Spaces of (in-)security and intervention: spatial competition and the politics of regional organizations in the Sahel

Edoardo Baldaro & Elisa Lopez Lucia

To cite this article: Edoardo Baldaro & Elisa Lopez Lucia (2022): Spaces of (in-)security and intervention: spatial competition and the politics of regional organizations in the Sahel, Territory, Politics, Governance, DOI: 10.1080/21622671.2022.2097303

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2022.2097303

Published online: 22 Jul 2022.
Spaces of (in-)security and intervention: spatial competition and the politics of regional organizations in the Sahel

Edoardo Baldaro a,b and Elisa Lopez Lucia b,*

ABSTRACT
This article investigates the interactions between three regional organizations – the G5 Sahel, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union – in the context of the Sahelian conflict. It argues that these organizations struggle for recognition by the international community and by their member states as the most legitimate regional security actor in the management of the conflict. By focusing on the politics driving these organizations’ interactions, this article makes two contributions. First, it complements and expands the literature on regional security governance by showing how these regional organizations are driven by legitimation struggles framed through spatial imaginaries. Each organization delineates a specific space of intervention – the Sahel, West Africa, the Sahelo-Sahara – to present itself as the right scale of governance. Second, identifying these spatial imaginaries enables a better understanding of African responses to the conflict in the Sahel, and provides insights into the reordering of (West) African security governance and, more broadly, the emergence of new modalities of security governance.

KEYWORDS
Sahel; West Africa; regional organizations; conflict management; regional security governance; spatialization

1. INTRODUCTION
Since the beginning of the conflict in Mali in 2012, the African Sahel1 has experienced a multiplication of intervening actors, and the creation of numerous (and usually redundant) security frameworks. This has determined the emergence of a ‘security traffic jam’ (Cold-Ravnkilde & Jacobsen, 2020), whose development directly affects how the region is defined and governed, as well as how security is delivered in the area. At the same time, the current form of the Sahel, as a space of (in-)security and intervention, is only the latest transformation within a larger historical process that has continuously reshaped the frontiers and systems of governance in the region (Charbonneau, 2017a).

Given these characteristics, we argue that the Sahel represents a crucial case for exploring the patterns of transformation of regional security governance and their underlying politics in a post-
9/11 international setting. More specifically, the analysis of security interventions in the area allows us to go beyond the institutionalist and functionalist outlook characterizing most of the literature on security governance (Ceccorulli et al., 2017), refocusing attention on the power dynamics shaping the interactions, imaginaries and practices of the actors involved.

We start with the observation that since the beginning of the conflicts in the Sahel at least three regional organizations (ROs) have claimed leadership in the management of the crisis: the G5 Sahel, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the African Union (AU), all of which have tried to assert themselves as central security deliverers, thus participating in the transformation of regional security governance in the area. The G5 Sahel is an organization formed by Mauritania, Niger, Mali, Chad and Burkina Faso in 2014 with the essential support of France and the European Union (EU). Its creation has challenged the central position of ECOWAS, traditionally the main regional security actor in West Africa, and one of the pillars of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) (Lopez Lucia, 2017). The G5 Sahel also destabilized the claim made by the AU for leadership following the launch in 2013 of the cooperation framework known as the Nouakchott Process (NP).

With the aim of exploring the politics driving the interactions of these three ROs, as well as investigating how they participate in the wider system of intervention in the area, the contribution this article makes is twofold. First, we claim that the politics among regional actors in the Sahel must be understood principally as a struggle for legitimacy and resources. In a region whose very definition has been influenced by the threat perceptions and ‘spatial imaginaries’ of international interveners (Charbonneau, 2017a), it is fundamental for ROs to be considered ‘legitimate’ regional security partners, since this enables them to attract financial and symbolic support from international donors, and to assert their authority within the regional security governance apparatus. Second, following a ‘socio-spatial approach’ to security (Adamson, 2016), we show how the three ROs have structured interactions among themselves and vis-à-vis international donors around competing processes of spatialization. By offering distinct spatial scales for the governance of the security issues plaguing the region, the three organizations have delineated alternative spaces of intervention – the Sahel, West Africa and the Sahelo-Sahara, respectively – and techniques of security governance. In doing so, they are co-participating in reordering (West) African security governance and, more broadly, defining new modalities of security governance.

Starting from these premises, in the next section we discuss how space is a central site of struggle in regional security governance. Subsequently, the three empirical sections explore: the regional governance landscape that has emerged since the 2012 Malian crisis; the competing self-legitimation strategies of ECOWAS, the G5, and the AU; and the consequent disruption and reordering of regional security governance. The empirical sections of the paper draw on the analysis of primary sources and official documents produced by the three ROs, and are based on data gathered during various periods of fieldwork, which has been conducted by the authors in Brussels, Paris, Mali and Nigeria since 2012.

2. SPACE AND LEGITIMACY IN REGIONAL SECURITY GOVERNANCE: THE POLITICS OF REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE SAHEL

Regional security governance is usually conceptualized as ‘the development and dynamics of security arrangements in a given region, institutionalized through regional and sub-regional organizations that share understandings, rules, and practices in the security realm’ (Kacowicz & Press-Barnathan, 2016, p. 299). Prioritizing the exploration of processes of institutionalization encapsulated by ROs, analyses of regional security governance tend to be dominated by a functional and rationalist perspective focused on ‘[the] governance (with respect to the “security”) side of the label’ (Ceccorulli et al., 2017, p. 60), stopping short of engaging with the ‘actual
politics, interactions and practices’ of ROs (Moe & Geis, 2020, p. 152). Moreover, while power dynamics and interactions among ROs, as well as between them and other security deliverers, remain understudied, this same literature usually fails to problematize space. Treating it as a ‘pre-given reality’, it fails to understand (regional) space as a socially constructed element that comes about as the result of constant interactions among actors, as well as the interactions between them and their environment (Massey, 2005). Accordingly, regional space is conceptualized here as an arena of meaning, action and disciplining power that is fluid, socially made and geographically bounded (Elden, 2013; Paasi, 2009, p. 226), shaped by the political, economic and cultural projects of a variety of actors (Engel, 2020a, p. 222).

Geography is thus ‘about power. … [T]he geography of the world is … a product of histories of struggle between competing authorities over the power to organize, occupy, and administer space’ (Ó Tuathail, 1996, p. 1), and conceptions of space and ordering praxes ‘emerge from each other and thus are inseparable’ (Häkli, 1998, p. 333). The history of the Sahel is no exception. Alternatively framed as a space connecting or dividing the Mediterranean from Sub-Saharan Africa, the Sahel has been dialectically recomposed by the encounter of ‘local’ dynamics with ‘external’ power and disciplining projections throughout its history (Raineri & Baldaro, 2021). In the post-colonial era, the region has passed from being understood as a space of poverty in which to test new development schemes patronized by international organizations (Bonnecase, 2011) to becoming an area identified by its humanitarian crisis, and one in which new forms of governmental rationality may be implemented, mainly through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working alongside local states, even as they implicitly reconfigure their sovereignty (Mann, 2015). If these reconfigurations of the region already pointed to the role of non-African actors and powers in shaping spatial imaginaries and policy possibilities, at the start of the 2000s a new understanding and framing of the area emerged. Following the ‘securitization’ initiatives implemented by Western security deliverers, the Sahel has been reimagined as a generator of insecurity and a space of intervention within the wider framework of the Global War on Terror (Baldaro, 2021a).

The re-creation of the Sahel in terms of insecurity and intervention reveals two principal elements that are key for understanding the politics of ROs’ involvement in conflict management in the area. On the one hand, the constant redefinition of the Sahel in the post-colonial era suggests that the processes of (re)spatialization are inextricably interlinked with and co-constitutive of specific conceptions of security (Bilgin, 2004).5 The ‘ungoverned space’ imaginary advanced by international interveners has created a region where deterritorialized threats such as transnational terrorists, criminal groups and armed conflicts are defining features (Charbonneau, 2017b). Simultaneously, this interpretation of the region implies specific prescriptions for intervention, which should be based on policing and hard-security approaches and practices reiterating a territorialized – that is, state-centred – spatial and security imaginary (Baldaro, 2021a). In recent years, various scholars have employed these ‘spatial lenses’ (Döring & Herpolsheimer, 2021) to explore how competing security and spatial projects are shaping those spaces and the field of security regionalism in the Sahel (Baldaro, 2021a), revealing the transformative effects that the politics of security and regionalism produce on space and the agency of the actors involved (Charbonneau, 2017b; Lopez-Lucia, 2020).

On the other hand, the current reconfiguration suggests that the politics of ROs’ interactions cannot be dissociated from the broader international politics of intervention. As noted by Brosig (2013), African security governance is based on strong interdependency between African and non-African actors. Exploring institutional security interactions in Africa thus requires us to take into account non-African interveners such as the EU and the United Nations (UN), former colonial powers, or other influential states (Moe & Geis, 2020). Accordingly, the strategies these ROs deploy towards member states, each other and international partners are also influenced by
an international politics of intervention and spatial reimagination (Baldaro, 2021b; Herpolsheimer, 2021; Plank, 2021).

This context doubly constrains African ROs. First, through financial and symbolic incentives, international partners are able to frame, to various extents, the mandates, strategies, practices and interactions of African ROs shaping the latter’s degree of political authority and autonomy. Second, the scarcity of financial and human resources characterizing conflict management in the Sahel constrains these ROs to compete with one another for financial resources (Ojanen, 2017), which is why legitimacy has become a central issue for them. Legitimacy, regarding the right to rule and govern (Reus-Smit, 2014), influences the choice international donors make when they decide to support one or more of these ROs. The AU, ECOWAS and the G5 are thus engaged in a politics of legitimation through which they cast themselves as having the most appropriate framework to tackle the Sahelian conflict. Indeed, legitimation is ‘conferred by others based on a subjective belief that an object is socially acceptable, that is, congruent with the norms of appropriate behaviour of those evaluating’ (Biermann, 2017, p. 339). Furthermore, legitimation audiences are not restricted to international donors. Since these organizations overlap in terms of membership, they must also convince their members that they are the most legitimate actors to organize security governance in the Sahel and beyond.

In the case of conflict management in the Sahel, these legitimation struggles are mediated by the ROs’ ability to naturalize the connection they make between a space of intervention (the Sahel, West Africa, Sahel-Sahara) – which can be constructed as a source of threat, as with the Sahelian ‘ungoverned space’, or as an object to be defended, like the West African political community – and a scale of governance (the G5, ECOWAS, AU), meaning the ‘right’ governance level for a specific space of intervention. The definition of a space of intervention thus enables these ROs to justify themselves as constituting the right scale of governance. Hence, the three ROs engage in self-legitimation strategies framed through distinct spatial imaginaries based on interconnected spatial representations, security concepts and understandings of the conflict.

Besides accessing international resources, two other elements are at stake in this competition. First, since the spatial ‘can shake up the manner in which certain political questions are formulated’ (Massey, 2005, p. 9), it opens up a field of possible taxonomies, narratives and appropriate security responses (Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992). The definition of spaces of intervention is thus associated with different ways of addressing problems: from a focus on hard security responses to terrorism in the framework of the G5 Sahel to a socio-economic perspective that is embedded in the regional political community imaginary of ECOWAS. Second, this spatial competition is also a struggle over the redefinition of the social order, since naming a space ‘indicates distinctive roles, capacities for action, and access to power within the social order’ (Harvey, 1990, p. 419). The Sahel is thus hosting a struggle for the reordering of African security governance, mainly of the APSA, through (re)allocation of political authority among ROs and the emergence of new forms of security governance.

3. CHANGING THE GOVERNANCE LANDSCAPE: THE EMERGENCE OF THE G5 SAHEL

On 19 December 2014, the presidents of Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad announced the creation of the G5 Sahel, an institutional framework aimed at furthering regional cooperation in the security and development domains (G5 Sahel, 2014, p. 1). As acknowledged by the first Permanent Secretary Najim El-hadj Mohamed, the organization was ‘sometimes perceived as … an organization in excess, or as just another organization claiming … monopoly over the label “Sahel”’ (G5 Sahel, 2016, p. 4), in a context where ECOWAS and the AU, in accordance with the APSA provisions, were already intervening and experiencing frictions.
The simultaneous presence of ECOWAS and the AU in the Sahel is explained by their geographical scope, their historical trajectory and the associated redefinition of their mandates in the security domain. Since its creation in 2002, as successor to the Organization for African Unity, the AU had displayed its new ambitions in the peace and security domain through the establishment of the APSA. As its foundational charter declared (AU, 2002), the organization internationally championed a normative shift from ‘non-intervention’ to ‘non-indifference’ in internal conflict and crisis situations, establishing formal ties in 2007 with the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (Williams, 2014). Notwithstanding these ambitions and an effort to shoulder the costs of its operational budget, the AU failed to secure the necessary funds and capabilities for the deployment of African peace support operations – a central dimension of the APSA – thereby perpetuating an important material dependence vis-à-vis international partners (Engel, 2020b). 8

Structured through collaboration between the AU and regional economic communities (RECs) and regional mechanisms (RMs), and embodied in various organs (e.g., the African Standby Force (ASF) 9 and the Continental Early Warning System), the APSA has compelled African ROs to strengthen their ties. 10 Döring and Herpolsheimer (2021, p. 127) observe that the APSA is vertically organized through a ‘spatial imagination of scalar hierarchy’ (regional, continental, global) connecting the RECs/RMs to the AU and the UN by placing the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) at the ‘centre’. However, this vertical organization did not preclude a certain ambiguity concerning which scale has primary responsibility for African peace and security. While in principle this is held by the AU (AU, 2002, art. 16), the ‘principles of subsidiarity, complementarity and comparative advantage’ are often invoked to support the leadership role of the RECs (AU-REC, 2008, art. IV), commonly seen as closer to and having more knowledge of the conflict (Lins de Albuquerque, 2016). ECOWAS is a case in point of this interpretation: thanks to conflict-management experience accumulated in the 1990s in Liberia and Sierra Leone, ECOWAS was internationally recognized as a reliable partner for peacekeeping. This came – albeit to a lesser extent than the AU thanks to the community levy – with an increasing financial dependence vis-à-vis external partners, and particularly the EU, which had contributed to financing development of its security architecture (Lopez Lucia, 2018). When the crisis in Mali began in 2012, these persisting tensions resurfaced and complicated relations between ECOWAS and the AU.

Building on its experience in mediation and conflict resolution in West Africa – albeit not in the Sahel specifically – and following the principle of subsidiarity, ECOWAS was the first African RO to assume leadership. Through the initiative of Burkina Faso President Compaoré, ECOWAS mediated between the post-coup transitional Malian government and the northern rebels, obtaining the signature of the Ouagadougou agreement in June 2013 (International Crisis Group (ICG), 2016). The organization also planned to set up a mission, the Mission Internationale de soutien au Mali (MICEMA), though its deployment was a failure. Besides capacity problems, the politics of ECOWAS was also a significant factor here, as leadership from major ECOWAS countries – particularly Nigeria, but also Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire – was clearly lacking (Bagayoko, 2019; Grebe, 2018). Moreover, the reluctance of the Malian authorities to accept ECOWAS troops on their territory also delayed deployment and showed their unwillingness to engage with ECOWAS on these issues.

Revealing the persistent Francophone–Anglophone tensions within the organization (ICG, 2016), this objection by the Malian authorities also undermined ECOWAS’s central claim to being the legitimate actor protecting the West African community. Reluctance regarding ECOWAS’s involvement also came from Mali’s non-ECOWAS neighbours, especially Mauritania and Algeria, which were closely connected to the conflict dynamics emerging in northern Mali (Lacher, 2013). The dormant nature of the North African Standby Force (NASF), 11 to which they belong within the ASF, hindered their involvement in the first APSA response to
the conflict, dominated by ECOWAS. In spite of their involvement in ECOWAS meetings, they were opposed to an ECOWAS intervention and supported a political solution to the conflict (Döring, 2018; Lacher, 2013).

In the midst of these tensions, the strategic leadership of MICEMA was contentiously transferred in March 2013 to the AU – becoming the African-led international Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) – on the argument, supported by the UN, that transforming it into a continental initiative would allow non-ECOWAS neighbours to participate (Thomas, 2012). This was a way of reinforcing the ‘vertical spatial imagination of APSA, as ECOWAS actors were referred [by the UNSC] (“back”) to the AU PSC as the prime authority for peace and security on the continent’ (Döring & Herpolsheimer, 2018, p. 130). This first struggle around the right scale of regional security governance opened the debate regarding which organization within the APSA should have primacy in conflict management efforts in the Sahel. Regardless, this leadership change made the mission even more complex and paved the way to its transfer to the UN through its July 2013 transformation into the Mission Multidimensionnelle Intégrée des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation au Mali (MINUSMA) (Desgrais, 2018), as well as the early 2013 launch of the French Opération Serval to reconquer northern Mali.

This French intervention was an embarrassment for the AU as regards the ability of the APSA to offer African solutions to African problems (Döring, 2018). On 17 March 2013, partly in reaction to this intervention, the AU launched the NP at a meeting on security cooperation and the operationalization of the APSA in the Sahelo-Saharan region attended by Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, the permanent members of the UNSC, and organizations such as ECOWAS, EU and UN (AU, 2013a). Although located within the APSA and led by the AU, the NP aims to foster security cooperation within a new space, the Sahelo-Saharan region, thereby challenging the spatial organization of the APSA, which is built on already geographically delimited regions. The AU also indirectly tried to regain a direct role in the peace process in Mali through the initiatives of Algeria, a country that has traditionally shaped the AU’s position on security and terrorism, and that strongly supported the launch of the NP. In 2014, following the overthrowing of Compaoré from the Burkinabe presidency, Algeria took the lead in the process that brought to the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. This activism enabled Algeria to regain some influence while limiting military interventionism in the Sahel, both by African and international actors, after its own regional security cooperation mechanisms had failed.

The conflict in the Sahel soon became the epicentre of many overlapping and sometimes competing concerns and interests. It is in this context of frictions that the G5 Sahel was created as an alternative scale of governance, this time located outside the APSA.

### 4. STRATEGIES OF SELF-LEGITIMATION: REINTERPRETING SPACE AND SECURITY THROUGH SPATIAL IMAGINARIES

The emergence of the G5 Sahel as the new ‘darling’ of external actors has created an even more competitive environment in which the three ROs sought to become or remain the most legitimate scale of regional security governance – thus reaping the ensuing benefits. To ensure the support of international donors but also of their own state membership, overlapping across the three ROs, they have deployed self-legitimation strategies framed by distinct spatial imaginaries that identify alternative scales of governance (the AU, ECOWAS, G5) through the definition of different spaces of intervention (the Sahelo-Sahara, West Africa, Sahel).
4.1. The G5 Sahel’s functional security region

The spatial imaginary framing the G5 Sahel’s self-legitimation strategy is very much directed at, and inspired by, external actors, particularly France and the EU. The debate surrounding the establishment of the organization usually acknowledges the central role played by European partners in promoting – not to say ‘imposing’ – the creation of a new regional scale of governance. Relying on its role as former colonial power and security provider of last resort for local regimes, France favoured the elaboration of a common framework of action involving the Chiefs of Defence Staff of the countries which then formed the G5 (Desgrais, 2018). Moreover, France and the EU strongly advocated the creation of a regional framework gathering the five countries at the centre of their strategies, with the aim of interacting with a single ‘Sahelian’ counterpart at both the political and security–military levels. In their eyes, the G5 Sahel was a more easily controllable regional counterpart, thought to reproduce the spatial imaginary of the 2011 ‘European Strategy for the Sahel’ and the French mission Barkhane which, succeeding Serval in 2014, significantly restructured the local French military presence by concentrating its deployment in the territories of the G5 countries (Charbonneau, 2017a). This move by European actors also met an emerging preference for more functional and security-focused regional initiatives, perceived as better fitted for tackling African security challenges (Grebe, 2018; Lopez-Lucia, 2020).

Responding to these external incentives, the self-legitimation strategy of the G5 operates through a spatial imaginary aimed at detaching the Sahel from the rest of West Africa by giving a distinct identity to a territorial ‘core’ within the Sahelian band: the five Sahelian states are presented as ‘homogenous in terms of their physical and natural characteristics and on the basis of their socio-economic development indexes, and … because of their history, geography, culture and [geopolitical positioning]’ (G5 Sahel, 2016, p. 3). This homogeneity is reiterated in the G5’s 2016 Sahel Strategy, where the ‘Sahelian’ identity – in opposition to the West African and Sahel–Saharan imaginaries – is given particular prominence, and the five countries are presented as the ‘Principal Sahelian States’ (G5 Sahel Permanent Secretary, 2016, p. 13). Confirming this attempt to create a common identity for ‘all the Sahelians’ (G5 Sahel, 2020, p. 3), in 2017 the organization established the ‘Day of the G5 Sahel’, celebrated in the five countries every 19 December (G5 Sahel, 2021, p. 1).

Besides responding to external actors’ spatial framing to ensure easier access to international financial and material support (Tisseron, 2015), this Sahelian distinctiveness is also expected to transform the G5 Sahel into the central actor, able to coordinate, and implicitly lead, the efforts of the other regional entities (G5 Sahel, 2019, pp. 3–4; G5 Sahel Permanent Secretary, 2020, p. 3). This remains an important reason behind the creation of the G5 Sahel, strongly supported by Chad and Mauritania, which are not members of ECOWAS. Similarly, Mali has historically distrusted ECOWAS, and maintained ambivalent relations with Algeria – and consequently the AU – due to the influence that country has tried to exert in Mali’s north (Bagayoko, 2019).

Building on this distinct Sahelian identity, the G5 further characterizes this space as being a ‘coherent complex’ made of transnational networks of terrorism and organized crime: ‘the immensity of uncontrolled territory, the porosities of borders, the recrudescence of armed conflicts, illicit traffic and organized crime, have transformed the Sahel region into the soft underbelly of Africa, where all these threats intersect, combine, mutate, and develop’ (G5 Sahel, 2018, p. 12). This imaginary, already exposed in the 2015 G5 Sahel–EU ‘Roadmap’ (G5 Sahel, 2015), clearly echoes the ‘ungoverned space’ framework produced by international partners (Charbonneau, 2017b). By equating this space to a bounded ‘ungoverned space’ constituted by transnational criminal and terrorist networks whose activities are furthered – and even ‘caused’ – by the ‘absence’ of local states on their peripheries, this narrative ultimately turns the
Sahel into a region in need of the deployment of the G5 Sahel’s security and development activities (G5 Sahel Permanent Secretary, 2016, pp. 16–18).

The G5 Sahel’s spatial imaginary is thus one of a functional security region – mainly defined by its own threats – in need of development, governance and, above all, hard security responses as a prerequisite to return state control and order to the region. The G5 Sahel presents itself as the rational solution inasmuch as it embodies ‘the right format and the right level for treating issues which are specifically Sahelian’ (G5 Sahel, 2016, p. 4).

4.2. ECOWAS’s West African political community

In a period when the AU launched various initiatives to assert its primacy by redrawing the APSA geography, and the G5 Sahel tried to carve out its place in the architecture, it was important for ECOWAS to (re)affirm its place as a central security actor in West Africa vis-à-vis international donors and its own member states, particularly those that created the G5. To do so it has built on its spatial imaginary of West Africa as a political community in construction whose citizens ECOWAS is meant to protect.

This spatial imaginary presents threats from the Sahel as essential threats to West Africa: Sahelian and West African security are connected, as the Sahel belongs almost entirely to West Africa, with ‘the consequence that negative developments in the Sahel directly impact on all states of the community’ (ECOWAS, 2018). West Africa is consequently identified as the appropriate space for intervention, insofar as it is the space that should be protected, and whose regional dynamics should be taken into account when elaborating a response to the conflict.

Contrarily to the G5 Sahel, which mainly identifies the Sahel as a region defined by transnational security threats, ECOWAS portrays West Africa as a political community based on rules and principles in which integration, security, and the well-being of its citizens are all intertwined. This imaginary is anchored in the history of ECOWAS’s construction and Nigeria’s central role in it. The Nigerian Civil War (1967–70) was a decisive moment: seeing France help secessionist Biafra and use Côte d’Ivoire as a base for its support radically changed Nigeria’s perception of its national security (Aluko, 1971; Obi, 2008). Having learnt that Nigerian security interests were interlinked with those of neighbouring countries (Aluko, 1971), the Nigerian government decided to connect an economic integration project to its project of national development and security, to reduce the dependence of West African countries on European countries and especially on France (Obi, 2008). This led to the 1975 creation of ECOWAS, initiated by the Nigerian and Togolese governments to bridge the Anglophone/Francophone divide in West Africa. A strong community discourse emerged from this process, linking West African states’ security, socio-economic development and integration, with ECOWAS designated as the community’s protector – a role embodied by the right of intervention bestowed by West African states on ECOWAS in the event of threats to democracy, humanitarian disasters, serious violations of human rights, and threats to regional peace and security (ECOWAS, 1999, art. 41; ECOWAS, 2008, art. 25). This role was particularly supported by the EU from the early 2000s through regular political dialogues, technical assistance and funding for the ECOWAS security architecture (Lopez Lucia, 2018; Plank, 2021).

Drawing on this imaginary, the conflict in the Sahel has been identified in ECOWAS documents as a danger to the process of integration and the socio-economic well-being of West African citizens: ‘the challenges of insecurity posed by corruption, terrorism, communal clashes … and other transnational organized crimes are some of the vices threatening peace, progress, integration and development in the region’ (ECOWAS, 2019). ECOWAS is thus presented as the appropriate scale of governance for intervening in West Africa, the ‘right’ space of intervention, and a multidimensional solution (political, socio-economic, and security) protecting the integration process and West African citizens.
Besides its continuous mediation role in Mali, meant to enforce the rule and norms of the community, the contrast between the ECOWAS (2013) Sahel Strategy and those of the AU and G5 is revealing of this manner of framing conflict and its solutions; the former starts from an assessment of the socio-economic root causes of the Sahelian crisis and from there advocates actions aimed at the long-term stabilization and socio-economic development of the area, also furthering regional integration (Gnanguênô, 2014). Proposing integrated security and development projects in the areas of infrastructures, pastoral livestock and education, the ECOWAS Sahel Strategy’s aim is ‘the emergence of a community free from the scourge of hunger and malnutrition, and deeply rooted in the principle of tolerance, peace and democracy’ (ECOWAS, 2015). This response to the conflict, anchored in the concept of human security (ICG, 2016), was at odds with the G5, AU and international actors. Although all agreed on the main issue to tackle – terrorism – these actors have privileged a ‘security-first’ approach mostly focused on the symptoms of the crisis, while the ECOWAS strategy has approached the conflict almost exclusively from a human security perspective emphasizing socio-economic responses.

4.3. The AU’s fluid and functional security region

Reflecting on the ‘inability of the AU to intervene in Mali in mid-January 2013’, when the ‘looming disaster was averted thanks to the French operation “Serval”’, the PSC asserted that ‘this operation could have and should have been undertaken by African troops’ (AU Assembly, 2013, p. 3). The establishment of the NP, together with another AU initiative, the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC) (see below), were thus to a great extent a reaction to the problems encountered in the deployment of AFISMA and the embarrassment caused by the French intervention (Döring, 2018).

Hence, the NP, an initiative of the AU Commission (Döring, 2018) aimed at opening a new space of intervention in the Sahel-Sahara, was an attempt to provide a homegrown solution to the conflict. It is meant to provide for a broad security coordination framework for the countries of this new region to enhance ‘the effectiveness of the fight against terrorism and transnational crime through appropriate border monitoring measures and exchange of intelligence information’ (AU, 2013a, p. 1). To situate this security initiative within a broader framework and as an answer to the strategies devised by the EU and ECOWAS, in 2014 the continental organization adopted an ‘AU Strategy for the Sahel region’; this strategy is supposed to ‘federate’ and find synergies between all the actions of African and international actors engaged in the Sahel (AU, 2014a, p. 6). These initiatives are part of the AU’s moves to position itself at the centre of the APSA geography – something it has recalled to both the RECs and the UN (AU Assembly, 2013, p. 3).

The AU has anchored its central position in a spatial imaginary identifying the Sahelo-Saharan space as the right space of intervention, cutting across the APSA, and more specifically the region-based ASF, geography and thus requiring an appropriate scale of governance (the AU) to bridge previously separated regions. This ‘Sahelo-Saharan’ region is identified functionally – similarly to the G5’s ‘Sahel’ – by the transnational security threats that constitute it. The interconnexion between terrorism and organized crime is presented as a specific feature of this area (AU, 2014a), defined by ‘long borders, vast territorial spaces where the presence of the state is very limited or non-existent’, thus requiring ‘enhanced coordination and cooperation between the concerned countries’ (see also AU, 2013b; AU, 2015b, p. 23). Not unlike the ungoverned space narrative and illustrating the Westphalian ideal that has shaped the AU’s image of statehood (Döring, 2018), this spatial imaginary indicates how the ‘weakness of border control exercised by the states of the Sahelo-Saharan sub-region’ and their lack of capabilities has enabled these transnational threats to emerge (AU, 2014a, p. 13). The AU Sahel Strategy responds to this weakness with a list of capacity-building and regional cooperation activities in the security and governance sectors (AU, 2014a). Even more than the G5, which highlights
the cultural and historical connection of the Sahelian states, the AU’s spatial imaginary considers transnational security issues as the defining feature of this region (AU, 2015a, p. 6).

The AU’s self-legitimation strategy diverges from the G5 in its territorial element. In contrast with the G5 Sahel, which defines the Sahel as an ungoverned space delimited by the territory of its member states, the AU offers a broader and more fluid – albeit still state-centric – definition of the Sahelo-Saharan space, involving different layers of states depending on the issue at hand. A first layer – representing the core of the Sahelo-Saharan space – includes Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Sudan, while a second layer, situated beyond this core, expands to Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria and Senegal, which are considered countries that also deserve ‘special attention’ (AU, 2014a, p. 2). This representation of the Sahelo-Saharan region as a functional and fluid region characterized by transnational threats is at the very core of the AU’s self-legitimation strategy. The AU makes clear – pointing to ‘the inappropriateness of the geographical coverage of the different existing structures’ (AU, 2013b, p. 3) – that it considers itself as the only organization that can ‘legitimately provide an umbrella for the regional initiatives in the Sahel, which transcends almost three geographical regions [North, West and Central in the ASF geography] of the continent and is thus situated beyond the space of any regional mechanism’ (AU, 2014a, p. 5). Under the objective of ‘operationalizing’ the APSA, the NP is in fact redrawing its geography by reshaping ‘a space across three ASF forces in the form of the Sahelo-Saharan region’ (Döring, 2018, p. 50). A redrawing which gives a greater role to AU, asserts its primacy in African peace and security, and enables a state like Algeria to recover a predominant position in its traditional area of influence, from which it was excluded in the ASF geography.

5. DISRUPTION AND REORDERING OF AFRICAN REGIONAL SECURITY GOVERNANCE

In 2015, G5 Sahel countries started conducting Joint Transborder Military Operations in the transborder areas of the region. They were deployed with the support and participation of Opération Barkhane and MINUSMA (Bagayoko & Ba, 2020), and provided in 2017 the foundation for the creation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force (G5S-JF). This multinational force, consisting of 5000 soldiers from the G5 Sahel countries (ICG, 2017), marked the rise of the G5 Sahel as international support17 converged to invest in the operationalization of this G5S-JF, seen until recently as the main security response to the conflict alongside Opération Barkhane.18 Directly responding to the interests of France and the EU, the G5 Sahel rapidly became the focal point of the international community concerning the management of the conflict, and this in spite of the many deficiencies of the Joint Force19 and its poor human rights record (Bagayoko, 2019). The G5’s spatial imaginary became the unique frame of reference for international interveners’ engagement, as illustrated by the launch of international coordination mechanisms such as the Sahel Alliance, the Partnership for Security and Stability (P3S), and the Coalition for the Sahel, created after 2018, following a French and European impulsion, and reproducing this imaginary. However, the success of the G5 Sahel self-legitimation strategy also has its downside: while it has enabled G5 Sahel states to concentrate international financial and political support and disrupt the traditional functioning of the APSA, its political authority and agency over Sahelian security matters remain circumscribed by international priorities (Lopez-Lucia, 2020).

In this context, it is no surprise that ECOWAS remains reluctant to back the central role of the G5 Sahel, despite signing a memorandum of understanding with the organization in July 2018 (Grebe, 2018). ECOWAS’s mistrust runs deep and originates in the creation of the G5 outside the ECOWAS framework and without consulting all its member states. ECOWAS – and its largest member state Nigeria, in particular – also sees it as a French initiative that could endanger the integration process (Bagayoko, 2019; Grebe, 2018),20 exacerbating the
Francophone/Anglophone divide and diverting international funding. In a post-colonial West African context, the French-supported G5 continues to play into the struggle for influence between France and a Nigeria-led ECOWAS.

Confronted with the rise of the G5 Sahel and the marginalization of its Sahel Strategy, which did not attract any international commitment to support its implementation, ECOWAS has attempted to regain a more central role in the management of the conflict by exploiting the expansion towards West African coastal states of the conflict dynamics previously localized in the territories of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso (ICG, 2019). This expansion led various actors to question the appropriateness of the G5 Sahel spatial imaginary to the ‘regional contagion of jihadist violence’ (ICG, 2019, p. 9). This opinion was relayed by several ECOWAS member states – Senegal, Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana and Togo, along with G5 member Burkina Faso – dissatisfied with the restrictive membership of the G5 Sahel and/or concerned with the worsening security conditions (Roger, 2019). In the absence of any initiative from Nigeria, focused on its own terrorism-related issue in the Lake Chad basin, Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana and Togo launched the Accra Initiative in 2017, a cooperative security mechanism meant to address transnational organized crime in border areas and prevent spillover of terrorist activities (Kwarkye et al., 2019).

Building on this dynamic, since 2016 ECOWAS has initiated various conferences bringing together regional and international actors to discuss the situation in the Sahel and reaffirm its political authority in West African security matters (ECOWAS, 2017b; ICG, 2019). It called, for instance, for the full implementation of the ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which is supposed to provide coherence to all related initiatives, including the G5 Sahel (ECOWAS, 2019). In September 2019, at the Ouagadougou summit, the organization also announced the mobilization of US$1 billion from internal funds dedicated to the fight against terrorism, and the involvement of the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) (ECOWAS Authority, 2019a). In December, this announcement was followed by Action Plan 2020–24 to eradicate terrorism in the region, with an estimated budget of US$2.3 billion (ECOWAS Authority, 2019b); this has de facto become the new Sahel strategy of the organization. This shift of focus from the 2013 Sahel Strategy demonstrates the consensus that emerged after the engagement of international actors in the Sahel around foregrounding hard security measures in the fight against terrorism. At the expense of its political community imaginary, ECOWAS had to converge towards this consensus to appear relevant again to international actors and also to its own member states, which have started, besides the G5, to create initiatives such as the Accra Initiative, outside of ECOWAS’ framework.

To support its political authority claim, ECOWAS also adapted the territorial element of its spatial imaginary by acknowledging the Sahel not just as a part of West Africa but as a ‘connected and fluid region’ at the centre of West Africa, Central Africa and North Africa (ECOWAS, 2013, p. 7). This representation of a fluctuating security area shared by bounded and established regions was embodied in practice by the Joint Summit on terrorism and violent extremism that ECOWAS organized in July 2018 with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). Asserting the need to respect the APSA as the main framework to deal with peace and security in Africa, the final declaration backs the leadership of the two RECs over what they identify as their shared space (ECOWAS-ECCAS, 2018). Within this space, ECOWAS presents the G5 as a circumscribed initiative that should be part of a broader one under its aegis or an ECOWAS-ECCAS partnership (ECOWAS, 2017b; ECOWAS-ECCAS, 2018). Doing so, it also responds to the criticism raised by the AU that the RECs do not geographically provide the right scale of governance within the APSA to address these transnational issues. This positioning of ECOWAS and the AU towards the APSA illustrates well Döring and Herpolsheimer’s (2021, p. 130) argument that even though ‘the phrase “apply APSA” is contested and used by different actors for different purposes’, it constitutes a common reference that enables
them to make legitimacy claims. In our case, both ECOWAS and the AU have anchored their legitimacy in the APSA to assert their centrality; the former by embodying its traditional geography, the latter, meanwhile, seeking to ‘operationalize’ the APSA by redrawing its geography.

In spite of these efforts, ECOWAS was progressively marginalized from conflict management efforts in the Sahel, apart from the issue of Malian democratic transition. The organization barely features in the two Sahel Strategies of the EU, and the lack of references to ECOWAS as a major partner in the recent P3S and Coalition for the Sahel initiatives is also revealing (ICG, 2019; see also European External Action Service (EEAS), 2020). It is noteworthy that while today many EU officials acknowledge the limits of the G5 and its Joint Force, they do not consider ECOWAS to be a realistic alternative.25

On the AU’s side, we saw the coordinating ambitions of the NP. They, however, did not last long, as international actors concentrated their support in the G5 and created international mechanisms of coordination like the Coalition for the Sahel. Alongside the creation of the NP, the AU also launched another initiative, the ACIRC. This proposal emerged from the observation that the ASF and its rapid deployment capability (RDC) were still not fully operational, which led to the French intervention in Mali (AU, 2013b). The objective was thus to provide ‘African solutions to African problems’ to ensure ‘collective self-reliance’ (AU, 2013c, p. 6) in the form of an efficient mechanism to be deployed in case of emergency until the ASF was fully operational (AU, 2013b). Notwithstanding this shared objective, the ACIRC is an unorthodox and contested proposal within the APSA, as it is not based on its regional components. Indeed, the ACIRC would consist of a reservoir of 5000 troops including battle groups of 1500 personnel to be rapidly deployed and pledged by a lead nation or a group of AU member states (AU, 2013c). Troops would thus not come from the concerned region’s standby force, but rather from any willing African state.

This particular ‘respatialization of the ASF geography’ (Döring, 2018, p. 42) can be seen as a ‘de-regionalization’ move within the APSA, supported by AU institutions and some of its member states to gain more control and influence to the detriment of the RECs. As Roux (2013) puts it, removing regional authorization processes ‘would leave a great deal of power in the hands of the AU secretariat, the AU Peace and Security Council and the small “club” of willing-and-able ACIRC countries like South Africa’. Indeed South Africa, particularly wary of extra-continental intervention and willing to strengthen its leadership in continental peace and security issues, was the country that tabled the initiative (Roux, 2013). Algeria, marginalized by the dormant nature of the NASF, has a strong interest in supporting this alternative to the ASF geography. The two states held the key positions of AU Chairperson of the Commission and Commissioner for Peace and Security when the ACIRC was proposed. Conversely, Nigeria has opposed this initiative, fearing its consequences in the ASF, and reluctant to give too much power to South Africa (Fabricius, 2014).

Here too, this initiative was legitimizted through the AU’s Sahelo-Saharan spatial imaginary of a fluid and functional security region that (allegedly) show how transnational criminal flows can form new spaces that do not fit within the traditional APSA geography. This de-regionalization is meant not to eradicate regional division from the APSA, but to turn regional standby forces into one instrument among others for tackling peace and security issues. This complexification of the APSA is an opportunity for the AU to increase its centrality in the APSA geography and for some member states to gain more direct access to the AU, thereby asserting their leadership in continental security (Döring, 2018).

However, the PSC’s decision to endorse the G5S-JF and de facto integrate it within the APSA framework seemed to spell the end of the ACIRC, which was supposed to be deployed in the Sahel (AU, 2014b).26 However, the debate regarding the ACIRC’s future seems to remain open, as the PSC (2020) recently welcomed a Draft Strategic Concept Note of the AU Commission on the deployment of a 3000-strong force in the Sahel.
6. CONCLUSIONS

The Sahel provides important insights about current changes shaping African security governance. Interactions between the G5 Sahel, ECOWAS and AU in a context of growing international interventionism have launched a still-uncertain process of reordering (West) African security governance. As the presence of France, the EU, UN and other international actors has restricted the agency of African actors involved in managing the conflict in the Sahel, these three organizations have drawn on spatial imaginaries defining spaces of intervention in which they are particularly suited to intervene to (re)gain political authority over Sahelian security matters and assert their centrality within the APSA.

The result of this struggle has been the overlap of three scales of governance, the AU, the G5 and ECOWAS – each claiming to be the ‘right’ scale to manage the conflict and competing for international resources and the support of its member states. One of the major consequences of this struggle is that the AU and the G5 alike are, through their spatial imaginaries, promoting a functional and security-centred thinking on regional crises: in this view, the scale of governance should be functionally dictated by the need to respond rapidly and pragmatically to security dynamics on the ground. Until recently, international actors had designated the G5 Sahel as the ‘right’ scale of governance for managing the conflict. At the continental level, the AU has seized the opportunity of the Sahelian conflict to attempt, by means of the NP and ACIRC, to redraw and partly de-regionalize the APSA geography, with the aim of reallocating political authority in its favour. The AU is presenting itself as the ‘right’ scale of governance to enable African states to deal with crises such as the Sahelian conflict in a manner that is more efficient, flexible, timely, and autonomous – that is, without non-African troops on the ground.

While this complexification of the APSA is not at odds with the trajectory of African regionalism, historically characterized by significant overlap between organizations, it still challenges the structure and functioning of the continental security architecture in various ways. Concerning ECOWAS, the G5 is disrupting its security architecture and diverting international funding and support from it by duplicating initiatives such as the Joint Force or the various training schools it has created. Even though ECOWAS is still considered an important actor on issues such as democratic governance, and its ESF has been used in recent years in the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau, the organization is regarded less and less by the EU – its main funder – as a relevant security actor. It is likely that the approach privileged by EU institutions in future years to tackle security problems in Africa will be geared towards a functional lens, favouring transnational security programmes geographically designed to ‘follow’ the problems, and thus not systematically involving the RECs. This is particularly strong in West Africa where ECOWAS has disappointed EU officials’ expectations. Such programmes could also foster the disengagement of RECs’ member states – like Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger in the case of the G5 and ECOWAS – if other platforms are demonstrably better at mobilizing international resources.

Furthermore, this functional security thinking could have adverse effects on the APSA and the AU’s political authority. Unconditional international support for ad hoc coalitions such as the G5 Sahel but also the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) could signify a broader disengagement of the international community from the APSA in favour of more flexible security initiatives supposed to solve specific crises in the short or middle term. Again, EU-level changes illustrate this shift well, as the EU, a staunch supporter and the biggest funder of the APSA, not only circumvented the AU to channel international funding directly to the G5, but also announced the creation of an European Peace Facility which would enable it to fund security coalitions of states outside the APSA (ICG, 2021). Note too that the Sahelian situation is constantly in flux: while Barkhane and the European Task Force Takuba announced their withdrawal from Mali in February 2022, because of growing tensions with the Malian transitional
government, France and its partners will pursue their counterterrorist activities in Niger, Chad and towards the Gulf of Guinea. As the ‘War on Terror’ seems to move towards a broader West African space, new security coalitions may emerge beyond the G5 Sahel (Charbonneau, 2021).

Hence, this ongoing reordering of regional security governance in Africa raises broader questions regarding the future modalities of security governance. Besides the impact that short-term and security-focused initiatives can have on the management of conflicts, the risk is diminishment of the general relevance of multidimensional ROs with broad political agendas and long-term visions, which since the 1990s have been building blocks of regional and global governance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the two anonymous reviewers and Frank Mattheis for their comments.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

FUNDING

This study was supported by the Gerda Henkel Foundation – Special Programme ‘Security, Society and the State’ 2020 [grant number AZ 02/KF/20], by the FNRS – Funds for Scientific Research of Belgium, Programme ‘Postdoctoral Researcher’ [grant number 40000345], and by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union [grant number 621297-EPP-1-2020-1-BE-EPPJMO-PROJECT].

NOTES

1. The definition of the ‘Sahel’ is an object of contestation. When we refer generically to the Sahel, we designate a space defined as problematic by certain international and African interveners, who have converged in locating this space in the territories of Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad.
2. Imaginaries involve both ‘discourses and practices that, in turn, are constitutive of new governmental forms’ (Larner & Le Heron, 2002, p. 754).
3. A spatial scale is intended here as a series of competing, negotiated or contested practices of governance and territorialization, embodied in a specific institutional framework (Döring & Herpolsheimer, 2018), and positioned somewhere at the intersection between the ‘international/global’ and the ‘national/local’ (Waever, 2020).
4. For each RO, we have thoroughly analysed all documents concerning their intervention in the Sahel. We chose to reference the documents that are the most representatives of their positions, and the central ones which are often referenced in other documents such as their respective strategies for the Sahel.
6. On the concept of space of intervention, see Morgan (2017) and Döring and Herpolsheimer (2018).
7. All G5 quotations are translated from the French by the authors.
8. The EU is the most important supporter and funder of the APSA. Since 2004, it has committed more than €2.7 billion to the APSA through its African Peace Facility (APF) instrument (Engel, 2020b).
9. The ASF consists of five regional brigades attached to the RECs/RMs: North, West, Centre, East and South. It also includes a rapid deployment capability (RDC).
10. See the texts defining the organization of the APSA (AU, 2002) and its operationalization (AU-REC, 2008).
11. The inactivity of the NASF results from longstanding political disagreements between Morocco and Algeria.
12. The position of AU Commissioner for Peace and Security has always been held by an Algerian diplomat.
14. For instance, see the ECOWAS (2001) Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.
15. Following the military coup d’état that overthrew President Keïta in August 2020, ECOWAS led the international efforts to manage the crisis, suspending Mali from the organization and imposing sanctions on the country. In June 2021, following another coup, ECOWAS exerted pressure on the country, and in November added further sanctions aimed at obtaining the respect of the transitional agreement.
16. The strategy includes three pillars: governance, security and development. However, it focuses mostly on the first two since, according to the document, the AU has ‘a clear comparative advantage’ in them (AU, 2014a).
17. The UNSC adopted Resolution 2359, calling on the international community to provide logistical, operational and financial assistance to the G5S-JF.
18. The G5S-JF receives logistical support from the MINUSMA. Since February 2018, through a dedicated trust fund, it has received approximately US$145 million from Saudi Arabia, Rwanda, Turkey the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (Williams, 2021). The main contributor remains the EU, with more than €200 million and police and military missions in Mali and Niger to build the capacities of G5S-JF personnel.
19. Interviews with: an EU official in Brussels, 26 September 2018; an EU official in Brussels, 1 October 2018; an EU official in Bamako, 5 November 2018; and a local security consultant in Bamako, 30 November 2019.
20. Interview with an ECOWAS official in Bamako, 13 October 2021. According to him, ‘We [ECOWAS] don’t see the necessity for this structure to exist. It came to divide ECOWAS.’
22. Côte d’Ivoire suffered terrorist attacks in 2016 and in June 2020. Two French citizens were also kidnapped in May 2019 in the north of Benin, near the Burkinabé border.
23. Senegal asked multiple times for membership to the G5 Sahel, to no avail.
26. In the same way, the ACIRC was not deployed in the Lake Chad Basin where the choice was made to use the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), including the states around Lake Chad and Benin.
27. Interviews with: an EU official in Brussels, 21 September 2021; and an EU official in Brussels, 22 September 2021.

ORCID

Edoardo Baldaro © http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6381-2397
Elisa Lopez Lucia © http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0181-4220

REFERENCES


Baldaro, E. (2021b). The Sahel as an Unintended region: Competing regionalisms and insecurity dynamics. In E. Lopez-Lucia, & F. Mattheis (Eds.), The Unintended Consequences of Interregionalism: effects on Regional Actors, Societies and structures (pp. 147–164). Routledge.


Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). (2017b). *Déclaration de Bamako*.


Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). (2019). *ECOWAS security ministers to work With Nigeria and other member states to tackle regional security challenges*.


Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Authority. (2019b). *Fifty-Sixth Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government*. ECOWAS.

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)-Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). (2018). *Lomé Declaration on peace, security, stability and the fight against terrorism and violent extremism*. ECOWAS.


Fabricius, P. (2014). *President Jacob zuma’s great ambition for South Africa to Be the continental policeman Has Hit a harsh reality checkpoint*. Institute for Security Studies.


Roux, A. (2013). Enhancing the existing African Standby Force’s capability to deploy at short notice makes more sense than creating a new structure like the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises. ISS.


