



Economic Community of Central African States and Peacekeeping in Central Africa: Institutional Mechanisms, Security Challenges, and Regional Stabilization Impacts

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Abstract

Persistent armed conflicts, political instability, unconstitutional power transitions, cross-border insurgencies, and maritime insecurity have made Central Africa one of Africa's most fragile security regions. Within this context, regional organizations have become central to collective security governance, conflict prevention, and peace-support operations. This article examines the role of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS/CEEAC) in peacekeeping and regional stabilization in Central Africa, with particular attention to its institutional mechanisms, operational constraints, and security impacts. The study adopts a qualitative research design based on documentary analysis of institutional reports, conflict data, maritime-security records, and scholarly literature on African regional security architectures. It evaluates the contribution of key ECCAS security instruments, including the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), the Multinational Force of Central Africa (FOMAC), and the early warning mechanism, MARAC. The findings show that ECCAS has contributed to regional security governance through preventive diplomacy, political coordination, peace-support initiatives, crisis-response facilitation, and maritime-security cooperation. Its engagement in the Central African Republic through MICOPAX and its role in the Gulf of Guinea maritime-security architecture demonstrate its relevance as a regional first responder and coordination platform within the broader African Union and United Nations peacekeeping framework. However, ECCAS effectiveness remains constrained by weak financial autonomy, limited FOMAC operational readiness, fragmented political commitment among member states, institutional capacity gaps, and dependence on external partners. The article argues that ECCAS is best understood through the combined lenses of APSA subsidiarity, partnership peacekeeping, regional security complex theory, and adaptive peacebuilding. It concludes that ECCAS remains necessary but structurally constrained, requiring stronger financial mechanisms, professionalized rapid-response capacity, enhanced early warning-to-early action linkages, and coherent strategies connecting prevention, stabilization, and post-conflict recovery.

Keywords: ECCAS, Regional Security, Peacekeeping, Central Africa, COPAX, FOMAC, APSA, Partnership Peacekeeping

INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Cold War, international security governance has increasingly shifted toward regionalized conflict management, with subregional organizations assuming greater responsibility for crisis prevention, peacekeeping, and stabilization. This shift reflects the growing recognition that many contemporary conflicts are intrastate, transnational, and regionally interconnected, requiring security responses that complement the mandates of the United Nations and the African Union. In this context, regional collective security frameworks have become central to the management of armed conflicts and complex emergencies in Africa (Adebajo, 2002; Williams, 2013).

Contemporary peace operations now extend beyond ceasefire monitoring to include mediation, civilian protection, electoral-security support, border governance, security-sector coordination, humanitarian facilitation, maritime-security cooperation, and post-conflict stabilization. This expanded mandate is particularly relevant in Central Africa, where insecurity is shaped by weak state authority, porous borders, cross-border armed networks, resource-based violence, illicit economies, population displacement, and fragile political settlements (Vircoulon, 2007, 2010). These overlapping threats generate a regional security complex in which instability in one state can rapidly produce spillover effects across neighboring territories (Buzan & Waeber, 2003).

Within this environment, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS/CEEAC), established in 1983 and institutionally relaunched in 1999, has gradually moved beyond its original economic integration mandate toward a broader peace and security role. This transition reflects the practical reality that regional trade, development, and integration cannot be sustained in a subregion affected by recurrent armed conflict and political instability. ECCAS has therefore sought to develop a collective security architecture through the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), the Multinational Force of Central Africa (FOMAC), and the Central African Early Warning Mechanism (MARAC) (Meyer, 2015; UNECA, n.d.).

These mechanisms are designed to perform complementary functions. COPAX provides political and strategic direction, FOMAC offers a potential operational instrument for peace-support deployment, and MARAC supports conflict anticipation through information collection, risk analysis, and early warning. Their effectiveness, however, depends on the extent to which early warning is translated into early action, political consensus is converted into operational deployment, and regional mandates are supported by adequate financing, logistics, and member-state commitment.

Despite these institutional advances, Central Africa remains one of Africa's most fragile security regions. Protracted conflict in the Central African Republic, persistent violence in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, politico-military instability in Chad, and maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea illustrate the complexity of the subregion's security environment. These conditions raise important questions about the operational effectiveness of ECCAS peacekeeping instruments and the extent to which its institutional architecture has produced measurable stabilization outcomes.

This article therefore examines the contribution of ECCAS to peacekeeping and regional stabilization in Central Africa. It argues that ECCAS has become an important but structurally constrained actor in the subregion's security governance. While its mechanisms have contributed to political coordination, preventive diplomacy, peace-support operations, and maritime-security cooperation, their overall effectiveness remains limited by financial dependence, weak operational capacity, political divergences among member states, and gaps between regional decision-making and field-level implementation. The study contributes to the literature on African regional security governance by assessing ECCAS through the lenses of APSA subsidiarity, regional security complex theory, partnership peacekeeping, and adaptive peacebuilding (Adebajo, 2002; Buzan & Waeber, 2003; Meyer, 2015; Williams, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative documentary research design to examine ECCAS peacekeeping mechanisms, security challenges, and stabilization

impacts in Central Africa between 1999 and 2024. The year 1999 was selected because it marked the institutional relaunch of ECCAS peace and security mechanisms, while 2024 allowed the study to incorporate recent developments in regional peace operations, maritime-security cooperation, and African security governance. Data were obtained from institutional reports, policy documents, Security Council records, academic publications, mission-related materials, and maritime-security datasets. The repositories consulted included the United Nations Digital Library, United Nations Security Council records, African Union peace and security documents, ECCAS/CEEAC publications, UNECA's Observatory on Regional Integration in Africa, International Crisis Group reports, ISS Africa publications, ICC International Maritime Bureau piracy reports, International Maritime Organization materials, UNODC publications, Africa Center for Strategic Studies outputs, and peer-reviewed academic databases accessed through Google Scholar and publisher platforms.

Documents were included if they directly addressed ECCAS, COPAX, FOMAC, MARAC, MICOPAX, the Central African Republic, the Gulf of Guinea, African Peace and Security Architecture, regional peace operations, or maritime-security cooperation. Materials were excluded if they were purely journalistic, lacked identifiable authorship or institutional provenance, duplicated previously selected sources, or discussed Central Africa without a clear peace-and-security focus. The analysis applied thematic coding across six core categories: institutional architecture, operational deployment, financing, political commitment, regional security impact, and implementation constraints. Quantitative figures presented in the study were not treated as primary data generated by the authors. Rather, they were extracted from secondary institutional and academic sources and triangulated where possible. Where figures relating to MICOPAX troop levels, funding shares, violence-reduction claims, or piracy trends could not be independently verified from a single authoritative dataset, they were interpreted cautiously as estimates or trend indicators rather than definitive causal measurements.

The study therefore emphasizes analytical plausibility, source triangulation, cautious

attribution, and theoretically informed interpretation. Its analytical framework draws on APSA subsidiarity, regional security complex theory, partnership peacekeeping, and adaptive peacebuilding to explain both the contributions and constraints of ECCAS in Central Africa's evolving security architecture.

RESULTS

The findings or outcome of this current study are presented around the core institutional and operational dimensions of ECCAS peacekeeping in Central Africa. The section first examines the organization's security architecture, particularly COPAX, FOMAC, and MARAC, before assessing its interventions, regional stabilization effects, maritime-security role, and the structural constraints limiting its effectiveness. The findings are interpreted cautiously, with emphasis on documented institutional contributions, observable security trends, and the persistent gap between regional mandates and operational implementation.

ECCAS Security Architecture

In response to the multiple security crises that have affected Central Africa since the 1990s, ECCAS has progressively established a collective security architecture intended to prevent conflicts and manage regional crises. This evolution forms part of the broader continental effort to strengthen African peace and security mechanisms and to enhance the capacity of regional organizations to intervene in conflict prevention, management, and stabilization ([Adebajo, 2002](#); [Williams, 2013](#)).

The development of this architecture reflects the principle of subsidiarity within the African Peace and Security Architecture. Under this logic, regional organizations are expected to act as first responders because they are geographically closer to crises, better informed about local political dynamics, and more directly exposed to the spillover effects of insecurity ([Nathan, 2017](#)).

ECCAS security architecture is based primarily on COPAX, supported by operational and military mechanisms such as FOMAC and MARAC. These instruments constitute the pillars of the regional system for conflict prevention and crisis management within the ECCAS space ([Meyer, 2015](#); [UNECA, n.d.](#)).

However, the value of this architecture lies not only in its institutional design but also in its capacity to generate practical coordination among member states. Without regular consultation, shared threat assessments, interoperable forces, and predictable funding, the architecture risks remain more normative than operational.

The Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX)

Established in 1999 under the protocol on the mechanism for the prevention, management, and settlement of conflicts, COPAX is the central crisis-management organ within ECCAS. It provides political and strategic coordination for regional initiatives aimed at maintaining peace and stability in the subregion. COPAX also performs a diplomatic function by creating a space where member states can harmonize positions before crises escalate. In a region marked by sensitive sovereignty concerns, such a platform is essential for building consensus around mediation, preventive diplomacy, and possible peace-support actions.

COPAX plays an essential role in promoting regional collective security by facilitating consultation among member states and defining the strategic orientations of regional interventions. Its main missions include preventing and anticipating potential conflicts within the community space, coordinating regional peacekeeping missions, promoting security cooperation among member states, and contributing to the consolidation of regional peace and stability. Its preventive role is particularly important because many crises in Central Africa evolve gradually before becoming open conflicts. A more proactive COPAX could therefore reduce the cost of interventions by encouraging early dialogue, discreet mediation, and political de-escalation before violence becomes widespread.

Several analyses suggest that COPAX represents an important attempt to structure a regional collective-security system in Central Africa. Nevertheless, its effectiveness remains dependent on member-state political will and the availability of resources required to implement its decisions (Meyer, 2015; UNECA, n.d.).

The Multinational Force of Central Africa (FOMAC)

FOMAC constitutes the operational and military arm of the ECCAS security mechanism. It is composed of military contingents provided by member states and may be deployed in regional crisis-management operations. FOMAC is significant because it translates the political commitments of ECCAS into a potential field capability. Its credibility, however, depends on the readiness of national contingents, the availability of strategic transport, common operational procedures, and the ability to sustain deployments beyond symbolic military presence.

The creation of FOMAC forms part of the broader effort to strengthen African peacekeeping capabilities in complementarity with African Union mechanisms and United Nations operations (Williams, 2013). The principal missions of FOMAC include conducting peacekeeping operations, providing humanitarian assistance in crisis situations, supporting post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction processes, and protecting civilian populations in conflict zones. These missions require a multidimensional force profile. In addition to infantry units, FOMAC would need medical, engineering, logistics, intelligence, communications, and civilian-protection capacities to operate effectively in complex crisis environments. In practice, FOMAC has been mobilized in several regional stabilization initiatives, particularly in the management of crises in Central Africa. However, as several academic and policy studies underline, its operational capacities remain limited because of logistical, financial, and organizational constraints affecting ECCAS security mechanisms (Meyer, 2015).

Thus, although ECCAS institutional security architecture represents a significant advance in the construction of a regional crisis-management system, its effectiveness depends heavily on strengthening the operational capacities of its mechanisms and on the political commitment of member states. Consequently, the main challenge is to move from institutional architecture to operational maturity. This means linking political decisions to rapid deployment mechanisms, aligning national contributions with regional priorities, and ensuring that peace operations are

supported by coherent diplomatic and post-conflict strategies.

ECCAS Interventions and Their Regional Security Impacts

Since the establishment of its collective security architecture, ECCAS has progressively participated in several peacekeeping and stabilization initiatives in the region. These interventions are part of a regional crisis-management logic based on the principle of African solutions to African problems (Adebajo, 2002). The assessment of ECCAS interventions should consider three dimensions: the capacity to respond rapidly to crises, the ability to coordinate with continental and international partners, and the extent to which interventions contribute to longer-term stabilization rather than only short-term violence reduction.

ECCAS action has been expressed through military operations, stabilization missions, and security cooperation mechanisms. The cases of the Central African Republic and maritime cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea are significant examples for assessing the concrete impact of the organization's security mechanisms.

Intervention in the Central African Republic

The Central African Republic is one of the main theatres of ECCAS intervention in peacekeeping. In response to recurring politico-military crises in the country, the organization deployed MICOPAX in 2008, with the purpose of stabilizing the security

situation and supporting national political reconciliation processes.

The Central African case is particularly instructive because it combines state fragility, armed rebellion, regional spillovers, humanitarian vulnerability, and repeated international intervention. It therefore provides a useful test of ECCAS capacity to act in a complex conflict where military, political, and humanitarian dimensions are closely connected.

MICOPAX, which succeeded FOMUC, had as its main mandate the stabilization of areas affected by armed conflicts, the protection of civilian populations, support for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), and assistance to political and electoral processes.

The mission also illustrates the importance of continuity between regional and international operations. By preparing the ground for MISCA and later MINUSCA, MICOPAX served as a bridging mechanism that helped prevent a complete security vacuum during a period of political transition (United Nations Security Council, 2013, 2014).

The progressive deployment of military contingents from ECCAS member states illustrates the regional commitment to managing the Central African crisis. Because mission-strength data vary across institutional reports, the figures below are presented as approximate estimates rather than definitive troop counts.

Table 1: Estimated Evolution of MICOPAX Mission Troop Levels (2008-2013)

Year	Estimated Military Personnel	Main Contributing Countries	Observations
2008	500	Gabon, Chad, Congo	Initial deployment of the mission
2009	600	Gabon, Chad, Congo	Expansion of intervention areas
2010	750	Gabon, Chad, Cameroon, Congo	Progressive stabilization of Bangui
2011	850	Cameroon, Chad, Gabon	Support for the electoral process
2012	900	ECCAS member states	Reinforcement in response to political tensions
2013	950	Regional coalition	Transition to MISCA

Source: ECCAS/CEEAC (2013); United Nations Security Council (2013, 2014); International Crisis Group (2013)

Note: Figures are approximate mission-strength estimates derived from secondary institutional and policy reports. They should not be read as audited or definitive deployment numbers.

United Nations and policy reports indicate that MICOPAX contributed to relative security improvements during specific phases of the crisis. The earlier claim of a fixed 35% reduction in intercommunal violence has therefore been reframed: available sources support a cautious interpretation of localized improvement, but they do not provide a sufficiently transparent dataset, baseline, geographic scope, event definition, and calculation procedure to present the percentage as a definitive finding.

MICOPAX also played a transitional role toward larger international operations, notably MISCA under African Union mandate, followed by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

However, its achievements should be interpreted with caution. The mission contributed to stabilization in specific areas, but it did not eliminate the structural causes of conflict, including weak state authority, armed-group fragmentation, local grievances, and competition over resources. This shows that peacekeeping must be linked to governance reform and long-term peacebuilding.

Maritime Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea

Beyond land-based crises, ECCAS also plays an important role in combating maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea, one of the most strategic

maritime zones for international trade and oil exploitation in Africa.

Maritime insecurity is a strategic issue because it affects trade routes, port activities, energy exports, fishing communities, and state revenues. For coastal and landlocked states alike, instability in the Gulf of Guinea can generate wider economic and security consequences across Central Africa.

Since the early 2010s, the region has experienced significant acts of piracy, armed robbery at sea, and illicit trafficking. To address these threats, ECCAS member states have strengthened maritime cooperation through regional maritime surveillance centers, joint naval exercises, security-information sharing, and coordinated maritime patrols.

These initiatives form part of the maritime security architecture that emerged from the 2013 Yaounde Summit on maritime security. The Yaounde framework is important because it connects ECCAS with ECOWAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, showing that some threats require interregional rather than purely subregional responses (IMO, 2013; Yucel, 2021).

The Table below reports trend indicators from maritime-security datasets. These figures should be interpreted as reported incidents rather than a complete measure of all maritime crime, because reporting practices and enforcement intensity may change over time

Table 2: Evolution of Reported Piracy Incidents in the Gulf of Guinea

Year	Reported Incidents	Attacks against Vessels	Crew Kidnappings	Regional Trend
2015	54	42	35	High maritime insecurity
2016	48	38	31	Intensification of patrols
2017	41	33	26	Increased regional cooperation
2018	32	26	20	Progressive reduction
2019	29	24	18	Relative stabilization
2020	22	18	14	Strengthened naval coordination
2021	20	15	11	Increased maritime surveillance
2022	18	13	9	Notable decrease in incidents

Source: International Maritime Bureau (2023); International Maritime Organization (2022); ECCAS/CEEAC (2021); UNODC (2021). **Note:** Attribution remains cautious because incident reporting, naval patrol intensity, criminal adaptation, and international support may also influence observed trends.

These data show an overall downward trend in reported piracy incidents, which may be partly associated with stronger security cooperation among Gulf of Guinea states and regional maritime surveillance initiatives. Although the decline is encouraging, maritime security remains vulnerable to displacement effects: criminal networks may shift routes, methods, or target areas when patrols intensify. For this reason, surveillance must be combined with prosecution capacity, port governance, intelligence cooperation, and livelihood alternatives for coastal communities (Schandorf, 2024; Yucel, 2021).

Overall Contribution to Regional Stabilization

Beyond these specific interventions, ECCAS security action has helped strengthen several dimensions of regional stability in Central Africa.

ECCAS contribution to stabilization is best understood as a cumulative process. Its impact lies in the gradual construction of habits of cooperation, shared security language, and regional crisis-management practices, even when field results remain uneven.

The organization's initiatives have notably contributed to better regional military coordination, facilitating joint operations among the armed forces of member states; the development of preventive diplomacy mechanisms, particularly through COPAX and MARAC activities; and the strengthening of security cooperation among states, particularly in intelligence sharing and border surveillance.

Nevertheless, despite these advances, several studies emphasize that the impact of ECCAS interventions remains limited by significant structural constraints, especially insufficient financial resources, dependence on international partners, and political divergences among certain member states (Meyer, 2015; Williams, 2013).

Thus, while ECCAS interventions have contributed to some short-term security improvements, the organization's capacity to produce lasting stabilization remains constrained by major institutional, political, financial, and operational challenges.

This distinction between short-term stabilization and sustainable peace is crucial. Stabilization can

reduce immediate violence, but durable peace requires the restoration of legitimate authority, justice mechanisms, economic recovery, and the reintegration of former combatants into civilian life.

Limits and Challenges of ECCAS Security Role

Despite the institutional and operational efforts deployed by ECCAS to strengthen regional security, the effectiveness of its peacekeeping mechanisms continues to face several structural constraints. These challenges mainly concern financial limitations, political divergences among member states, and the still-insufficient operational capacities of regional military instruments. Analyzing these constraints helps clarify the obstacles faced by the organization in implementing its collective security architecture.

These constraints reveal the difference between formal mandate and effective capability. ECCAS has acquired a legitimate security role, but its performance depends on whether member states are willing and able to provide resources, political backing, and deployable assets when crises arise.

Financial Constraints

One of the main obstacles to the effectiveness of ECCAS security mechanisms is the inadequacy of the organization's financial resources. The financing of peace operations and regional security mechanisms remains heavily dependent on support from international partners, particularly the European Union, the United Nations, and certain bilateral partners.

Predictable financing is especially important for peace operations because delays in funding affect planning, troop readiness, logistics, personnel rotation, and mission credibility. A regional fund would therefore not only increase autonomy but also improve operational planning and accountability.

This situation limits ECCAS's ability to plan and deploy stabilization missions autonomously, while also creating structural dependence on external assistance.

This financial dependence reduces ECCAS strategic room for maneuvering and can slow the rapid implementation of peace operations.

Table 3: Illustrative Funding Structure of ECCAS Security Operations

Funding Source	Estimated Contribution	Observations
ECCAS member states	35%	Statutory contributions often irregular
European Union	30%	Support to African peace and security mechanisms
United Nations	20%	Logistical and financial support to missions
Other international partners	15%	Bilateral support and cooperation programs
Total	100%	Mixed funding

Source: Author's synthesis based on [ECCAS/CEEAC \(2021\)](#), [European Union \(2020\)](#), [Meyer \(2015\)](#), and [Williams \(2013\)](#).

Note: The percentages are illustrative estimates based on secondary reports, not audited budget data. They are used to show the structure of dependence rather than exact financial accounting.

Several analyses also underline that delays in the payment of contributions by some member states affect the regular functioning of regional security mechanisms ([Meyer, 2015](#)).

Financial autonomy should also be accompanied by transparent management mechanisms. Member states are more likely to contribute regularly when they can clearly see how funds are allocated, audited, and linked to measurable security outcomes.

Political Divergences among Member States

Another major challenge lies in the political and geopolitical divergences that exist among certain ECCAS member states. The diversity of national interests, regional rivalries, and diplomatic tensions can sometimes hinder collective decision-making in the security field.

These divergences are often reinforced by the tension between sovereignty and collective security. While states recognize the need for regional intervention, they may hesitate to support mechanisms that could later be perceived as interference in domestic affairs.

In certain crisis situations, member states may adopt divergent positions regarding the modalities of intervention or the degree of the organization's involvement. These divergences often slow decision-making processes and can affect the coherence of regional responses to security crises.

Building a shared threat assessment is therefore essential. Regular strategic dialogue, joint scenario planning, and confidence-building measures among defense and foreign-policy officials could reduce mistrust and improve collective decision-

making. Moreover, internal political changes in some member states may also influence their level of commitment to regional peacekeeping initiatives.

Limited Military Capacities

Finally, the effectiveness of ECCAS security interventions is also limited by the still-insufficient military and logistical capacities of FOMAC. Although this force is the main operational instrument of the regional security mechanism, its deployment continues to face several operational constraints.

Military capacity should not be reduced to troop numbers alone. Effective peacekeeping requires interoperability, command discipline, intelligence support, mobility, medical evacuation, communications systems, and the ability to operate under a unified doctrine.

The main limitations identified include insufficient modern military equipment, limited logistical capacities for transport and rapid troop deployment, lack of sustainable funding to support prolonged operations, and major disparities among the military capabilities of member states.

FOMAC would therefore benefit from standardized training modules, joint exercises, common rules of engagement, and a regional logistics planning cell capable of preparing deployments before crises reach their peak.

These structural limitations partly explain why ECCAS interventions are often complemented or taken over by African Union or United Nations missions.

Table 4: Main Operational Constraints of FOMAC

Area	Identified Constraints	Impact on Operations
Military equipment	Heterogeneous and sometimes obsolete materiel	Reduced operational effectiveness
Logistics	Lack of strategic transport assets	Difficulty in rapid deployment
Training	Variable level of training among contingents	Limited operational coordination
Financing	Insufficient financial resources	Compromised mission sustainability
Command	Sometimes complex interstate coordination	Slower decision-making

Source: African Union (2019); ECCAS/CEEAC (2021); Meyer (2015).

Nevertheless, despite these constraints, ECCAS remains an important regional actor in crisis management in Central Africa and continues to gradually develop its collective security mechanisms.

The challenge is not to replace the African Union or the United Nations, but to ensure that ECCAS can act credibly at the earliest stages of crisis. A stronger regional first-response capacity would make subsequent continental or international missions more effective.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that ECCAS has progressively become an important regional actor in the governance of peace and security in Central Africa. This conclusion is consistent with the broader literature on African regional organizations, which emphasizes the growing role of Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and crisis management. The discussion is framed through four complementary lenses: APSA subsidiarity, partnership peacekeeping, regional security complex theory, and adaptive peacebuilding. Williams (2013) argues that peace operations in Africa increasingly depend on partnership peacekeeping, in which regional organizations, the African Union, the United Nations, and external partners combine political, financial, and operational capacities. In this sense, the ECCAS experience confirms that peacekeeping in Africa is no longer managed exclusively by the United Nations but increasingly involves regional institutions as first responders or complementary actors.

From the perspective of APSA subsidiarity, ECCAS occupies the level of governance closest to Central African crises. This proximity gives the organization potential advantages in early warning, political mediation, contextual knowledge, and rapid regional consultation. However, as Nathan (2017) argues, subsidiarity in African peacemaking is not automatically effective; it depends on whether the regional level has the legitimacy, capacity, resources, and political cohesion required to act. The ECCAS case confirms this ambivalence: the organization has proximity and mandate, but its implementation capacity remains uneven.

Regional security complex theory further clarifies why ECCAS matters. Buzan and Waever (2003) argue that security threats often cluster regionally because neighboring states are tied together by patterns of interdependence, spillover, rivalry, and shared vulnerability. Central Africa fits this logic: violence in the Central African Republic, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, and the Gulf of Guinea generates cross-border effects involving refugees, armed groups, illicit trafficking, maritime crime, and diplomatic tensions. ECCAS is therefore necessary because many threats in the subregion are structurally transnational and cannot be managed by national instruments alone.

The first major finding relates to the consolidation of ECCAS's regional security governance architecture through the operational roles of COPAX, FOMAC, and its early warning mechanisms. This finding supports the position of the African Union, which defines APSA as a continental framework built around institutions, norms, decision-making procedures, and mechanisms for conflict prevention, crisis

management, and post-conflict reconstruction. ECCAS therefore appears as a regional expression of this broader African security architecture. However, the study also shows that institutional creation does not automatically produce operational effectiveness. This confirms the argument advanced by several scholars that African security institutions often suffer from an implementation gap between normative ambition and practical capacity (African Union, 2012; Aning, 2008; Nathan, 2011).

The second result echoes ECCAS's peacekeeping intervention in the Central African Republic through MICOPAX. The analysis shows that MICOPAX contributed to stabilizing selected areas, supported political transition processes, and served as a bridge toward broader African Union and United Nations missions, particularly MISCA and MINUSCA. This finding is consistent with Coleman (2011), who argues that African regional peacekeeping missions often function as interim mechanisms before the deployment of larger international operations. Boutellis and Williams (2013) similarly note that the relationship among the African Union, regional organizations, and the United Nations has become central to contemporary peace operations in Africa. Carayannis and Fowles (2017) also show that the CAR sequence from MICOPAX to MISCA and MINUSCA illustrates layered AU-UN cooperation rather than a single autonomous intervention model.

The third finding reiterates the maritime security cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea. This study reasoned that regional cooperation, maritime surveillance, information sharing, and coordinated patrols have contributed to a relative reduction of reported piracy incidents. This analysis is consistent with the literature on regional security cooperation, which shows that transnational threats such as piracy, illicit trafficking, and maritime crime require collective responses because they exceed the capacity of individual states. The Yaounde maritime security architecture reinforces this point because it links ECCAS, ECOWAS, and the Gulf of Guinea Commission in a networked framework for information sharing and maritime law enforcement (IMO, 2013; Yucel, 2021). However, these gains remain fragile because maritime criminal networks can adapt rapidly to

state responses. Therefore, ECCAS maritime security efforts should be understood not as a definitive solution, but as part of a continuous process of regional security governance (Schandorf, 2024).

The fourth finding reflects the financial dependence of ECCAS security mechanisms. The article shows that ECCAS peace and security operations remain heavily dependent on external partners, including the European Union, the African Union, the United Nations, and bilateral donors. This finding corresponds with the broader literature on African peace operations, which repeatedly identifies financing as one of the main obstacles to African security autonomy. Williams (2013) stresses that effective peace operations require not only troop numbers but also sustainable mission capabilities, including logistics, mobility, intelligence, training, and predictable funding. In the case of ECCAS, the lack of stable financial resources limits its capacity to plan, deploy, and sustain peace operations independently.

The fifth result relates to political divergences among member states. The study shows that regional security mechanisms are weakened when member states do not share the same threat perceptions, political priorities, or strategic interests. This finding is in line with Laakso (2005), who argues that African regional organizations are often constrained by the political interests of member states and by the difficulty of transforming formal commitments into collective action. In Central Africa, this challenge is particularly visible because regional crises are often connected to cross-border alliances, regime security concerns, rebel movements, natural resource competition, and diplomatic rivalries. Consequently, ECCAS effectiveness depends not only on institutional design but also on political cohesion and trust among member states.

The sixth finding concerns the operational limits of FOMAC. Although FOMAC is designed as the military arm of ECCAS security architecture, its effectiveness is constrained by limited equipment, weak logistical capacity, unequal training among contingents, insufficient strategic mobility, and dependence on external support. This confirms Nathan's (2011) argument that African peace and security mechanisms often face a gap between

mandate and capability. It also supports Williams' (2013) observation that African peace operations should not be judged only by the number of troops deployed, but by their ability to generate specialized capabilities adapted to complex conflict environments. In Central Africa, where armed groups are mobile, transnational, and sometimes connected to illicit economies, FOMAC needs stronger intelligence, rapid deployment capacity, air mobility, secure communications, and sustainable financing.

The adaptive peace-building perspective adds further insight. De Coning (2018) argues that peacebuilding in complex conflict systems should rely on learning, feedback, adaptation, and context-sensitive experimentation rather than rigid templates. This perspective is relevant for ECCAS because Central African crises are fluid and multi-layered. A more adaptive ECCAS approach would connect early warning, preventive diplomacy, community-level conflict analysis, maritime-security learning, and post-conflict stabilization into a continuous cycle of assessment and adjustment.

The findings also show that ECCAS has been more effective in short-term stabilization than in long-term peacebuilding. This point is important because peacekeeping can reduce violence temporarily, but sustainable peace requires political dialogue, justice, disarmament, reconciliation, border governance, institutional reform, and economic recovery. This observation is consistent with the United Nations approach to sustaining peace, which emphasizes that peace operations must be connected to political strategies and post-conflict reconstruction. In the case of Central Africa, the persistence of insecurity in the Central African Republic, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, and the Gulf of Guinea shows that military interventions alone cannot resolve structural conflicts. ECCAS must therefore strengthen the link between security intervention, preventive diplomacy, and post-conflict peacebuilding.

Overall, the discussion shows that ECCAS is both a necessary and limited actor in Central African security governance. It is necessary because many threats affecting the region are transnational and cannot be addressed effectively by individual states alone. It is limited because its mechanisms remain

constrained by weak financing, political fragmentation, insufficient operational capacity, and dependence on international partners. This confirms the central argument of the article: ECCAS has made important progress in building a regional peace and security architecture, but its practical impact depends on its ability to transform institutional mechanisms into effective, autonomous, adaptive, and coordinated action.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Peacekeeping in Central Africa remains a critical component of regional security governance because the subregion continues to experience protracted armed conflicts, political instability, unconstitutional transitions, porous borders, transnational criminal networks, and maritime insecurity. Within this fragile security environment, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS/CEEAC) has evolved from a predominantly economic integration body into a regional security actor with an increasingly important role in conflict prevention, crisis management, and stabilization. The analysis demonstrates that ECCAS has developed an institutional security architecture through mechanisms such as the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), the Multinational Force of Central Africa (FOMAC), and early warning structures. These mechanisms reflect the organization's attempt to operationalize regional ownership of peace and security challenges. ECCAS interventions, particularly through MICOPAX in the Central African Republic and its involvement in Gulf of Guinea maritime-security cooperation, show that the organization can function as a regional first responder, political coordination platform, and complementary partner to the African Union and United Nations.

However, the effectiveness of ECCAS remains uneven and structurally constrained. Its peacekeeping capacity is weakened by limited financial autonomy, dependence on external partners, inadequate logistical and operational capabilities, fragmented political commitment among member states, and delays in translating regional decisions into field-level action. These constraints reveal that institutional existence alone is insufficient; the credibility of ECCAS depends

on its ability to close the gap between normative mandates, political declarations, and operational implementation in crisis-affected areas. Overall, ECCAS remains a necessary but still under-resourced actor in Central Africa's security architecture. Its future relevance will depend on the extent to which member states strengthen FOMAC, finance regional security mechanisms, reinforce early warning-to-early action linkages, and deepen preventive diplomacy. Sustainable regional stabilization will require a coherent strategy that integrates conflict prevention, rapid response, peace-support operations, post-conflict recovery, and long-term governance reform within a single, institutionally coordinated framework.

Based on the insightful findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthen ECCAS financial autonomy:** ECCAS should reduce dependence on external partners by establishing a transparent regional security fund supported by mandatory member-state contributions. This should be reinforced through a defined contribution schedule, penalties for persistent default, and independent auditing mechanisms to improve accountability, predictability, and institutional trust.
2. **Enhance FOMAC operational readiness:** The operational capacity of FOMAC should be strengthened through regular joint training, interoperable command structures, harmonized rules of engagement, and the provision of modern peace-support equipment. Priority should be given to regional logistics reserves and specialized units for intelligence, engineering, medical support, civilian protection, and rapid deployment.
3. **Improve strategic coordination with the AU and UN:** ECCAS should deepen cooperation with the African Union and United Nations on the basis of complementarity, not dependency. Partnerships should prioritize technical capacity transfer, joint planning, intelligence sharing, operational support, and the preservation of regional ownership in peace-support operations.
4. **Institutionalize preventive diplomacy:** ECCAS should strengthen mediation, political dialogue, and peaceful dispute-resolution mechanisms across member states. Preventive diplomacy should include conflict-risk mapping, electoral-risk monitoring, discreet mediation, and the structured involvement of

credible regional personalities before tensions escalate into violence.

Link early warning to early action

ECCAS should reinforce its regional early warning mechanisms by establishing clear procedures for converting alerts into timely diplomatic, political, humanitarian, or security responses. Early warning systems should be supported by defined response timelines, reliable data channels, and coordinated action between regional institutions and member states.

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