ASFs or the deployment of an AU mission, AHCs do not fit in neatly, as they are not administrated by the AU or a recognised regional organisation. The operational authority and responsibility for action and providing resources rest directly on participating states.

[28]Yf Reykers, John Karlsrud, Malte Brosig, Stephanie Hofmann, Pernille Rieker, and Cristiana Maglia, 'Ad hoc coalitions in global governance: Short notice, task-specific and temporary cooperation', *International Affairs* (accepted for publication).

[29]M. Brosig, 'Ad Hoc Coalitions in a Changing Global Order', GIGA Focus Global, No. 4 (October 2022).

[30]Cedric De Coning, Andrew E. Yaw Tchie, and Aanab O. Grand, 'Ad-hoc security initiatives, an African response to insecurity', *African Security Review*, online first (2022).

[31]AU-PSC 299th meeting, Addis Ababa (22 November 2011).

[32]UNSC, Resolution 2098, New York (28 March 2013).

[33]Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), 14th Summit of Head of Government, N'Djamena (30 April 2012).

[34]G5 Secretariat, Resolution 00-01/2017 (6 February 2017).

[35]Karlsrud and Reykers, 'Ad hoc coalitions and institutional exploitation in international security'.

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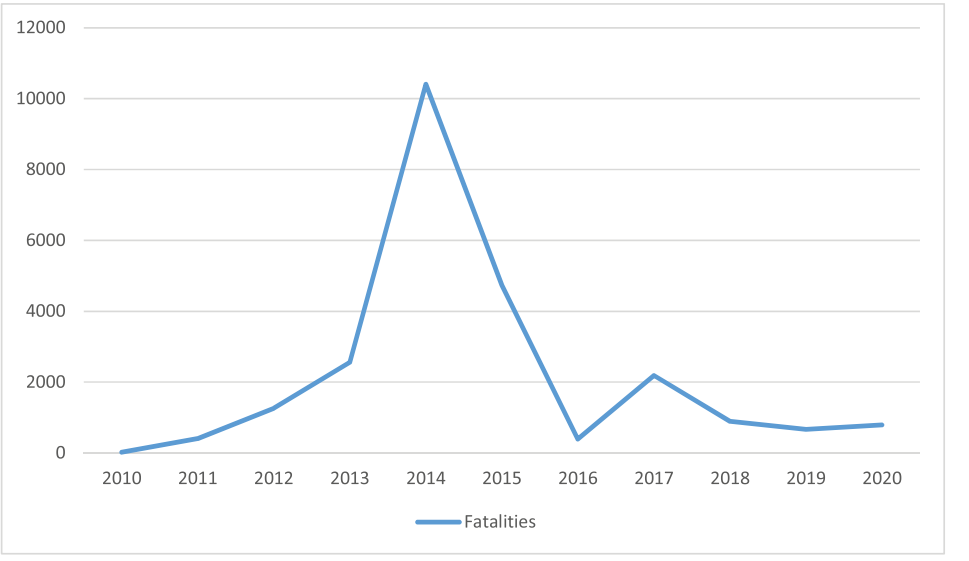


Figure 2. Fatalities through Boko Haram (2010–20)
Source: Data are drawn from the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, available at: {https://ucdp.uu.se/} accessed 10 December 2022.

Only when applying a wider definition of the APSA as constituting the entirety of AU norms and policies one could argue that countries when setting up AHCs are operating with the framework of the AU's Common African Defence and Security Policy.[36] The AU PSC has also authorised and mandated AHCs, but this does not mean they are administrated by the AU. The AU PSC protocol claims primary responsibility for matters of peace and security, and at the same time promotes subsidiarity and complementary in relations to RECs (Art. 16). In sum, AHCs are operating outside the traditional APSA framework, bypassing the use of recognised RECs and their ASFs, as well as moving beyond the concept of PSOs. However, in a wider but more looser sense they are covered by APSA policies. In any case, the African security landscape is profoundly changing through the frequent use of AHCs. Thus, the question of which consequences of this is providing for the APSA bears significant value. Are AHCs undermining the APSA, crowding it out from its own 'home turf', the management of armed conflict, or are they a useful addition to existing functional gaps? In other words, are AHCs providing complementary value or are they an example for institutional competition?

The Multinational Joint Task Force

The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) was established in 1994 but remained dormant most of the time until its reactivation by the LCBC to fight the growing threat from Boko Haram in Nigeria. The terror group started its operations from 2009 and quickly captured more territory mostly in the northern part of Nigeria. At the peak of their reign in 2014–15 it was responsible for the killing of more than ten thousand people a year (Figure 2). Formally the LCBC reactivated the MNJTF in April 2012. Each country of the group agreed to contribute one battalion.[37] However, several years went by between the initial reactivation to the actual deployment. Initially contributing countries to the MNJTF are Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. Algeria, Libya, and Sudan, also members of the LCBC, opted out. Later the CAR dropped out as well but Benin, a

[36]De Coning, Yaw Tchie, and Grand, 'Ad-hoc security initiatives'.
[37]William Assanvo, Jeannine Abatan, and Wendyam Sawadogo, 'Assessing the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram', Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, Western Africa Report, Issue 19 (September 2016).

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non-member, joined the group. Although the MNJTF was not set up anew and is technically an LCBC instrument, it has been categorised as AHC. This is warranted because since its establishment it was inactive and the LCBC after the MNJTF became operational did not perform many oversight tasks. In the end, the MNJTF resembles more an AHC that is driven by common threat perceptions of a select group of countries.

The mandate and Concept of Operations (CONOPS) have been developed over several years. The AU PSC in 2015 defined it as providing 'a safe and secure environment', 'significantly reduc[ing] violence against civilians', a 'full restoration of state sovereignty', return of refugees, and facilitating humanitarian aid.[38] Furthermore, disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) of combatants is mentioned in addition to freeing hostages held by Boko Haram (Chibok girls) and preventing the transfer of arms and ammunition.[39] A troop size of 7,500 soldiers was authorised and later increased to 10,000 troops.[40]

The composition of the MNJTF is fundamentally different from existing peacekeeping operations of the UN or AU. While these missions are fully integrating national contingents under a joint command, and troops are operating in a foreign country under the banner of an international organisation, the MNJTF operates with minimal internal coordination mostly on national territory. It is rather based on inter-governmental agreement than international oversight. Principally national contingents are operating within their own borders as opposed to having a multinational troop operating in a single host country. Cross-border operations are only expected to take place within 50km into the territory of the neighbouring country. Furthermore, the MNJTF is also different from traditional peacekeeping missions as its focus is narrowly concentrating on pushing back Boko Haram militarily. However, most multilateral peacekeeping missions are equipped with comprehensive mandates, which also address governance questions and are focusing on civilian tasks. Although the MNJTF is mandated to perform civilian and policing tasks, in practice these have not materialised. In sum, the MNJTF does not resemble any of the institutionalised response structures currently operating at the level of the AU, RECs, or UN. It rather represents a group-tailored response of countries in the Lake Chad region.

To which extent is the MNJTF a complementary element to the APSA or an example of institutional competition? Was the APSA willing and able to provide an alternative response to Boko Haram in the same area at the same time? The answer is no. This can be traced back to a number of circumstances. First, regional affiliations in the conflict area are not neatly falling into the APSA's geographical organisation. The countries most affected by Boko Haram, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, are split in their membership of APSA RECs between ECOWAS and ECCAS. It is not self-evident which REC with its ASF would qualify as a first responder to the conflict. Given that Nigeria as regional political heavyweight was affected the most, one would assume that ECOWAS could have played a central role by setting up a multinational force.

In fact, Ghana chairing ECOWAS in 2014 planned to activate the ECOWAS counterterrorism protocol but this was not welcomed in Nigeria.[41] Under President Jonathan, the country showed minimal interest in internationalising the conflict. To the contrary a tendency to downplay the seriousness of the situation and the upcoming elections in 2015 complicated the organisation of an international response. The country becoming itself the target of international deployments constitutes a significant fall in Nigeria's regional reputation. Reactivating the MNJTF provided an opportunity for Nigeria to cooperate across borders in a multinational framework but without the burden of an international intervention force within its territory. However, in practice, common operations by Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Nigeria also took place in the Sambisa Forest (Nigeria),

[38] AU PSC 484th meeting (29 January 2015), para. 19.

[39] Ibid., para. 20.

[40] AU PSC 489th meeting (3 March 2015).

[41] John Mahama, 'Boko Haram: President Mahama discusses efforts to stand in solidarity with Nigeria', *Joy Online* (15 May 2014), available at: {www.myjoyonline.com/opinion/2014/may-14th/boko-hara-presidentmahama-discusses-efforts-to-stand-in-solidarity-with-nigeria.php} accessed 24 October 2018.

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which is more than 50km away from Nigeria's border with Cameroon.[42] Still there is a difference between neighbouring countries accepting cross-border operations, and hosting an international counterterrorism operation deployed and supervised by the AU. The former provides better control over military resources and does not need to involve extra-regional bureaucracies such as the APSA. Nigeria as a regional hegemon perceived the Ghanaian initiative as misplaced (Interview MNJTF 22 November 2022). This prevented the activation of APSA regional components like ECOWAS.

The choice for the MNJTF instead of a multilateral deployment through ECOWAS or the APSA was also favoured by another regional aspiring actor, Chad. As Nigeria was no member of ECCAS and decried ECOWAS action, regional leadership ambitions of Chad were best served by operating through another framework, the MNJTF.[43] A potential APSA response could have been the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC), which was set up in 2013 as an interim military instrument providing the AU with a response mechanism beyond the system of regional ASFs.[44] However, the ACIRC was not operational in its early years and more importantly it did not have all-African support. Among the countries not supporting it was Nigeria.

Taken together, the APSA was not in the position to offer, the two key players Nigeria and Chad an institutional platform they would favour. It is difficult to claim that the mere existence of the MNJTF is as such undermining the APSA, if the latter does not possess an instrument that fits the regional interests. Regarding regional composition and operation, the MNJTF is functionally different. In the absence of direct institutional competition, a division of labour emerged, which further fostered differentiation.

The fact that the MNJTF operates outside APSA key institutions does not automatically mean that it is irrelevant and not involved. Because functional differentiation is understood as a complementary process, a reciprocal relationship emerged. From the beginning the AU occupied functional niches in which it has a competitive advantage. It endorsed the setting up of the MNJTF, authorised its operation, was involved in mandating the force, including its concept of operations (CONOPS), called for a UN Security Council resolution to authorise the mission, and played an essential role demanding and facilitating international donor support.[45] The meeting that drafted the CONOPS consisted of experts from the AU, ECCAS, ECOWAS, EU, LCBC, France, the UK, and US.[46] In other words, the MNJTF was embedded into the existing network of international institutions but mostly outside the APSA. A MoU and support agreement formalised the relationship between the MNJTF and the AU Commission.[47]

Most African multilateral military campaigns are not financially self-sustaining and the MNJTF, although chiefly supported by troop contributing countries, also relies on donor support. In this context the AU played no marginal role for the MNJTF. The EU's main instrument for support until 2021 is the African Peace Facility (APF). While €50m was earmarked in financial support, the APF can only pay out funds to official APSA components. Thus the AU Commission came into play receiving EU funds for the MNJTF. However, with a restructuring of the EU finance mechanisms from 2021, and the replacement of the APF with the European Peace Facility (EPF), the EU now directly supports AHCs sidelining the AU.[48] A sizable part of the EPF funds (about €48m)

[42] AU Commission, Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Implementation of Communique PSC/AHG/COMM.2 (CDLXXXIV) on the Boko Haram Terrorist Group and on other related International Efforts, Addis Ababa (3 March 2015), para. 7.

[43] Elysee M. Atagana, 'The underlying reasons for the emerging dynamic of regional security cooperation against Boko Haram', *Africa Review*, 10:2 (2018), pp. 206–15.

[44] Kasajia P. 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.

[45] AU PSC 469th meeting (25 November 2014).

[46] AU Commission (3 March 2015), para. 10.

[47] AU PSC 639th meeting (29 November 2016), para. 7.

[48] International Crisis Group, 'How to Spend It: New EU Funding for African Peace and Security', Africa Report No. 297, Brussels (14 January 2021).

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are provided to the MNJTF through a private contractor, COGINTA (Interview N'Djamena, 25 November 2022). The EU's influence is now more direct as it provides a number of military support assets (such as air transport, operating costs, intelligence, fuel, etc.) directly. It should also not be forgotten that Nigeria is the largest donor to the MNJTF, providing $100m in 2015 for its operation. In this regard the MNJTF is a regionally supported initiative.

Naturally, funds for military operations will only be paid out to one institutional framework. With the APSA losing its function as financial hub, it also loses a significant part of its authority and oversight responsibility.

Functional differentiation that emerged between the AU and MNJTF resulted as a consequence of the conflict-specific constellation of actors and their positions and resources for action. The AU aimed at staying in the 'game' by insisting on 'the imperative of enhanced synergy' and by mentioning the 'the cardinal principles of subsidiarity, complementarity and comparative advantage.'[49]

The AU concentrated on its comparative advantage by emphasising the need for a holistic response to the terrorist threat and helping to organise a multi-stakeholder reaction. While the MNJTF is primarily a military instrument, a more comprehensive and civilian response is needed to sustain territorial wins against Boko Haram. The adoption of the Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy (RSS) provides a holistic and more civilian and governance-oriented approach.[50] It was developed by the LCBC and AU Commission in 2018. Its implementation is overseen by a group of regional organisations such as the AU, CEMAC, ECCAS, ECOWAS, the UN, and MNJTF countries. Together with the LCBC, the AU Commission is chairing the steering committee for its implementation. However, because of the scarcity of AU funding, its current role rather resembles a 'rubber stamping' approach in which the AU provides overall political legitimacy, but the implementation funds are coming from external actors such as the UNDP (Interview, LCBC N'Djamena, 21 November 2022). Thus, what can be seen is a further sharping of functionally different roles of institutions. While this facilitates a system response, it is weakening the role of the APSA.

The G5 Sahel Joint Force

More than the Lake Chad region, armed conflict in the Sahel is characterised by actor proliferation. A wide range of collective and individual mostly military responses emerged around the conflict in Mali since 2013 (see Figure 2).[51] On the ground the number of armed groups is high. An OECD study counts 137 different groups in the Sahel being involved in conflict.[52] These range from Jihadist groups, ethnic militias, vigilante organisations, or simply herders and farmers. The G5 Sahel is a newly established regional organisation (2014), which later also set up a military force, the G5 Sahel Joint Force (G5S-JF), starting its first operation in 2017. From the beginning, the G5S-JF was not set up to monopolise international counterterrorism initiatives but constitutes a supplement to existing operations and programmes at least until 2022 before Mali left and France withdrew its troops from the country.

At the centre of the crisis is Mali, which in 2012 experienced a military coup. State structures nearly collapsed under the pressure from Tuareg rebels and Jihadist groups in 2013. At the invitation of the Malian government, France intervened militarily and deployed several missions to the country (Serval, Barkhane, Task Force Takuba). The French military intervention was necessary, as a regional force under the leadership of ECOWAS was not materialising at the time.

[49] AU PSC 898th meeting (28 November 2019), para. 2 and AU PSC (10th July 2021), preamble.

[50] AU/LCBC, Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery & Resilience of the Boko Haram-affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region (RSS) (2018).

[51] Signe M. Cold-Ravnkilde and Katja Lindskov Jakobson, 'Disentangling the security traffic jam in the Sahel: Constitutive effects of contemporary interventionism', *International Affairs*, 96:4 (2020), pp. 855–74.

[52] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Conflict Networks in North and West Africa, West African Studies* (Paris: OECD Publishing), pp. 100–1003, available at: {https://doi.org/10.1787/896e3eca-en}.

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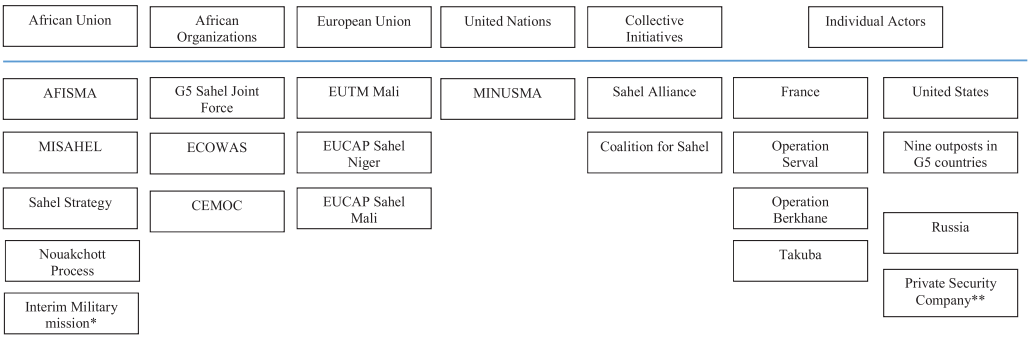


Figure 3. Main international security initiatives and actors in the Sahel.

France stabilised the country to some degree. However, this did not prevent military coups in 2020 and 2021 as well as the spread of violence throughout the region. In addition to Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso experienced new waves of violence (Figure 3). Certainly, France is one of the key countries that actively crafted the institutional response in the Sahel. As member of the UN Security Council and penholder for Francophone Africa, it was essential in supporting the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission. It also crafted the EU's response with the deployment of two military training missions, and is chiefly involved in support of the G5S-JF.[53]

While ECOWAS did not manage to deploy quickly enough in 2012, an African-Led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) by the AU was filling the gap. Although AFISMA was an AU mission it consisted of mostly ECOWAS member states. It was deployed shortly after the French intervention. AFISMA only existed for a short while. It was replaced by the UN peacekeeping operation MINUSMA around six months after its deployment. Most African troops were rehatted into blue helmets. With around 18,000 military and civilian staff, MINUSMA is currently the largest UN peacekeeping operation.[54] Of the G5 Sahel countries, Burkina Faso (1,000), Chad (1,425) and Niger (861) are major troop contributors to the UN mission.[55]

In contrast to the MNJTF, the G5S-JT was established at a time and location when a number of actors were already active. In 2014 these were MINUSMA and the French military operation Barkhane. The AU tried to stay in the game as well. In addition to the short-lived military operation AFISMA it developed a political mission, the African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL). This mission focuses on governance, development, and security and was entrusted to implement the AU's Sahel Strategy adopted in 2014.[56]

The AU tried to create momentum and assume the role of a lead organisation managing the regional response. At the centre of its efforts is the Nouakchott Process consisting of 11 countries.[57] It was started in March 2013 and is designed as an African-led process, coordinating and crafting a cross-regional response. Such an approach was necessary because the conflict area did not neatly fit into a single region recognised under the APSA. Furthermore, no regional hegemon exists that could steer regional organisations from within, as Nigeria did with rejection of the ECOWAS mission and reactivating the MNJTF.[58] Thus some policy space emerged for the AU to try to coordinate

[53] Roland Marchal, 'French Interventions in the Sahel', in L. Villalon (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 458–78.

[54] UN Fact Sheet MINUSMA (21 October 2021).

[55] UN Peacekeeping, Troop and Police Contributions (August 2021), available at: {https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors}.

[56] AU PSC 449th meeting (11 August 2014), para. 4.

[57] Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Ivory-Coast, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Niger, and Nigeria.

[58] Morten Bøås, 'Rival Priorities in the Sahel: Finding the Balance between Security and Development', Policy Note No. 3:2018 (Uppsala: Nord Africa Institute), p. 6.

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the African response to the crisis. However, it failed in assuming a leadership role. The group of countries within the Nouakchott Process was not fully supportive of the initiative.[59]

Internally, the ACIRC, which was set up to enable the AU to quickly deploy military missions and which would technically be a cross-regional instrument was politically too contested and not ready to deploy. The rehatting of AFISMA troops into MINUSMA also deprived the AU from having greater political influence. The inability to finance and fund military operations independently is a significant drawback for the AU.

The AU was not the only organisation that lost out. Before the Malian crisis started, Algeria initiated a regional security initiative, the Comité d'état-major opérationnel conjoint (CEMOC). It consisted of four countries, Algeria, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger, presenting an ambitious military force of up to 75,000 troops.[60] However, the CEMOC never acquired the position of an effective regional instrument. Lack of internal agreement and unclear regional ambitions of Algeria hampered a more influential role, despite the country being the most significant military power in the neighbourhood. While Algeria sees Frances's engagement in the region with dismay, initially Mali entrusted France and not its neighbour with fighting Jihadist groups.

Instead of the AU or Algeria assuming regional leadership roles efforts soon concentrated on a new regional organisation – the G5 Sahel. With the establishment of the G5 Sahel in 2014, an entirely new regional organisation was set up, which has no links to the APSA. The organisation aims at balancing development and security needs. According to its foundational treaty most objectives the G5 Sahel pursues are civilian. Article 4 makes reference to good governance, democracies, human development, and regional cooperation in addition to security. However, with the setting up of the Joint-Force the momentum shifted to the military side of regional cooperation. The G5S-JF consists of around 5,000 troops divided into seven battalions of 650 soldiers each and operating in three geographical sectors within G5 countries.[61] The G5S-JF CONOPS were adopted by the AU PSC in April 2017. Accordingly, it is expected to 'combat terrorism, drug trafficking and human trafficking', engage in the 'restoration of state authority', 'facilitate humanitarian operations', and implement 'development action'.[62]

The group of five Sahelian countries would not have been able to play any significant role without substantial external backing. It has not been a secret that France, after its intervention in Mali, looked for opportunities to share the costs of its operation.[63] The deployment of MINUSMA did not provide the wanted relief, as the UN peacekeeping mission is not directly involved in counterinsurgency operations. Likewise, the EU's training missions in Mali and Niger are no substitute for Operation Barkhane. In this context, it can be argued that the G5S-JF, despite an institutional dense space in terms of location and timing, would provide a functional niche capacity with its main focus on combating terrorism in addition to drug and human trafficking.[64] Barkhane only focused on Jihadist groups excluding, for example, communal violence, which is becoming more prominent.[65] The G5S-JF mandate is not identical with those of MINUSMA, Barkhane, or the EU. The UN mission is geographically confined to Mali. Still a certain overlap exists as all these missions aim at stabilising Mali and the region using military instruments. Additionally, the US also

[59]Karolina Gasinska and Elias Bohman, 'Joint Force of the Group of Five: A Review of Multiple Challenges' (Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Agency, 2017), p. 30.

[60]P. L. Ammour, 'La coopération de sécurité au Maghreb et au Sahel: l'Ambivalence de l'Algérie', *Bulletin de la Sécurité Africaine*, 18 (2012), p. 3.

[61]International Crisis Group, 'Finding the Right Role for the G5 Sahel Joint Force', Africa Report 258 (12 December 2017).

[62]AU PSC 679th meeting (13 April 2017), para. 11 iii.

[63]Natasja Rupesinghe, 'The Joint Force of the G5 Sahel An Appropriate Response to Combat Terrorism?', Conflict Trends (18 September 2018), available at: {http://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/the-joint-force-of-the-g5-sahel/}.

[64]Gasinska and Bohman, 'Joint Force of the Group of Five', p. 16.

[65]Heni Nsaibia and Jules Duhamel, 'Sahel 2021: Communal Wars, Broken Ceasefires, and Shifting Frontlines' ACLED (17 June 2021), available at: {https://acleddata.com/2021/06/17/sahel-2021-communal-wars-broken-ceasefires-and-shifting-frontlines/}.

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operates in the region using Special Forces. In 2019 four permanent and five non-permanent military outposts were located in the Sahel.[66] This 'light military' footprint is accompanied by direct financial support for the G5S-JT of around $588m since 2017.[67]

The G5S-JF emerged because it received support from two essential groups. First, it is accepted regionally, and second it is resourced by international donors. For G5 countries the prospects of getting quick military support without prioritising internal governance reforms appeared as fairly attractive, especially in the absence of a regional hegemon who could forge a regional coalition or a poorly resourced AU.[68] For France and European partners, the G5S-JF provides an opportunity to diversify the military burden its missions are creating, and handing over responsibility to a local actor, which also receives extensive developmental aid. The EU's partnership framework with the G5 Sahel has earmarked €8bn between 2014–20, a large sum for an impoverished region.[69] With this massive external support no other regional organisation can compete.

In the case of the Sahel, the question if the G5S-JF is complementary to existing security arrangements or competes with them cannot only be answered with reference to functional differentiation alone. While there is evidence for different mandates, there is also a degree of overlap and competition. The fact that G5 countries (despite international support) can only make available a limited number of troops to regional or international initiatives displays elements of institutional competition. Military resources are finite and cannot be extended easily. The reason why the G5S-JF is not posing a significant challenge for existing institutions is the inability of the international response to end armed conflict. Degrees of violence have not decreased over time. To the contrary, the number of fatalities is sharply on the rise (Figure 4). These high levels of violence produce space for actor proliferation. Because no individual actor can pacify the conflict, deploying several missions concurrently to the same place does not necessarily create competition. In other words, the demand for deployments outstrips the supply.

The AU even plans to send another mission into the region.[70] However, the pool of available resources from which organisations can draw, although not static, is not infinite. Expecting G5 countries to deploy through three different organisations (G5, UN, AU) rather fragments than enables a coherent response. Even if the planned AU mission presents a functionally different mandate, it is not likely to add more functionality to the overall system of international responses.

When looking at the institutional response comprehensively one cannot but agree that an entire biotope of institutions has emerged around armed conflict in the Sahel and Mali at its centre. It can be treated as a conflict specific regime complex in its own right. There are good indicators for the existence of functional differentiation but also a degree of institutional competition can be identified. This is as such not surprising as inter-institutional relations often display ambiguous results not exclusively pointing in one direction. The year 2022 marks a turning point. Relations between France and the Malian military leadership are in rapid decay, which has led to the withdrawal of Mali from G5S-JF, the termination of French military operations in Mali, and a gradual draw down of MINUSMA. At the time of writing, it is unclear if the G5S-JF will have any future role to play or will silently disappear. In any case, AHCs are set up on a short timeframe, which is an intentional design feature, they are not meant to be permanent structures. If they lose support from constituent countries, they cease to be meaningful.

[66]Nick Turse, 'Pentagon's Own Map of U.S. Bases in Africa Contradicts Its Claim of "Light" Footprint', The Intercept (27 February 2020), available at: {https://theintercept.com/2020/02/27/africa-us-military-bases-africom/}.

[67]US Mission to the UN, Remarks by Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield at a UN Security Council Briefing on the G5 Sahel Joint Force, New York (18 May 2021), available at: {https://usun.usmission.gov/remarks-by-ambassador-linda-thomas-greenfield-at-a-un-security-council-briefing-on-the-g5-sahel-joint-force/}.

[68]Denis Tull, 'Mali, the G5 and Security Sector Assistance: Political Obstacles to Effective Cooperation', Berlin: SWP Comments, 52 (2017).

[69]EU Fact Sheet, Partnership with the G5 Sahel Countries (July 2019), available at: {https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/factsheet_eu_g5_sahel_july-2019.pdfEU}.

[70]AU Assembly, AU/Dec.792(XXXIII), Addis Ababa (9–10 February 2020).

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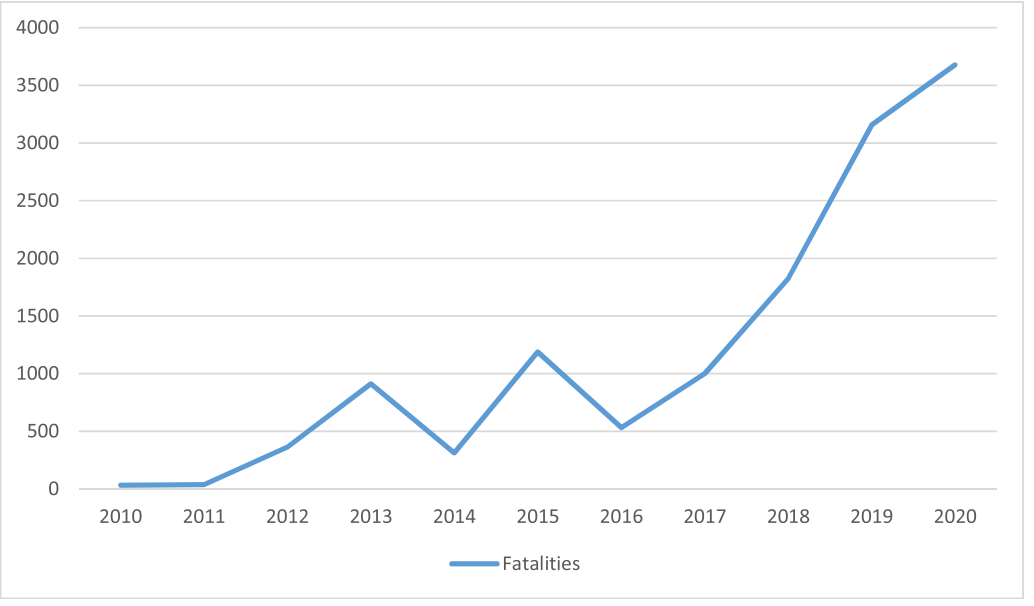


Figure 4. Fatalities in G5 countries (2010–20).
Source: Data are drawn from the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, available at: {https://ucdp.uu.se/} accessed 10 December 2022.

A moderate degree of differentiation can be found with regard to the military operations and their mandate. Although the AU is not playing a major military role, the establishment of AFISMA as an interim instrument before the UN mission was deployed was in fact important to get the UN involved in preparing the ground for its deployment. However, the transition process did not run smoothly.[71]

The UN mission operates with a comprehensive approach covering civilian as well as military goals.[72] The main emphasis was initially on supporting the transitional government and stabilising the country. Operations Serval and later Barkhane were more narrowly focusing on the active pursuit of Jihadist groups. The EU deployed two military training missions to the region and is the main donor for developmental aid. The US was operating outside of regional or international organisations, but heavily supports the G5S-JF.

The G5S-JF although operating in the same theatre has a wider geographical scope than MINUSMA, which is confined to Mali. It also has a different mandate than the French operation and UN mission, as it includes human and drug trafficking. In sum, all these mentioned actors provide different resources either by mandate, timing, or geography. There is no single actor who resembles the other entirely. Despite operating in a dense institutional environment, the increasing intensity of armed conflict in the region minimises institutional competition.

Despite this, there are also elements of competition. Especially the AU has lost out institutionally. Its attempts to craft a regional African international response were not successful. The Nouakchott Process never materialised in a meaningful way. Other initiatives like the MISAHEL or the AU Sahel Strategy are not central for the wider international response and AFISMA quickly dissolved into the UN mission. If the planned AU mission will ever materialise remains to be seen. Instead of providing overall regional leadership the AU is mainly confined to a subsidiary role. Conceding to its functional niche, it has authorised the CONOPS for the G5S-JF and called for

[71]Thomas Weiss and Martin Welz, 'The UN and the African Union in Mali and beyond: A shotgun wedding?', *International Relations*, 90:4 (2014), pp. 889–905.
[72]UNSC, Resolution 2100 (25 April 2013).

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UN Security Council endorsement as well as funding. The Security Council replied by adopting Resolution 2357, welcoming the establishment of the G5S-JF but not recognising it as chapter VII operation or providing funds for it. The AU's role in the region remains underwhelming. Most international resources went into outside APSA institutions. In particular France was championing the G5 Sahel and preferring its establishment over a more meaningful APSA role.[73]

In the end, the APSA is not equipped with the right institutional choices for the conflict at hand. No regional hegemon was taking action and crafting a coalition to activate APSA components. No prior existing REC was geographically matching the conflict area. And finally, the APSA is not able to provide the necessary material resources to sustain its own initiatives and thus cannot 'buy out' countries opting for different frameworks. In this context, a certain dilemma emerges. On the one hand, one could well argue that the APSA was not damaged severely simply because its institutional design was not made to respond to the conflict. Those actors that responded also display functional differentiation in comparison with the APSA. On the other hand, the APSA played a too minimal role also because it was bypassed by international donors and countries in the region opting for different frameworks. However, considering the still-increasing degree of violence, the demand for international response outstrips the supply, which eases competitive pressure on actors. The decay of the G5S-JF is a reminder that AHCs are not only set up quickly but can become defunct fast.

Are AHCs undermining the APSA or facilitating a wider system response?

Africa's institutional security landscape is no static edifice but continues to dynamically evolve. While the APSA has shaped much of the past response to armed conflict, AHCs are forming a newer trend and have the potential to transform the old order. To which extent are AHCs a disruptive invention or innovative instrument in the further development of regime complexity in Africa? The article aims at answering this question by applying and further operationalising the concept of functional differentiation. The article argues that AHCs are only in a competitive relationship to the APSA if they replicate existing structures. To be more precise, if this replication occurs with similar intentions leading to similar outputs at the same time and space. In cases in which AHCs display functional differences, it is difficult to argue that they replace the APSA or seriously undermine it. Not every case of non-differentiation needs to lead to competition. If the demand for a crisis response outstrips the supply by international actors, competition is less likely. Differentiation is limited by potential losses of institutional autonomy and over-specialisation.

What empirical observations can be made about the MNJTF and G5S-JT? Both cases reveal the design flaws of the APSA. The Lake Chad region as well as the Sahel do not neatly fall into any of the APSA-recognised RECs (spatial dimension). Here the APSA displays real institutional gaps that have been filled by AHCs. Thus, AHCs display functional differentiation by adopting tasks that the APSA could not perform in a specific region and with the normative framework of PSOs.

Still, it can be argued that Nigeria favouring the MNJTF over the ECOWAS standby force and Sahel countries favouring the G5S-JF over the Nouakchott process assigned the AU a secondary role. Resources made available for one institutional framework are not available for another. However, if AHCs are functionally different, they are not directly withholding resources for the APSA, but if the APSA does not provide its members with attractive enough solutions for their security needs a constant bypassing of its core institutions is a challenge. What we can observe is a decline in the focality of the APSA within the wider African Security Regime Complex. The AU moved from being a central actor in the management of armed conflict to one providing more tailored contributions and assuming coordinative tasks. This could be seen in its role as authorising and coordinating agent. A clear leadership role is not visible. In the end, AHCs are contributing to institutional proliferation and further regime complexity beyond but not without the APSA. AHCs are the preferred light institutional framework that African countries chose and

[73]Moda Dieng, Philip Onguny, and Amadou Ghouenzen Mfondi, 'Leadership without membership: France and the G5 Sahel Joint Force', *African Journal of Terrorism and Insurgencies Research*, 1:2 (2020), pp. 21–41.

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international donors support. However, they are not standalone institutions but are interlinked with established structures such as the APSA. In this context, what is important is less the situational relevance of an actor (APSA or AHCs) but the ability to respond to a conflict as a tandem. Seen from the perspective of the African Security Regime Complex it matters less if either the APSA or AHCs respond but rather that they assume functionally different roles while staying engaged. It is the character of regime complexes to provide a mostly non-hierarchical form of order, which is driven by the linkages among its component units. AHCs are one form of component units that co-exist in dense institutional spaces such as African Security Regime Complex. The newly set up European Peace Facility (EPF) allows the EU to directly fund AHCs and is likely to solidify the further emergence of AHCs. This is functionally less of a problem but politically deprives the APSA from its envisioned central role in conflict management.

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