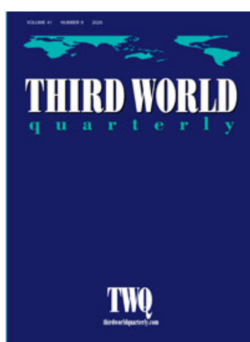

Third World Quarterly

ISSN: 0143-6597 (Print) 1360-2241 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ctwq20

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To cite this article: John Karlsrud & Yf Reykers (2020) Ad hoc coalitions and institutional exploitation in international security: towards a typology, Third World Quarterly, 41:9, 1518-1536, DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2020.1763171

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2020.1763171

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Published online: 09 Jun 2020.

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THIRD WORLD QUARTERLY
2020, VOL. 41, NO. 9, 1518–1536
https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2020.1763171

Ad hoc coalitions and institutional exploitation in international security: towards a typology

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ABSTRACT

While the increasingly thick web of global, regional and sub-regional security arrangements and institutions has received ample scholarly attention, the phenomenon of ad hoc military coalitions and how they impact these institutions has been relatively little explored. We examine ad hoc coalitions in international security responses and develop a tentative typology of military responses that takes ad hoc coalitions into consideration, where we differentiate in terms of institutionalisation and duration. Following a rational-choice institutionalist logic, we argue that institutional proliferation increases the chances of *institutional exploitation*. We illustrate this with how states apply a pick-and-choose approach in which institutional products but not frameworks are used. They use the interoperable forces, a common culture and mainstreamed doctrine, but not the formal deployment of rapid response mechanisms of eg the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the African Union. In closing, we observe that institutional proliferation in international security facilitates a functionalist approach mainly inspired by national self-interest. Future research should examine whether this could result in dwindling relevance of international institutions, first in the domain of security, but later also in other domains.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 6 September 2019
Accepted 28 April 2020

KEYWORDS
ad hoc coalitions
international organisations
institutional exploitation
IR theory
military interventions
security arrangements

Introduction

The domain of peace and security has been a principal engine in the development of global, regional and sub-regional arrangements and institutions. Institutions such as the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have broadened their thematic and geographic span. Member states have put significant political, financial and military resources into the development of the NATO Response Force, the EU Battlegroups and the AU African Standby Force (ASF). Remarkably, however, none of these has so far been deployed.[1] Institutionalisation has not simply led to implementation. Choosing to avoid formal structures, member states mostly seem to select ad hoc coalitions as the preferred mode of operation when confronted with imminent conflicts and crises.

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Indeed, ad hoc coalitions have for several decades been a defining feature of international security responses, often in bilateral or multilateral partnerships.[2] After the end of the Cold War, Western member states deployed a long string of ad hoc coalitions to out-of-area theatres. The Coalition of the Willing mobilised to intervene in Iraq in 2003 is perhaps the most prominent example,[3] but Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan (from 2001 to 2014) and Operation Inherent Resolve fighting the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria (2014–) are but a few examples of other deployments.

Similar dynamics are observable on the African continent. The AU was established with the Constitutive Act adopted by member states in 2002. Since then, the development of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) has been the main engine of increasing collaboration among African member states, which has expanded into more formal agreements also in other domains such as trade.[4] The ASF, the organisation's rapid response mechanism, is one of five core pillars of the APSA. However, while considerable investments have been made in the ASF at regional and sub-regional levels to enable deployment to no less than six pre-defined scenarios (at least in theory), ad hoc coalitions remain the primary feature of military interventions on the continent.[5] The Force Intervention Brigade (FIB), deployed to fight rebel groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), was originally an initiative by the South African Development Community (SADC), but was included in the UN peacekeeping mission in the country (MONUSCO) to instrumentally access funding and logistical support, despite breaching the principles of UN peacekeeping.[6] The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) is an ad hoc coalition of Nigeria, Niger and Chad to fight Boko Haram, and enjoys financial and material support from the USA, the UK and other donors.[7] The Joint Force of the Group of Five Sahel (JF-G5S) is a counter-terrorism operation deployed by and covering Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, which managed to mobilise a total of $509 million in pledges in Paris in February 2018.[8] Financial and capacity-building support for these coalitions, such as for the JF-G5S, is seen as part of the global 'burden-sharing' of security challenges between the US and its allies.

Writ large, we define ad hoc coalitions as a temporary group of actors that agree to solve a particular security problem at a given time and location.[9] Recent scholarly efforts to differentiate better between formal alliances and loose, ad hoc coalitions are of course laudable.[10] Yet we consider it necessary to further unfold the category of ad hoc coalitions. Treating ad hoc coalitions as a uniform category has led to an insufficient understanding of how different ad hoc coalitions might affect the existing and emerging international and sub-regional institutions with a mandate in the field of peace and security.

Currently, the move towards ad hoc coalitions is mostly viewed as a positive trend, giving more choice and flexibility, inter alia creating 'a framework for states to cooperate while pursuing their national interests'.[11] Ad hoc coalitions are often preferred due to a variety of commonsensical reasons. They may enable member states to remain more in control of their troops and pursue national interests (although this is not guaranteed); they may buy time for multilateral organisations[12]; and contrary to rapid response mechanisms they do not require unanimity or consensus among member states. They can furthermore provide an avenue for 'pivotal states' to 'buy allies' through financially or politically rewarding third parties 'to serve in multilateral coalitions', in order to pursue national security goals.[13] Ad hoc coalitions also avoid bureaucratic delay and do not create precedence for future crises responses. While these are of course valid reasons for ad hoc coalitions to be a popular tool in the international peace and security toolbox, in this article, we raise attention to and

examine the shared feature of *institutional exploitation* of these ad hoc coalitions that potentially has longer term implications for the development and understanding of international security and relations. We also analytically open up the concept of ad hoc coalitions by offering a tentative typology to grasp the complexity of the phenomenon.

We claim that the field of military rapid response offers the clearest illustration of the pragmatism that is an inherent feature of the institutional proliferation of international institutions. Pragmatism is here understood in a simple (non-philosophical) form, as the process of selecting the most straightforward solution to a problem. It hence links with the rational-choice logic, involving the selection of the route where costs and benefits are most optimal. Ad hoc coalitions draw upon the investments that have been made in institutional frameworks at global and regional levels, such as the NATO Response Force and the ASF. This includes using the created interoperability of armed forces, the established doctrines and access to financial and logistical support from external partners. In doing so, the ad hoc coalitions and the member states supporting them are also seeking the support of bilateral and multilateral partners.

We follow a rational-choice institutionalist logic to argue that, therefore, not only does institutional proliferation increase the chances of *forum-shopping*,[14] it also prepares the ground for increasing *ad hocism* and *institutional exploitation* in international relations. Institutional exploitation is here defined as the phenomenon of states pragmatically – or functionally – using the products that are developed in the context of institutionalisation without formally working through these institutional frameworks. By introducing this concept, we underscore the need for further research to examine whether the preference for ad hoc coalitions might also decrease the willingness and reverse the trend to invest in global and regional security arrangements and institutions.

The article is structured in five parts. In the first part we examine the theorisation of international institutions, in particular with regards to forum-shopping between different institutions in the security domain. We highlight the need for further theorising informal governance structures, such as ad hoc coalitions, to fully understand the palette of options available and their implications. In the second part, we argue that the feature of ad hocism in international security in effect is an example of *institutional exploitation*. Next, we provide an empirical basis for our analysis by looking at the efforts of member states to establish rapid response mechanisms at global and regional institutional levels, and how these in practice have been eclipsed by the deployment of ad hoc coalitions. Building on these insights, we then offer a first step towards an analytical dissection of the diverse reality of military responses, and ad hoc coalitions in particular, by developing a typology ranging from loose burden-sharing to deployment of formal rapid response mechanisms. Finally, we reflect on the possible systemic effects of institutional exploitation and what future research should look at. We suggest that the move towards ad hoc coalitions may threaten the relevance of multilateral institutions not only in the domain of security, but also in other areas.

Complex proliferation

The growing web of international institutions has been one of the principal subjects of inquiry in international relations. Central schools of international relations theory have assumed that the proliferation of international and regional institutions leads to increasing

interdependence. Institutionalisation in international and regional security, such as within the frameworks of the AU and the EU, is commonly seen as an example thereof.[15] The niche of military rapid response has more recently garnered academic interest, following growing investments within regional and sub-regional institutional frameworks.[16]

At a more general level, the proliferation of international (and regional) institutions has been the subject of longstanding debates between, inter alia, neorealists and neoliberals. Scholars like Mearsheimer argue that institutions would not hinder states from seeking to maximise their power.[17] This reflects the (neo)realist idea that states would never subordinate themselves to international regimes or institutions. Following an economic and rational-choice reasoning, (neo)liberal-institutionalists such as Keohane argue that, acting in their own self-interest, states cooperate and establish international regimes and institutions to realise shared interests, reduce transaction costs and limit uncertainty.[18] Not only does this proliferation lead to growing complex interdependence between member states of each of these institutions, it also illustrates the emergence of certain global norms and expectations. These increasingly shared expectations in international security, which build on liberal foundations such as bringing peace and stability, have steadily been institutionalised in the so-called liberal world order.[19] Investments in the further integration of each of these security arrangements and institutions, and the gradual strengthening of cooperation between them in that sense, illustrate the post-Cold War emergence of norms such as the need for a global system of 'collective conflict management'.[20] The development of the AU peace and security architecture and the localisation of the norms of condemnation of unconstitutional changes of government are taken as further evidence of this development.[21] At the global level, China also has strengthened its support for UN peacekeeping, with the pledge of making troops available to the UN for rapid response.[22] Regime theorists and constructivists claim that the continuing investments in institutionalised crisis response capacities, and rapid reaction capacities in particular, are therefore evidence of increasingly shared norms about the necessity of rapidly responding to international crises to avoid human loss.[23]

We suggest that what we see in the field of military operations is, however, a more complicated picture that could underpin a different and contrary argument. Here the trend is not one of institutional deployments, but rather a proliferation of ad hoc deployments, largely connected to national interests. In other words, what we think of as liberal-institutional frameworks seem to be enabling a realist and highly functionalist practice.

An increasingly broad palette of options

We start from a rationalist view on state behaviour in international crisis response. While initially only attempting to explain the mere creation of institutions, rational-choice institutionalists gradually shifted focus to questions about when and why (formal) international institutions are used.[24] The assumption that institutions are *developed* or *used* by political actors on the basis of transaction-cost considerations has been at the core of this scholarship.[25] States with an interest in addressing a conflict through military means are assumed to weigh the costs and benefits of the institutional pathway against those of unilateral action.[26] This logic has both explicitly and more implicitly guided multiple scholars in explaining institutional choice in international crisis management, pointing at how international and regional security institutions might offer opportunities for burden-sharing and

overcoming collective action challenges, as well as accumulating expertise. At the same time, legitimacy considerations have increasingly been recognised as an integral part of such calculations, resulting in more 'analytical eclectic' approaches in recent studies of institutional choice.[27]

Yet with the increased proliferation of international institutions within different policy domains after World War II, and particularly after the end of the Cold War, new complexities have arisen. States no longer need to decide *whether* they wish to act through international institutions; they can choose between different institutions, as well as more ad hoc solutions. This is a development which goes beyond the domain of peace and security. Member states can nowadays select from an increasingly broad palette of options in global governance, ranging from traditional multilateral strategies by working through formalised international (governmental) organisations (IGOs), in so-called 'governance clubs', or pure informal governance, of which loose ad hoc coalitions are an integral part (Figure 1). Patrick therefore argues that we are entering an era of contested multilateralism or 'global governance in pieces'.[28] Governance clubs and informal or ad hoc coalitions are often seen as more effective, flexible and nimble than acting through international organisations.[29]

These trends have also gradually spurred academic research into the effects of this wider palette of options. With their symposium on 'International Regime Complexity' in *Perspectives on Politics*, Alter and Meunier moved forward the research agenda on the increasingly *complex proliferation* of international agreements and institutions, by highlighting that 'few studies and even fewer theories are available to guide scholars in thinking about the consequences of this complexity'.[30] Within the same symposium, Drezner stressed how this proliferation leads to new problems for institutionalists, which is the issue of 'selecting among a welter of possible governance arrangements', linking back to his early ideas about *forum-shopping*.[31]

The concept of forum-shopping has its roots in judicial studies, where it is used to better understand the 'battles over venue' that take place in the choice of courts.[32] It captures the phenomenon of plaintiffs transferring their case to a court where they have a higher chance of success. In the study of international relations, institutional proliferation could similarly facilitate increased opportunities for *forum-shopping* behaviour. The concept is generally defined as 'strategies where actors select the international venues based on where they are best able to promote specific policy preferences, with the goal of eliciting a decision that favors their interests'.[33] It hence reflects a functionalist logic applied by states with memberships in institutions with similar mandates.[34] Proliferation has therefore quickly been seen by many academics and policymakers as a means to foster and legitimize international collaboration.[35]

As a result, the idea of forum-shopping has over the past decade played an increasingly prominent role in the rapidly developing literature on inter-organizationalism, which looks into the 'interaction between two or more organizations'.[36] Growing institutional proliferation

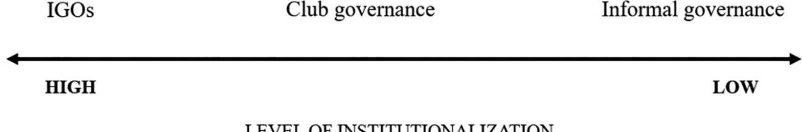

Figure 1. Variations in organization in global governance.

and membership overlap between institutions with a similar geographical and functional mandate – think of the EU and NATO, but equally crisis response interests by the AU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) – offers states the chance to pick and choose the venue that best suits their interests. More recently, Hofmann expanded on these strategies at the disposal of member states of overlapping organisations. She highlighted how the interplay between membership overlap and preference diversity might not only lead to forum-shopping, but also to 'brokering' and, more disruptively, even 'hostage-taking'.[37] As such, inter-organizationalists not only raise attention for these opportunities of forum-shopping and cooperation, they also increasingly highlight the risk of rivalry between institutions, such as competition for resources and legitimacy.[38] In the area of international security, where most small and medium-sized states are limited in their operational capacity by a single set of armed forces and modest defence budgets, this risk is likely to be most prominent. Relatedly, Hofmann earlier highlighted how such overlap tends to impact performance on the ground as well.[39]

What we thus see is an increasing literature theorising the effects of overlapping organisations. At the same time, however, the literature on ad hoc coalitions lags behind. There is so far little attention paid to their impact on multilateral organisations and their inter-organizational relationships, particularly in international security.

Theorizing ad hocism in military rapid response

We argue that institutional proliferation and *ad hocism* in the domain of security also come with a risk of *institutional exploitation*. The argument that states can opt for an ad hoc response to threats against international security, instead of operating under the flag of an international or regional institution, is of course not new. For instance, initial responses to the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s took place in an ad hoc fashion. In the context of increased calls in the early 2000s for the UN to rely more on regional organisations, Wilson assessed whether authorisation of regional bodies could offer more effective responses than using ad hoc coalitions.[40] While suggesting that ad hoc coalitions, such as those deployed in the Persian Gulf War (1990–1991) and Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti (1994), might more successfully fulfil UN Security Council objectives, he stressed that 'the most serious problem in placing reliance on ad hoc coalitions is that there is no guarantee that the resources required for effective action will be forthcoming', referring to the importance of perceptions of national interests and difficulty.[41] Rynning has highlighted the strategic need for better connecting coalitions of the willing, institutions and so-called 'tents' – where coalitions are viewed as the 'sharp end of the spear', and institutions and broader groupings of like-minded nations can offer necessary strategic guidance and political legitimacy.[42]

We add, however, to these insights an explicit link with the increasing proliferation in the domain of international security, and in the niche of military rapid response especially. More particularly, the increasingly thick web of global, regional and sub-regional security organisations and arrangements is creating fertile ground for more ad hocism, rather than just forum-shopping, in military rapid response. As illustrated in the next section, it is a puzzling phenomenon that growing investments in regional rapid reaction frameworks are not matched with actual deployment of these tools. This should, however, not surprise,

as ad hoc responses allow troop-contributing states to avoid many of the institutional drawbacks that inherently come with an institutional response, while offering the opportunity to nonetheless build upon key benefits developed through joint membership of international institutions such as the AU, EU and NATO.

For instance, troop-contributing states can use the products or benefits that resulted from joint training and certification efforts in their respective regional security institutions (and rapid response mechanisms), such as improved interoperability of their forces and increasingly matching doctrines. Deploying as part of an ad hoc coalition can avoid bureaucratic red tape and delays due to requirements for institutional consensus or unanimity. An ad hoc coalition also avoids creating path dependencies with unwanted or unknown political and economic implications. It allows for maintaining flexibility and autonomy in defining mandate and geographical focus. Coalitions may also allow states to choose their allies, rather than having to operate in a pre-defined standby-nation constellation, as is the case in many of the institutionalised rapid response mechanisms. Finally, a critically important feature of many of the aforementioned ad hoc coalitions is that the institutional endorsement which they tend to receive – as illustrated by the UN Security Council authorisation of the FIB discussed in the next section – enables access to funding and logistical support.

The idea of institutional exploitation hence reflects a functionalist logic, wherein states, when facing an imminent threat to peace and security, can not only choose one of many institutional frameworks, they can also pragmatically – or functionally – use the products that are developed in the context of this institutionalisation without formally working through these institutional frameworks. They can apply a pick-and-choose approach and use the institutional products but not the frameworks – ie the formal deployment of these institutionalised crisis response tools.

In other words, the liberal effect of the increasingly dense web of institutions may in that sense be overestimated, as institutional proliferation can facilitate a pragmatist approach mainly inspired by national self-interest. The short-termism permeating the move towards governance clubs, informal governance and ad hocism also highlights clear risks to global governance. As Patrick argues, '[t]he risk of rampant international ad hockery is that it will fail to deliver results, while undercutting formal organizations upon which the world continues to depend'.[43]

Rapid response – from institutional to ad hoc solutions

There is a general recognition of the necessity of guaranteeing rapid response to avoid human loss in the early stages of an emerging or escalating crisis. Institutionalisation of this norm only really gained a foothold after the end of the Cold War, and after the Rwanda genocide in particular, with the late UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan drawing attention to rapid response as a tool 'to limit the range, extent and momentum of a conflict'.[44] Within the EU, this has resulted in the gradual institutionalisation of the EU Battlegroups, in theory a rapidly deployable and rotating force package of 1500 troops, for which first proposals were put forward in 2004 and which was declared ready for deployment in 2007.[45] Within NATO, a largely similar process towards a more rapidly deployable and expeditionary set of forces took place, with the NATO Response Force reaching full operational capacity in 2006.[46] The need for an effective military rapid response mechanism similarly evolved at the AU, although

actual institutionalisation has been slow.[47] The ASF, which is based on African sub-regional standby forces from each of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), was only declared fully operational in 2016 by the AU.[48]

What characterises these institutional tools for rapid response is not only that they are built upon a shared recognition of the need to guarantee effective, credible and legitimate rapid response. Their largely similar architectural flaws have also repeatedly hindered actual deployment. Each of these mechanisms relies on voluntary troop commitments by their member states,[49] they are either funded following a 'costs lie where they fall' principle (EU Battlegroups and NATO Response Force) or rely heavily on funding from third parties (ASF), and their unanimity or consensus procedures often hinder rapid decision-making.

Over the past few years, crisis situations have occurred for which a deployment of these institutional tools for rapid response could nonetheless have been expected. For instance, Darkwa has claimed that the closest the AU has so far come to deploying the ASF was in response to the escalating crisis in Burundi in December 2015, but actual deployment stumbled over disagreement in the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC).[50] Earlier, in 2012, the AU was unable to provide an adequate military response to the government collapse in Mali, resulting in the French Operation Serval, which deployed rapidly and operated with allied logistical support. Similar situations repeatedly occurred within the EU, as battlegroup deployment could have been expected in response to, for instance, the crisis in the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2014, but was hindered by a lacking political willingness of standby nations to put their troops at risk.[51] Despite suggestions to deploy the NATO Response Force to conflicts such as those in Afghanistan, deployment was here also repeatedly blocked, and the force struggled for years to find sufficient troops.[52] Actual use of the force remained limited to 'rather insignificant deployments' to provide disaster relief.[53]

Although not deployed, these formal rapid response mechanisms have contributed to strengthen cooperation between like-minded member states, foster the interoperability of their forces, and develop joint doctrine and training efforts.[54] In the development of these frameworks, several products have been created which could facilitate operational cooperation between member states. For instance, examining the EU Battlegroups, Andersson argues that 'the battlegroups are important drivers for European defence transformation and regional military cooperation, regardless of whether they have seen action or not'.[55] Ringsmose and Rynning echo this message regarding the NATO Response Force, emphasising its positive impact on introducing expeditionary mindsets on the European continent.[56] In other words, non-deployment does not necessarily imply that these institutional investments have been fruitless. What we see, however, is that these investments and the products that result from them have largely been utilised outside the institutions' frameworks.

Ad hoc coalitions in practice

Ad hoc coalitions have become the rule rather than the exception during the two last decades when providing actual (and sometimes rapid) military responses. Examples include Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan (2001–2014), the Coalition of the Willing in Iraq (2003–2011); Operation Inherent Resolve fighting the IS in Iraq, Syria and northern Africa (2014–); the Multinational Joint Task Force fighting Boko Haram (since 2015); the JF-G5S (since 2017, primarily in Mali); and the Regional Coalition Initiative against the Lord's Resistance Army

(since 2011, DRC and CAR primarily). In addition, there are several smaller ongoing counter-terrorism operations in, for example, Niger (US, Germany, France). These operations all contribute to a growing awareness of the prominence of ad hoc coalitions.[57] Mello recently noted that 'democratic war involvement is increasingly happening in multilateral frameworks comprised of ad hoc coalitions of states'.[58]

Ad hoc coalitions on the African continent have taken several forms over the past decade. The French-led military response to the jihadist rebellion in Mali in January 2013 was a typical example of what we term a *loose burden-sharing coalition*. The French Operation Serval was supported by Chadian troops deployed under the African-led International Support Mission to Mali – a mission deployed under the aegis of ECOWAS. It also received considerable logistical support from fellow NATO members, including airlift capacity, in-flight fuelling and intelligence.[59] France did not even think of the EU Battlegroups as a credible option when developing their plan for an intervention in Mali, as it was aware of the long decision-making process, and the need for a unanimous decision and division of costs, with the outcome almost certain to be negative.[60]

The MNJTF, fighting Boko Haram, was created by the countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission in January 2015 and is composed of military troops from those states threatened most by Boko Haram (Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria). The countries belong to two different RECs – ECOWAS (Benin, Niger and Nigeria) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS; Cameroon and Chad), and thus also to two different sub-regional standby brigades of the ASF. The MNJTF is characterised by being an ad hoc coalition of states authorised by the AU Peace and Security Council, which is not a formal deployment of the ASF but receives support from its standby brigades: 'the AU used the ASF planning element capacities in ECCAS and ECOWAS to establish a regional forward headquarters that could support the MNJTF force headquarters [based in N'Djamena, Chad], and act as a link to the AU in Addis'.[61] In that sense, the MNJTF allows its troop-contributing states to cooperate without giving up on their own national interests and adapt to the new security threats on the African continent (ie counter-terrorism), while benefitting from the technical capacity developed at the sub-regional level and headquarters of the ASF, and draw upon the legitimacy offered by the AU.[62]

Largely similar observations can be made regarding the JF-G5S and the Regional Coalition Initiative against the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA). These ad hoc coalitions and the member states supporting them are also seeking the support of bilateral and multilateral partners. The UN has been repeatedly asked by the AU, Mali and the G5S to adjust the mandate of its peacekeeping operation MINUSMA in Mali to enable direct support to the JF-G5S counter-terrorism force, although this would be a clear violation of its peacekeeping principles.[63] ECOWAS was not consulted in the discussion around the JF-G5S, and it was not tabled for discussion at the ECOWAS Summit, 'suggesting that the G5 Sahel states intentionally sought to bypass ECOWAS'.[64]

Also in the DRC, similar developments could be observed over the past years, with the deployment of the FIB in 2013. Composed of member states from the SADC, the intervention mainly served as a robust force package to fight the March 23 Movement (M23).[65] While authorised under Resolution 2098 of the UN Security Council and officially integrated into MONUSCO, the force had everything a rapid regional ad hoc coalition response should be marked by. It was composed of the neighbouring southern African member states and took up robust stabilisation tasks alongside the MONUSCO forces.[66] At the same time, the FIB

troops benefitted heavily from investments in the ASF, including joint training and doctrine development, as they were all part of the same sub-regional mechanism within that framework.[67] In addition, while the FIB's aggressive mandate and offensive goals – eg to 'neutralize' M23 factions – clearly went against UN peacekeeping principles,[68] it was nonetheless pragmatically integrated into MONUSCO. By doing so, it not only provided the offensive force with required international legitimation, importantly, it also gave SADC troop-contributing countries the much-needed access to financial and logistical support which would have otherwise been unavailable.[69]

It should be added here that the phenomenon of ad hocism and reluctance to delegate command and control to standby mechanisms can to a certain degree also be understood as a function of the level of risk the troops could expect to be facing. When deployed to an extremely challenging security environment, as is the case for the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) in Somalia, it is not surprising that the member states retain direct control over their troops although they are formally under the control of the AU Head of Mission.[70] According to Karlsrud, there is 'an inverse relationship between the level of force a mission is expected to apply, and the willingness of TCCs [troop-contributing countries] to delegate the command and control of their forces to the operation'.[71] This also applies to other institutions, as evidenced by the strong national control retained by, for example, Western member states when deploying troops to operations managed by the UN (eg in Mali, Lebanon), the EU (CAR and Chad) or NATO (Afghanistan). Member states will establish strong liaison functions and informal or formal forms of command and control over their forces.

But ad hocism and exploitation of institutional frameworks are also clearly visible beyond African responses. Even when a formal institution like NATO is deploying, it is often in parallel to an ad hoc coalition with participation from the same member states, but with fewer bureaucratic hurdles and transparency on operations. An early example was Operation Enduring Freedom, operating in southern Afghanistan, while NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operation was given peace- and state-building tasks in stabilised areas. Likewise, the military intervention of 2011 in Libya started off as a rapidly deployed ad hoc coalition, following conflicting preferences within NATO. Command and control of the initial coalition, which was mainly composed of French, American and British air forces (complemented with allied contributions from Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Italy, Norway, Spain and Qatar), was after only 14 days transferred to NATO.[72]

Towards a typology of military responses and ad hoc coalitions

So far, the term 'ad hoc coalitions' has mainly served as a catch-all concept. If one is to better grasp the consequences of institutional proliferation and assess how these ad hoc tendencies might affect the liberal-institutional constructs in the field of international security, a better analytical and conceptual differentiation is warranted.

To provide this, we introduce a tentative typology of military responses that takes ad hoc coalitions into consideration. By doing so, we expand the fora among which states tend to 'shop' when deciding upon deploying military troops, including the variety of ad hoc constellations (Figure 2).

Military responses, and ad hoc coalitions in particular, differ on many levels. In this first attempt at moving towards a typology, we take their level of institutionalisation (and their

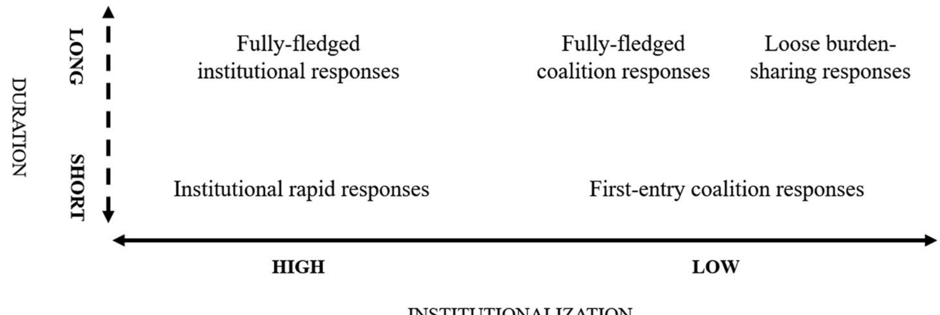

Figure 2. Tentative typology of military responses and ad hoc coalitions.

relationship to existing institutional frameworks) as the key defining characteristic. In this way, our tentative typology ties in with the wider literature about institutional proliferation in international security. Duration is included as secondary characteristic. With this dimension, we primarily intend to differentiate between rapid responses, which are generally deployed for a short duration,[73] on the one hand, and military responses of a longer duration on the other. Importantly, this does not imply that we deny the relevance of other characteristics, such as geographical scope, membership and sponsorship. These characteristics are important features which could be explored further in future work.

This logic leads us to five general categories of military responses. Among the responses of a longer duration, we identify three categories. The first category is *loose burden-sharing coalition responses*. We define this as all interventions initiated by a single state or a small group of states, with logistical support from a multinational coalition. A typical example is the aforementioned French-led Operation Serval deployed in Mali in 2013. The second category contains *fully fledged coalition responses*, here defined as all interventions structured around an ad hoc coalition, with multiple member states undertaking offensive military measures, either with or without a parallel institutional deployment for softer and longer-term measures such as peace- and state-building or stabilisation efforts. The FIB in the DRC deployed in 2013 can be included in this category. A third category includes *fully fledged institutional responses*, wherein from the immediate start of the intervention, forces operate under the flag and command and control of an institutional framework. The African Union's operation in Somalia, AMISOM, is a typical case in this regard.

Among the short-term, and often rapid, responses, two more categories are identified. First, we identify a group of *first-entry coalition responses*. These are interventions where an ad hoc coalition takes care of first entry, but is then incorporated into a wider institutionalised effort. The most notable example in this group is Operation Unified Protector in Libya in 2011. The rationale behind these interventions can be one of avoiding human loss due to delays following from bureaucratic red tape or from institutional consensus or unanimity requirements. Finally, there is the category of *institutional rapid responses*. This is so far still a hypothetical category, of interventions deployed within the framework of one of the aforementioned institutionalised rapid response mechanisms of the AU, EU or NATO. Actual deployment of these institutional tools remains to date absent. Within each of these five categories, one can furthermore differentiate, for instance on the basis of the regional spread of troop-contributing countries, the geographical focus of operations, as well as the diversity of funding that these coalitions rely upon.

By introducing a wider array of categories, we move beyond the institutional bias of the forum-shopping literature, highlighting rather the diversity of options outside the institutional frameworks from which states can pick and choose when facing a security crisis. Recognising this complexity allows for better grasping the institutional implications of these ad hoc responses.

Implications and future research

Since World War II, and particularly since the end of the Cold War, there have been firm efforts to build institutional responses to global and regional security challenges. The conflicts that were unleashed by the end of the Cold War had a galvanising effect on these efforts, resulting in ambitions to build institutions that not only should provide global and regional security, but also provided a platform for cooperation in other domains. Nevertheless, as has already been mentioned, the formal rapid response mechanisms out there have so far not been deployed. As considerable investments have been made, this imbalance leaves ample room for criticism and scholarly inquiry.

First and foremost, this has led to criticism against the credibility of institutionalised rapid response mechanisms. Second, a further liability of the evident mushrooming of ad hoc coalitions is the inherent lack of a coordinating or controlling actor, a role ideally reserved for the institutional responder in question. Yet this would require that member states put aside their fear of giving up authority over their deployed forces. On the African continent, ad hoc coalitions create room for operating outside the territories of the RECs/Regional Mechanisms (RMs), which would normally provide troops for deployment of the ASF. The geographical flexibility also inherently comes with a need for coordination, which is largely absent to date.

Third, one should not underestimate the impact of ad hoc responses on the conflict itself. Operating outside the framework of an international or regional institution logically also comes with doubts about effective and durable implementation and follow-up. This is particularly problematic as many states, including larger states such as France, operate with limited resources. They have to be careful of financial, material or political overstretch. The active search of France for an exit strategy after Operation Serval in Mali and Operation Barkhane in the wider Sahel region clearly illustrates this problem.

On a more general level, the tendency to prefer ad hoc over institutional responses to imminent threats against peace and security comes with a risk of affecting the credibility and legitimacy of the regional security organisations within which these mechanisms have been developed, and their constituent parts.[74] In the case of the ASF, ad hoc coalitions call into question the continued relevance of the RECs/RMs as its building blocks, because ad hoc coalitions 'transcend the geographical and arguably arbitrary boundaries of the RECs/RMs'.[75] In October 2017, the International Crisis Group highlighted that ad hoc coalitions such as the MNJTF and the JF-G5S pose 'significant challenges to the AU's authority'.[76] Given their heavy reliance upon funding from third-party actors, including from Western donors such as the EU, one can indeed argue that these coalitions inherently threaten the future of APSA. With funding follows leverage. When funding is given directly by the EU to the JF-G5S, the AU has little leverage. Preference for ad hoc coalitions over more institutionalised frameworks such as the ASF not only might lead to a growing disengagement of the member states to invest money and capabilities in the AU's infrastructure, it can also cause a growing

disinterest of donors to support further development of the AU's peace and security architecture.

The preference for ad hoc mechanisms over institutional responses is interesting in and of itself, but may in this sense also be read into larger tectonic shifts in the post-liberal-institutional landscape. If no longer seen as principal instruments to safeguard global and regional peace and security, the risk is that the relevance of these multilateral organisations in other domains also will diminish.

Concluding observations

The policy and scholarly discourse is today deeply engaged in debates about the challenges to the liberal world order – populism, protectionism and a shift in focus from liberal peace- and state-building to more limited security-oriented ambitions in fragile and conflict-affected states.[77] Ad hocism is an integral part of this development that should not be ignored. This article has argued that ad hocism might lead to institutional exploitation. The increasingly broad palette of options which states nowadays face, ranging from working through highly formalised international organisations on one end of the spectrum to informal governance structures, such as loose ad hoc coalitions, on the other end, is in that sense a double-edged sword. While these loose, informal coalitions come with benefits in terms of responsiveness to imminent crises and avoid creating institutional precedents, their effects in terms of decreased legitimacy and credibility of the existing multilateral security frameworks are potentially disruptive in the longer run.

To grasp the phenomenon of ad hoc coalitions and the consequences of institutional exploitation for the liberal-institutional constructs in international security, we have developed a tentative typology of ad hoc coalitions, including loose burden-sharing coalition responses, fully fledged coalition responses, fully fledged institutional responses, first-entry coalition responses and institutional rapid responses. By doing so, we intend to provide a first step towards a richer analysis of ad hoc coalitions, which has so far largely been treated as a catch-all concept. Our typology, which is mainly based on the characteristics of these responses in terms of institutionalisation and duration, can serve as a stepping stone for future research into the phenomenon of ad hoc coalitions and informal alliances outside of formal international institutions and how they relate to each other. More research is needed to further explore the importance of additional criteria, such as the geographical focus of these military responses, as well as their membership and sponsorship.

While we have focussed on the international security domain, and the effect of institutional proliferation on the international community's capacity to rapidly respond to crises in particular, its theoretical relevance is wider. By introducing the concept of *institutional exploitation* in international security, we show how ad hocism increasingly challenges the liberal world order. This is a phenomenon which is not limited to the international security domain, as it is equally visible in other areas, and future research should consider institutional exploitation and increasingly selective use of multilateral arrangements in all sorts of policy domains which have been defined by institutional proliferation. In fact, in many domains examples can be found of global problems which would require a rapid response – normally initiated and coordinated by one of the many international institutions that proliferated – but institutional inadequacy has led to ad hoc solutions. For instance, the World Health Organization (WHO) has been criticised for its slow responses to health problems such as

the 2013 West African Ebola outbreak,[78] or the COVID-19 pandemic.[79] The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation has somewhat sidelined the role of the WHO on the issue of vaccination.[80] Likewise, in the fight against climate change, member states have engaged in multiple, and at times competing, voluntary solutions, with climate clubs becoming increasingly prominent.[81] In that sense, pragmatic ad hocism is part of a move away from global and multilateral solutions towards voluntary engagement and exploitation of institutions, phenomena which are in a dire need of academic attention if one is to better understand the crisis of the liberal international world order and the possible decline of multilateral institutions.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to the contributors to a Special Forum on Multinational Rapid Response Mechanisms in *Contemporary Security Policy* (2018) and to an edited volume on the same topic published by Routledge in 2019 for their willingness to participate in this project and provide the empirical foundation on which this article rests. We are also very grateful for comments and suggestions from the participants at the panel on 'Multinational Crisis Management: Coordination or Competition?' at the 11th Pan-European Conference on International Relations, Barcelona, 13–16 September 2017. Finally, we would like to thank the two anonymous peer reviewers for very constructive and useful input. Any errors and omissions remain our own.

Disclosure statement

The authors report no conflicts of interest.

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Notes

1. Karlsrud and Reykers, *Multinational Rapid Response Mechanisms*, 1–24.
2. Ibid.; de Coning, Gelot, and Karlsrud, *Future of African Peace Operations*; McInnis, *How and Why States Defect*; Williams, "Can Ad Hoc Security Coalitions in Africa."

3. As the term 'Coalition of the Willing' is a pleonasm, we will use only 'coalition' in the continuation of the article except when referring to mission names. See also McInnis, *How and Why States Defect*.
4. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was initiated in March 2018 and by the time of writing it was signed by 52 out of 55 member states, with only Benin, Eritrea and Niger missing. For more, see Tralac, "African Continental Free Trade Area."
5. de Coning, Gelot, and Karlsrud, *Future of African Peace Operations*.
6. Karlsrud, *UN at War?*
7. Brubacher, Damman, and Day, AU Task Forces."
8. Rupesinghe, "Joint Force of the G5 Sahel."
9. We hence echo McInnis' definition of coalitions as 'the operational-level grouping of states choosing to collaboratively prosecute a military mission'. McInnis, *How and Why States Defect*, 38.
10. Ibid.; Mello, "Paths towards Coalition Defection"; Wilkins, "'Alignment,' not 'Alliance.'"
11. Brubacher, Damman, and Day, AU Task Forces," 277.
12. Sauer, "Role of Informal International Organizations."
13. Henke, "Buying Allies," 130; see also Henke, "Networked Cooperation."
14. Drezner, "Viscosity of Global Governance."
15. Söderbaum and Tavares, "Problematizing Regional Organizations in African Security."
16. Karlsrud and Reykers, *Multinational Rapid Response Mechanisms*.
17. Mearsheimer, "False Promise of International Institutions," 7.
18. Keohane, *After Hegemony*, 13.
19. Ikenberry, "End of Liberal International Order?"
20. Crocker, Hampson, and Aall, "Collective Conflict Management."
21. Williams, "From Non-Intervention to Non-Indifference."
22. Karlsrud, *UN at War?*; Koops and Novosseloff, "United Nations Rapid Reaction Mechanisms."
23. Barnett and Finnemore, "Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations"; Krasner, *International Regimes*.
24. Abbott, Green, and Keohane, "Organizational Ecology and Institutional Change"; Hall and Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms"; Jupille and Snidal, "Choice of International Institutions"; Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal, "Rational Design of International Institutions."
25. Williamson, *Economic Institutions of Capitalism*.
26. Abbott and Snidal, "Why States Act through Formal International Organizations."
27. Hofmann, "Politics of Overlapping Organizations," 886; see also Barnett and Finnemore, "Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations"; Coleman, *International Organisations and Peace Enforcement*.
28. Patrick, "Multilateralism à la Carte"; Patrick, "Unruled World."
29. Patrick, "Multilateralism à la Carte"; see also Delreux and Keukeleire, "Informal Division of Labour in EU"; Happaerts, "Rising Powers in Global Climate Governance."
30. Alter and Meunier, "Politics of International Regime Complexity," 13.
31. Drezner, "Viscosity of Global Governance," 66.
32. Clermont and Eisenberg, "Exorcising the Evil of Forum-Shopping."
33. Alter and Meunier, "Politics of International Regime Complexity," 16.
34. Hofmann, "Overlapping Institutions in the Realm of International Security."
35. Drezner refers to a statement made by Francis Fukuyama: 'a multiplicity of geographically and functionally overlapping institutions will permit the United States and other powers to "forum shop" for an appropriate instrument to facilitate international cooperation'. Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads*, cited in Drezner, "Viscosity of Global Governance," 15.
36. Biermann, "Inter-Organizational Relations."
37. Hofmann, "Politics of Overlapping Organizations."
38. Biermann and Koops, *Palgrave Handbook of Inter-Organizational Relations*; Jupille, Mattli, and Snidal, *Institutional Choice and Global Commerce*.

39. Hofmann, "Why Institutional Overlap Matters."
40. Wilson, "UN Authorized Enforcement."
41. Ibid., 93.
42. Rynning, "Coalitions, Institutions and Big Tents."
43. Patrick, "Multilateralism à la Carte," 3; see also Weiss, "Is 'Good-Enough' Global Governance Good Enough?"
44. Annan, "Peacekeeping Prescription."
45. Reykers, "EU Battlegroups."
46. Ringsmose and Rynning, "NATO Response Force."
47. Darkwa, "African Standby Force."
48. However, significant challenges remain. For instance, the ASF concept does not envisage some of the key security challenges facing Africa today, such as terrorism, organized crime and humanitarian crises. For more, see Ani, "Is the African Standby Force any Closer."
49. Through sub-regional standby brigades in the case of the African Standby Force.
50. Darkwa, "African Standby Force," 477.
51. Reykers, "No Supply without Demand."
52. Ringsmose and Rynning, "NATO Response Force," 447.
53. Ibid.
54. Karlsrud and Reykers, *Multinational Rapid Response Mechanisms*.
55. Andersson, "If Not Now, When?," 1.
56. Ringsmose and Rynning, "NATO Response Force."
57. Williams, "Can Ad Hoc Security Coalitions in Africa."
58. Mello, "Paths towards Coalition Defection," 24; see also McInnis, *How and Why States Defect from Contemporary Military Operations*, 46.
59. Karlsrud, Rupesinghe, and Tull, "Tangled up in Glue."
60. Reykers, "No Supply without Demand."
61. de Coning, Gelot, and Karlsrud, *Future of African Peace Operations*, 125.
62. Brubacher, Damman, and Day, "AU Task Forces," 277.
63. Ibid.
64. Karlsrud, Rupesinghe, and Tull, "Tangled up in Glue," 147.
65. Mandrup, "Multinational Rapid Response Forces."
66. Ibid., 103.
67. de Coning, "Peace Enforcement in Africa," 149.
68. Breakey and Dekker, "Weak Links in the Chain of Authority"; Karlsrud, "UN at War."
69. Tull, "Limits and Unintended Consequences."
70. Formally known as the Special Representative of the African Union Commission Chairperson (SRCC).
71. Karlsrud, *UN at War?*, 115.
72. See eg Lindström and Zetterlund, *Setting the Stage for the Military Intervention in Libya*, 94.
73. Karlsrud and Reykers, *Multinational Rapid Response Mechanisms*. This rule is not without exceptions, however; the EU's Operation Artemis in the DRC in 2003 could be considered a fully fledged coalition response, but was of short duration – only three months.
74. See eg ibid. The volume examines the efforts of the AU, the EU, NATO and the UN to develop rapid response mechanisms, and contrasts these efforts to build formal mechanisms with an examination of the informal responses to conflicts in various parts of Africa.
75. Karlsrud et al., "Tangled up in Glue," 147.
76. ICG, "Time to Reset African Union."
77. See eg Ikenberry, "Liberal Internationalism 3.0."
78. See eg Raguin and Girard, "Toward a Global Health Approach."
79. See eg Superville, "Trump Directs Halt to Payments."
80. See eg Kickbusch, "Global Health Governance Challenges 2016."
81. See eg Abbott, Green, and Keohane, "Organizational Ecology and Institutional Change"; Falkner, "Paris Agreement and the New Logic."

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