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# Ad Hoc Crisis Response and International Organisations (ADHOCISM)

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International organisations (IOs) are created with the aim of solving collective action problems when a crisis arises. Yet, member states have repeatedly established ad hoc crisis responses in situations where IOs might be expected to play a central role. *ADHOCISM* asks what is the impact of ad hoc crisis responses on international organisations? In this way, *ADHOCISM* wants to contribute to filling this knowledge gap through a systematic study of ad hoc crisis responses in two policy domains: security and health. With this paired comparison, *ADHOCISM* wants to tap into a broader empirical governance phenomenon. Ad hoc crisis responses are here understood as loose groups of actors that agree to solve a particular crisis at a given time and location outside of an existing international organisation in the same policy domain. Ad hoc crisis responses can, in the short-term, lead to more rapid and effective crisis responses among like-minded states, but if international organisations are no longer seen as the principal instruments to confront global challenges, the risk is also that the relevance of these international organisations will diminish, and similar trends may unfold in other domains.

The complex web of international and (sub-)regional organisations has been one of the principal subjects of inquiry in international relations. While, initially, much scholarly attention went to explaining the proliferation of IOs, focus gradually shifted to studying the effects of this wider palette of options (Alter & Meunier, 2009; Hofmann, 2019; Jupille, Mattli, & Snidal, 2013). A central claim has been that memberships in institutions with similar mandates increases the chances of *forum-shopping*, reflecting a functionalist logic (Drezner, 2009; Hofmann, 2009). Member states can nowadays select from an increasingly broad menu of options in global governance, ranging from traditional multilateral strategies by working through formalised IOs, minilateral solutions via so-called 'governance clubs' to informal governance (Rogers, 2020), of which loose ad hoc crisis responses are an integral part. The result is an era of "contested multilateralism" (Morse & Keohane, 2014) or "global governance in pieces" (Patrick, 2015). Governance clubs and informal multilateralism or ad hoc coalitions are often seen as more effective, flexible and nimble than IOs. At the same time, they are criticised for lacking legitimacy.

Scholars tend to agree that IOs at global, regional and sub-regional levels overlap in terms of mandate and memberships, which can lead to cooperation or competition to be first responders (Brosig, 2010). More recently, Hofmann (2019) has 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". In general, membership overlap between institutions with a similar geographical and functional mandate is seen as offering states the chance to pick and choose the vehicle that best suits their interests (see e.g. Haftel and Hofmann, 2019). Obvious examples include the EU's and NATO's security architecture, but military crisis response interests by the AU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), ad hoc coalitions like the *Joint Force of the Group of Five Sahel* (JF-G5S) in Mali, the *Multinational Joint Task Force* (MNJTF) fighting Boko Haram in northern Nigeria and the *Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast Somalia* (CGPCS) are equally good illustrations. As such, inter-organisationalists not only highlight these opportunities of forum-shopping and cooperation, they also increasingly stress the risk of rivalry between institutions, such as competition for resources and legitimacy (Biermann & Koops, 2017; Brosig, 2017). What we thus see is an increasing literature theorising the effects of overlapping organisations, but so far with a blind eye towards the impact of ad hoc coalitions on the multilateral system.

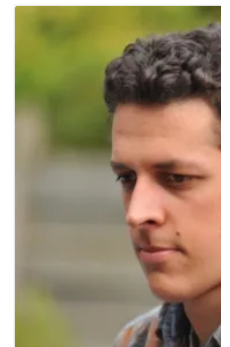
For many good reasons, ad hoc coalitions are mostly viewed in a positive fashion. They are seen as giving member states more choice and flexibility, *inter alia* creating "a framework for states to cooperate while pursuing their



## Bibliographic R

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national interests” (Brubacher, Damman, & Day, 2017, 11). Ad hoc coalitions also avoid bureaucratic delay and do not create precedents for future crises responses (Reykers & Karlsrud, 2017). They enable states to pursue national interests (Brubacher et al., 2017) and avoid bureaucratic delay and future precedents (Karlsrud and Reykers, 2019). Rynning (2013) has underscored the strategic need for better connecting coalitions of the willing, institutions and so-called “tents” or contact groups – where ad hoc coalitions are viewed as the “sharp end of the spear” and IOs and broader groupings of like-minded nations can offer necessary strategic guidance and political legitimacy. Other scholars have focused more on the on-the-ground effects of institutional proliferation and ad hoc coalitions. Ad hoc coalitions allow states to remain more in control – of, for instance, their military troops or personnel – and they provide an opportunity for “pivotal states” to “buy allies” through financially or politically rewarding third parties “to serve in multilateral coalitions”, in order to pursue national goals (Henke, 2019; see also Stone, 2013). However, this approach does not explain the continued investment in rapid response mechanisms such as the AU African Standby Force, the EU Battlegroups or the NATO Response Force, all of which have not been put to use to date.

A key problem is that the term ‘ad hoc coalitions’ is generally used as a catch-all concept, which does not reflect empirical complexity. Ad hoc coalitions can differ in e.g. duration, resources, membership, geographical scope and relationship to formal IOs (Karlsrud and Reykers 2020: 1527-29). Because we lack understanding about what ad hoc crisis responses are, we also do not know how different ad hoc coalitions might affect existing and emerging IOs. We do not know if, when, and how these ad hoc coalitions compete with, or perhaps even undermine, established or developing IOs. In this way, also the long-term effects of ad hocism and the resilience of IOs to this phenomenon remains a black-box.

**Cases and methods:** To advance knowledge on ad hoc coalitions, ADHOCISM will establish a dataset on ad hoc crisis responses in global health and security. In health, the case study will be on the relationship between the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO – IO) and the [Vaccine Alliance](#) (Gavi), the [Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations](#) (CEPI) and the joint [COVAX](#) project. In the security domain our case studies will be the AU African Standby Force and EU Battlegroups (IOs) and the Multinational Joint Task Force fighting Boko Haram (MNJTF); the Joint Force of the Group of Five Sahel (JF-G5S) and Barkhane, primarily in Mali; and the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS).

ADHOCISM will also quantitatively and qualitatively map select member states’ strategic choices to explore and explain variation among ad hoc coalitions, and their relationship with IOs in the same domain. Through a set of case studies, it will make a significant academic contribution to our understanding of the complex interrelations between member states, ad hoc coalitions and IOs.

Besides Karlsrud and Reykers, the team includes [Malte Brosig](#) (University of Witwatersrand), [Stephanie C. Hofmann](#) (EUI and Collaborator, NSA Network) and [Pernille Rieker](#) (Norwegian Institute of International Affairs).

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