

Task Force 06

**STRENGTHENING MULTILATERALISM AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE**

## Ad Hoc Coalitions in International Security: The Role of the G20

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**TF06**



## Abstract

In an era marked by resurgence of great power rivalry and a shift towards a more multipolar world order, global consensus in responding to international security crises poses a growing challenge. While UN peacekeeping operations are in decline, ad hoc coalitions are becoming an increasingly important feature of international crisis response and conflict management. Ad hoc coalitions, defined as autonomous arrangements with a task-specific mandate established at short notice for a limited time frame (Reykers et al. 2023), have multiplied in overall numbers as well as the number of states and international actors participating in them (see Figure 1). This trend reflects changes in global governance. International organizations (IOs) have been seen as ineffective in dealing with a rapidly changing world. In parallel, minilateral clubs, philanthropists and public-private partnerships have taken a larger share of the provision of global public goods in areas like health, digitalization and climate change.

G20 is an example of an informal international organization that, notably since 2008, has assumed a more significant role in coordinating the international community's response to crises and ensuring a rules-based global order. Increasingly, the G20 initiates responses in various policy fields, through traditional IOs as well as smaller clubs and coalitions of countries, playing a pivotal but under-recognized and under-explored role in contributing to them. Looking ahead, the G20 should craft a longer-term strategy to ensure that the international community has a relevant, nimble, legitimate, and agile set of crises response tools. Avoiding dysfunctional overlap through an effective division of labor is key for maintaining a stable and inclusive multilateral world order. The G20 is uniquely positioned to assume an active role in crafting this changing order. The AU's recent membership to the G20 expands the group's security agenda to issues of peace

operations and warrants a stronger focus on UN reform and the AU's role in peace operations.

At the G20 Summit, member states should:

- Identify comparative advantages of UN and regional peace operations vs. ad hoc coalitions, along the lines of division of labor.
- Recognize and support the efforts to develop and finance AU peace support operations.
- Identify best practices of ad hoc coalitions and provide recommendations for how to improve financing regimes to ensure that these operations do not become less accountable for human rights violations than their peers.

**Keywords:** ad hoc coalitions, African Union, international security, G20, global governance, peace operations, United Nations



## Diagnosis of the issue

Over the last two decades, global governance and international peace and security have changed greatly. UN multidimensional peace operations have been in decline, with no new missions deployed since 2014. This decline of the UN can be read into larger tectonic shifts in global politics. States have scaled back liberal ambitions and more often participate in and give support to operations with more limited and short-term counterinsurgency and counterterrorism goals (Karlsrud 2019). The growing divides in global politics have made an impact on how the international community responds to global challenges. Traditional international organizations such as the UN have increasingly been gridlocked and scrutinized for their inefficiency and slow response. The crisis in multilateralism has corresponded with an increase of new actors and informal modes of governance in the shapes of minilateral clubs, public-private partnerships and ad hoc coalitions (AHCs). The G20 is an example of such an informal mode of governance that has been actively addressing international problems, particularly since the financial crisis of 2008.

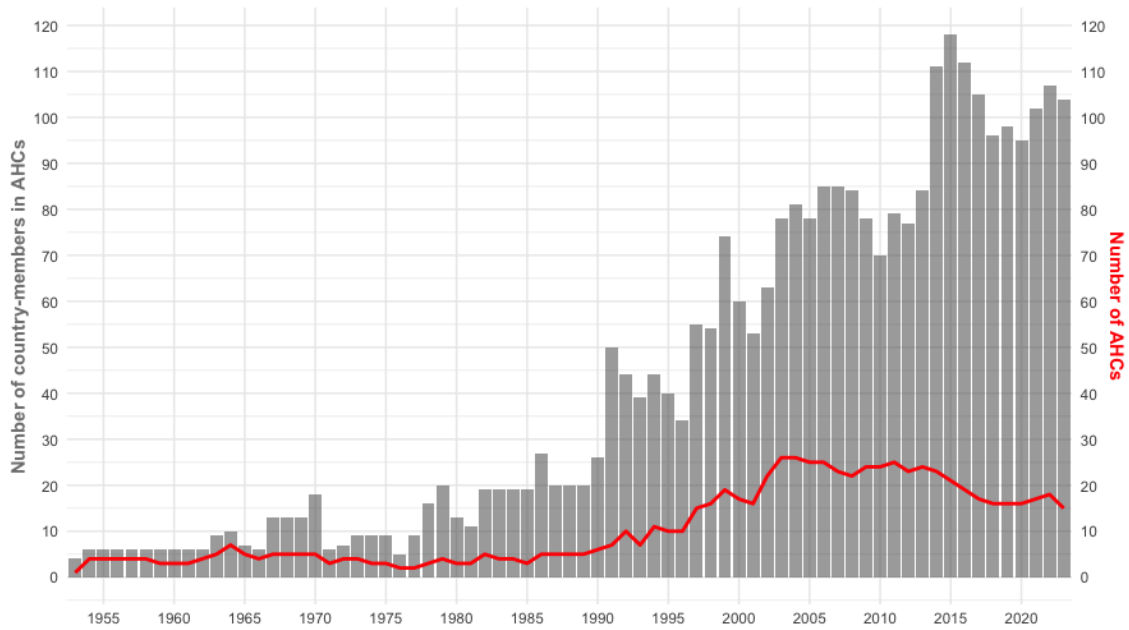


FIGURE 1. Number of country-members and AHCs over time (Maglia et al. forthcoming)

In the area of peace and security, this trend towards informality has also manifested itself in an increase of subregional and bilateral interventions, often in the shape of ad hoc coalitions (AHCs). AHCs have been used in global governance as an alternative arrangement to deal with problems that require fast action. They avoid gridlock, are swift to set up, align with states' self-interest and their wish to control national forces, include other actors, are easily dissolvable and focus on specific tasks (Reykers et. al 2023: 727). With the invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq AHCs became more visible. Since the end of the 2000s, they have plateaued in absolute numbers but increased in terms of countries participating (see Figure 1). While AHCs have been deployed worldwide, Africa has a higher concentration of cases. Recent examples include the Multinational Joint Task Force fighting Boko Haram (MNJTF) since 2015, the UN Security Council authorized, but not deployed, the Multinational Security Support Mission in Haiti, to be led by Kenya, or maritime missions such as the European Maritime Awareness Mission in the Strait of



Hormuz and the US-led Coalition Task Force Sentinel in the Gulf Region (Reykers and Rieker 2024).

Despite the crisis of multilateralism, we can also observe a trend of continuing institutional proliferation in global governance. AHCs are one phenomenon of an ever-denser network of international arrangements. This raises the question of how best to arrange this institutional diversity. AHCs are both a challenge and a complement to existing multilateral institutions. Notably on the African continent, they have emerged in functional niches left by the UN, AU and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Their operation, mandate and internal functioning significantly differ from a UN or AU mission. Division of labor, or *functional differentiation*, is a necessary condition for the effective management of actor density. Ideally, it avoids damaging competition and allows for building cooperative relationships in which a larger number of institutions co-govern the crisis response. As larger international organizations are often facing internal gridlock, a plurality of institutions which can take action is not necessarily a disadvantage or a sign of dysfunctionality. In this regard AHCs, when occupying a functional niche, offer complementary value and do not pose a significant challenge (Brosig 2024). In fact, most AHCs seek some form of approval from regional and global organizations.

However, recently we have seen the balance skewed more towards AHCs. In the longer term, AHCs can contribute to the deinstitutionalization of established international organizations like the AU and the UN, in the sense that “AHCs bypass standard procedures for decision-making processes, whittle down established institutional scripts and shift resource allocations” (Brosig and Karlsrud 2024: 1). Even when AHCs offer additional functionality, resources allocated to them might not be available for other institutions. When AHCs grow at the expense of other institutions, their effect can be malicious too.



Another aspect that is worth giving attention is the accountability concerns that come with AHC. Whereas AHCs are often seen as more responsive, effective and nimble, they are also often under less stringent demands of financial and human rights accountability. This makes them appear less legitimate compared to multilateral peace operations and gives them a patchier human rights record (Hofmann et al. 2024; Petrini and Pepe 2024).

### **What the G20 can do**

First, to sustain and strengthen a rules-based global order, the G20 can play an important role in ensuring that the international community maintains a toolbox for international peace and security that ranges from multidimensional UN peace operations to sharper and shorter counterterrorism operations, used according to their comparative advantages and functional differentiation. Many of the G20 members deploy as part of peace operations (AU, EU) and provide troops or finance operations (the EU and the US are among the largest contributors to UN, AU and AHCs).

Second, the G20 occupies an increasingly central role in global governance, being a sort of a *primus inter pares*, providing a more representative and balanced arena for discussing solutions to global challenges than e.g. the UN Security Council (UNSC).

The G20 can serve as a safeguard of multilateralism and act as a bridge between institutions primarily oriented towards the Global North and more informal arenas advocating for global governance reform, such as the BRICS. The G20 can also provide an informal platform for preparatory discussions to achieve greater consensus for issues on the UNSC agenda, particularly those that do not concern the strategic interest of one of the P5.

Third, the G20 member states include the key decision-makers on the UNSC and regularly discuss security situations and mandate UN and regional peace operations. The



Council has also supported the UN Secretary-General's initiative for stronger cooperation with the African Union, most recently by adopting UN Security Council resolution 2719 in December 2023 to provide more predictable, adequate and sustainable financing to African peace operations (UN 2023).

Security issues is an area of increasing relevance for the G20 where it can plan a constructive coordinative role at the global level. The recent accession of the AU is likely to bring a stronger emphasis on African security. Prominent discussions on the current international agenda are connected to the conflicts happening in Gaza and Ukraine. In the first G20 Foreign Ministers Meeting, in Rio de Janeiro, in February 2023, this was no different. The potential for using the G20 as a platform to orchestrate bilateral and multilateral engagement connected to peace and security is significant (Downie 2022), especially considering the reform of global governance as one of the priorities of the Brazilian presidency this year.





## Recommendations

With this in mind, G20 policymakers should have a focused discussion on the global peace and security toolbox to ensure effective, flexible, legitimate and sustainable responses to global security challenges.

G20 member states should:

- **Officially endorse AHCs as complementary short-term instruments** offering additional functionality for a global governance architecture in crisis and **ensure that funding for AHCs includes a human rights accountability framework.**
- **Identify comparative advantages of UN, regional and ad hoc peace operations** and update and reform doctrinal frameworks to **carve out a more defined space for AHCs** to ensure integration in the global peace and security architecture.
- Work with the United Nations to **reform UN peace operations** and ensure that operations are deployed into situations where there is consent of the main parties, while implementing comprehensive strategies aimed at resolving conflicts through mediation and sustainable peacebuilding initiatives.
- Support the efforts of the African Union to **reform and update the APSA** to align it with member state practices and interests when deploying AHCs. In practice, this means a move away from the AU's current setup of subregional brigades and towards more flexible, responsive and localized AHC responses in line with the AU's normative framework and mandated by the AU PSC.
- **Recognize and support the efforts to develop and finance AU peace support operations**, by pressing for reform of UN rules and regulations. This includes updating administrative procedures for reimbursement for personnel and contingent owned

equipment to facilitate strengthened cooperation and financing of African Union-mandated peace support operations deployed to high-tempo kinetic operations.

- The AU and EU should use the G20 as a platform for more effectively **coordinating their tripartite relations** involving the UN Security Council, AU Peace and Security Council and EU Peace and Security Council.

- Consider inputs for the *Pact for the Future*, the outcome document for the UN Summit of the Future slated for the UN General Assembly 2024, to ensure that the document will push for **reform of UN peace operations while acknowledging the important and complementary roles that UN peace operations, AU peace support operations and AHCs** have in the international peace and security toolbox.



## Scenario of outcomes

G20 discussion and unity on the role of ad hoc coalitions in international security can have a positive impact in several important areas.

With requisite reform and support, UN peace operations will remain a vital and important tool in the international toolbox. With the support of G20 member states, UN and AU will update their rules and regulations to ensure improved complementarities and most importantly maintaining the comparative advantages of different types of peace operations.

First, the G20 can influence the *Pact for the Future* outcome document by stressing the need for complementary development and use of the international peace and security toolbox, including UN peacekeeping operations, AU peace support operations and ad hoc coalitions, each used according to the situation on the ground and always within a political framework. This can strengthen responses to crises and peace operations in the long term.

Second, the operationalization of UN Security Council resolution 2719 on financing of AU peace support operations will need help from G20 member states. With this support, the UN can develop effective, relevant, legitimate and nimble rules and regulations on financial and operational support that are responding to the needs that AU peace support operations have in high-tempo kinetic environments. The G20 should also safeguard and support the continued use of UN peacekeeping operations in situations where there is consent from the main parties.

Third, G20 support should also be extended to the revision of and further realization of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), including AHCs, to ensure the ability of the AU and its member states to realize the goals of Agenda 2063 of a fully functional and operational APSA, contributing to long-term peace and stability in Africa.

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