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FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN EUNAVFOR SOMALIA

DOI: [10.35926/HDR.2019.1-2.9](https://doi.org/10.35926/HDR.2019.1-2.9)

ABSTRACT: Piracy, once a novel phenomenon in the already altered security environment along Somali coasts following the millennium, has become a factor threatening the stability of the region. This is despite the fact that along African coastlines steady international military presence has always been ensured, since 70 percent of the European Union's sea trade is conducted through this region. France – putting into action both its political and military powers – has actively participated in the fight against piracy in the region by providing continual as well as situational aid, which in my opinion proves both France's interest in the region as well as their aspiration to be an all-time leading power in Europe. Moreover, demonstrating and analysing France's participation might also contribute to pre-planning future naval operations as regards asymmetric conflicts.

KEYWORDS: France, Somalia, piracy, European Union Naval Force–Somalia (EUNAVFOR), French navy, Gulf of Aden

REASONS FOR AND BACKGROUND OF PIRACY IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

First of all, historical reasons behind piracy in this region must be explained. In 1960, Somalia was established by uniting territories formerly belonging to British as well as Italian colonies. Alluding to its geographical location, the country is generally referred to as the Horn of Africa, where a civil war broke out in the mid-80s overthrowing former dictator Mahammad Siyaad Barre and his regime, who had seized power in 1969 by staging a coup¹ following a short-lived democratic government. After a series of coups d'état in the late 1980s and early 1990s it was by no means possible to establish a stable political system, and the different political powers have so far been incapable of creating a separation of powers. Following the commencing of armed fights among the clans, the country began to decline not only politically, but also economically. As a result, due to a lack of centralized power the area today has become a state suffering from the battles of its warlords. Previously termed a 'failed state'², today it is most commonly called a 'fragile state'. In 2018 it came in second

¹ Kiss, Á. P., Besenyő, J. and Resperger, I. *Szomália: Országismertető*. Budapest: Honvéd Vezérkar Tudományos Kutatóhely, MH GEOSZ, 2014. 40.

² Failed states; according to the definition, born at the end of the Cold War, a failed state is a state which is internationally acknowledged as a sovereign state, yet has no functioning central governing power, thus cannot attend to the most basic tasks in international context. Hegedűs, K. "Tizenhárom év anarchia: Szomália a hidegháború után". *Külgügyi Szemle* 4/1–2. 2005. 37–62.

https://kki.hu/assets/upload/KULUGY_KulugyiSzemle_2005_1-2hegedus.pdf

on the Fragile States Index by 113.2 points, indicating a state that is still weak and presents security risks.³

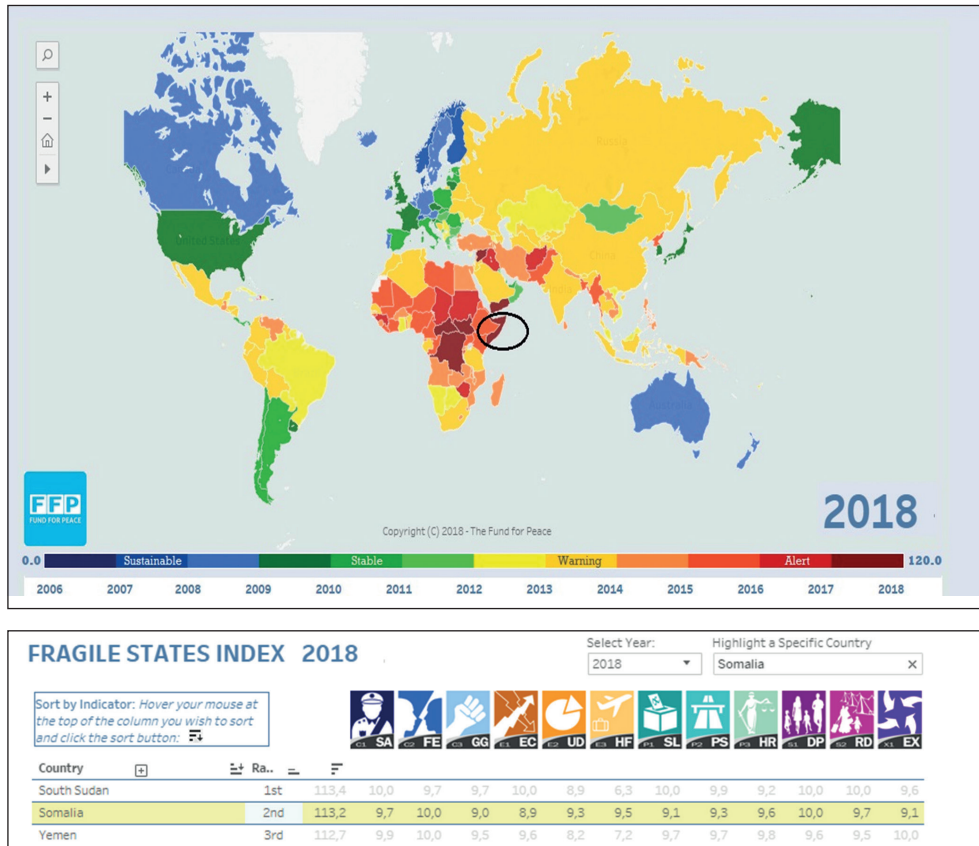


Figure 1: *Fragile States Index 2018*

Source: “Fragile States Index”. The Fund for Peace. <http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/>; “Fragile States Index: Global Data”. The Fund for Peace. <http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/data/>, Accessed on 14 May 2018. (Edited by Eva Fabian)

³ “Fragile States Index: Global Data”. The Fund for Peace. <http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/data/>, Accessed on 14 May 2018. “The Fragile States Index is based on a conflict assessment framework – known as “CAST” – that was developed by FFP nearly a quarter-century ago for assessing the vulnerability of states to collapse. The CAST framework was designed to measure this vulnerability in pre-conflict, active conflict and post-conflict situations, and continues to be used widely by policy makers, field practitioners, and local community networks. The methodology uses both qualitative and quantitative indicators, relies on public source data, and produces quantifiable results. Twelve conflict risk indicators are used to measure the condition of a state at any given moment.” “Fragile States Index: Indicators”. The Fund for Peace. <http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/indicators/>, Accessed on 14 May 2018. The indicators used both in the CAST framework and also in the Fragile States Index are as follows: Security Apparatus, Factionalized Elites, Group Grievance, Economic Decline and Poverty, Uneven Development, Human Flight and Brain Drain, State Legitimacy, Public Services, Human Rights and Rule of Law, Demographic Pressure, Refugees and IDPs, External Intervention. “Fragile States Index and Cast Framework Methodology”. The Fund for Peace. 13 May 2017. <http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/2017/05/13/fragile-states-index-and-cast-framework-methodology/>, Accessed on 14 May 2018.

In the instability after the civil war and in the absence of central political control, pirate fishing got underway, which particularly posed a problem for those living along the coastline, for whom fishing was almost the only way of making a living. The first of the pirates were fishermen who meant to drive away directly competing foreign ships from their waters. This affair increased in intensity when warlords of the Somali coastline saw it as an opportunity to make money, and therefore set up their own militias. Although it was not until April 2005 that the first large foreign ship was attacked, this incident was soon followed by a great number of such attacks. In conclusion, the sea-bandits' gangs consisted of former fishermen, seamen as well as recruited members of military groups⁴. The first raids were conducted in and around the Gulf of Aden – where the annual traffic of about 20,000 commercial ships is managed, and which is also considered the most important transport route between Asia and Europe – though by now the piracy hotspots have relocated to the waters further out.⁵ Piracy in the area undoubtedly became socially accepted. It is no great surprise that pirates grew in strength and organization and called themselves coast guardsmen rather than pirates.⁶ In general, each pirate group has their own set of rules regarding recruitment, treatment of hostages as well as division of the spoils. Although we consider them to be several rival groups of pirates, their methods as well as structural hierarchy are practically identical. Most of them – being former fishermen – have a significant amount of local knowledge, yet the small fishing boats they used at first are constantly modernized.⁷ Their weaponry is obtained in Mogadishu black markets as well as in Yemen, applying the informal, trust-based, traditional hawala mediator system.⁸

STEPS TAKEN BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The humanitarian disaster urged the United Nations to launch humanitarian operations. The United Nations Operation in Somalia I and then II (UNISOM) took place alongside the US-led international United Task Force (UNITAF). Blue Helmets first arrived there in September 1992, and their numbers grew rapidly owing to the increasingly disastrous conditions. The International Committee of the Red Cross as well as other aid organizations conducted humanitarian actions in the area, which – at least at the time – were regarded as the largest of their kind since World War II. The course of events significantly changed in July 1993. Upon overthrowing Barre's regime, the country's two most powerful figures were Ali Mahdi, an influential businessman, and General Aideed, who nevertheless never managed to reach an

⁴ Pirates are divided into three categories. There are one-time fishermen, who also know the sea inside and out. There are former militiamen, who used to fight for the clan of a warlord, and there are technology experts, who are computer-literate, and have knowledge of various high-tech devices and can handle GPS, satellite phones and the like. "Lutter contre la piraterie". France, Ministry of Defence. <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/lutterContrePiraterieWeb/>, Accessed on 3 June 2018.

⁵ "Lutter contre la piraterie". France, Ministry of Defence. <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/lutterContrePiraterieWeb/>, Accessed on 3 June 2018.

⁶ Hunter, R. "Somali pirates living the high life". BBC. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7650415.stm>, Accessed on 20 December 2010.

⁷ "Lutter contre la piraterie". France, Ministry of Defence. <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/lutterContrePiraterieWeb/>, Accessed on 3 June 2018.

⁸ Mayyasi, A. "Hawala: The working Man's Bitcoin". Priceonomics. <https://priceonomics.com/hawala-the-working-mans-bitcoin/>, Accessed on 22 April 2017.

agreement and actually divided the capital city of Mogadishu into two parts. Both made efforts to extend their control over other areas in Somalia. The fight previously between the latter warlord and United Nations (UN) as well as the United States (US) troops resulted in turning the clans controlling Mogadishu against the foreign troops, so the operation went amiss. Somalia's self-appointed president Mohamed Farrah Aideed's militiamen began combating American soldiers. Because of this failure and pressure from the general public, then US President Bill Clinton had withdrawn the American troops – sent by George H. W. Bush – from the area by spring 1994, whilst the UN mission was obliged to cease its operation in March 1995.⁹

Adverse changes in the 1990s led to the establishment of several separatist state forms in the Horn of Africa, which all took advantage of the weakness of the central administration. One of these areas was Puntland, established in 1998, where the majority of Somali pirates originated. Due to the present state of the country the various territories are functioning autonomously, making their own political decisions. Following the 2012 elections it was generally thought that the 'federal system had found a way in Somalia, creating hope for the formation of would-be federal member states in which law and order can be restored at the grass root level.'¹⁰ Nevertheless, as Viktor Marsai expressed in a 2017 article, since the 'federal member states have fallen into the hands of wrangling clans and sub-clans, some people describe Somali federalism as the Balkanization of the country'¹¹. In his opinion, during the last (i.e. 2016) elections the clans, which – according to several experts, international public figures, as well as the Somali themselves – serve as the foundation of the Somali political establishment, as well as the Somali elite, some foreigners, and al-Shabaab all played major parts in the political dynamism.¹²

After the discontinuation of the central governmental power, the influence of Islamic law (also known as Sharia) increased. In 2000, 11 Mogadishu courts were united, establishing the Islamic Courts Union (ICU)¹³, which was to join with different Islamic movements in the whole of Somalia. One of their strongest military groups is Al-Shabaab. ICU's sphere of action covered the whole of Mogadishu by 2006, as well as most of South and Central Somalia, yet it was overthrown by the Ethiopian army in January 2007.¹⁴ Al-Shabaab launched guerrilla activities. With UN authorization, in February 2007 the peacekeepers of the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) commenced their activities in Somali territories and managed to push Al-Shabaab forces out of the larger cities.¹⁵ Al-Shabaab has since then been continually attacking both army and civilian targets throughout Somalia, Kenya, and Uganda. Their main goal is to overthrow the internationally supported federal government of Somalia. The mission of AMISOM has not achieved all that was expected: the counterinsurgency operations of the African Union troops and Somali government forces

⁹ Kiss, Besenyő and Resperger. *Szomália...* 52–53.

¹⁰ Tawane, A. A. "Federalism in Africa: The case of Somalia". Pambazuka News. 6 April 2017. <https://www.pambazuka.org/governance/federalism-africa-case-somalia>, Accessed on 23 October 2018.

¹¹ Marsai, V. "Somali elections in 2016-2017 – Business as usual or a new hope?". *Center for Strategic and Defense Studies Analyses* 14. 2017. 1–12. http://archiv.netk.uni-nke.hu/uploads/media_items/csds-analyses-2017-14-somali-elections-in-2016-2017-marsai-v.original.pdf, Accessed on 4 November 2018.

¹² More of this analysis in Marsai, V. "Somali elections in 2016-2017 – Business as usual or a new hope?". *Center for Strategic and Defense Studies Analyses* 14. 2017. 1–12. http://archiv.netk.uni-nke.hu/uploads/media_items/csds-analyses-2017-14-somali-elections-in-2016-2017-marsai-v.original.pdf, Accessed on 4 November 2018.

¹³ Midowga Maxkamadaha Islaamiga

¹⁴ The US was in favour of this operation, since they assumed close connection between the ICU and al-Qaeda.

¹⁵ "Brief History". AMISOM. <http://amisom-au.org/about-somalia/brief-history/>, Accessed on 30 October 2017.

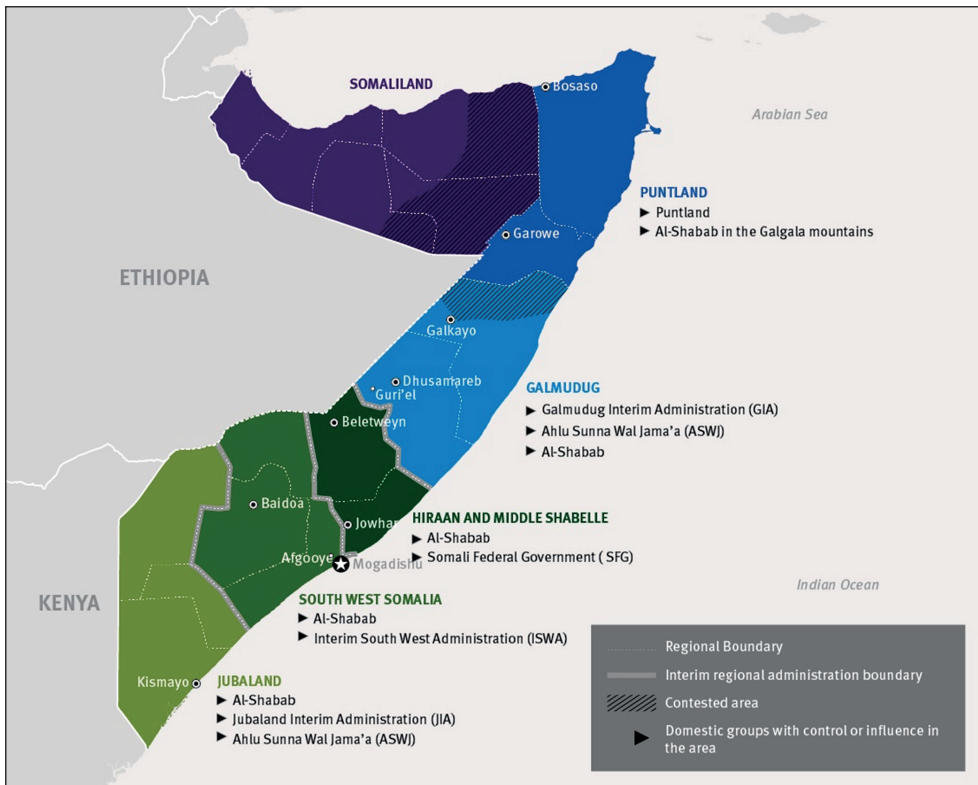


Figure 2: *Somalia Federal States map*

Source: "Somali update, latest Somalia news and analysis". *Africa news online*. <http://www.africanews.online/somalie/somali-update-latest-somalia-news-and-analysis-2/>, Accessed on 23 October 2018.

have failed to blunt Al-Shabaab's capacity to inflict heavy civilian and military casualties.¹⁶ This fact along with the weakness and low public acceptance of the federal government explain why the armed group has been gaining territories in the area in the past few years. Still, the group neither entertains global terrorist ambitions nor has such capacities. Al-Shabaab was also able to step up its deadly actions despite a greater frequency of United States drone attacks since President Trump's inauguration.¹⁷ Altogether 10,535 Africans lost their lives because of militant Islamists' actions between May 2017 and May 2018, which is – while greater than the number of fatalities in the previous 12 months – definitely lower than it was in 2015.¹⁸

¹⁶ Adan, A. M. "Al-Shabab ranked as deadliest terror group in Africa". Hiraaan. https://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2018/May/157875/al_shabab_ranked_as_deadliest_terror_group_in_africa.aspx, Accessed on 23 October 2018.

¹⁷ Since the beginning of 2017.

¹⁸ There were 18,728 deaths in total in 2015. Adan, A. M. "Al-Shabab ranked as deadliest terror group in Africa". Hiraaan. https://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2018/May/157875/al_shabab_ranked_as_deadliest_terror_group_in_africa.aspx, Accessed on 23 October 2018. Nevertheless, the 2015 mortality rates – even compared to those

DIRECT ANTECEDENTS, FORMATION, AND RUNNING OF OPERATION ATALANTA

Modern-day piracy has become a problem of globalization which the international community has had to tackle to an ever-greater extent. France realized this long before NATO, and before the launch of the all-European cooperation. On 10 July 2007, indicating their despair, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Maritime Bureau (IMB)¹⁹ appealed to the general public in a call for international cooperation against piracy along the coastline of the Horn of Africa as well as for protecting humanitarian aid to Somalia. As a response, on 25 September, during the 62nd Session of the UN General Assembly, President Nicolas Sarkozy announced that France would send a warship to protect WFP ships. On 16 November 2007 Operation Alcyon commenced. The task was taken over on 2 February 2008 by the Danish Navy, and numerous nations joined the initiative. On 15 September 2008, following France and Spain's suggestion, the Council of Europe in Brussels decided to establish the European Union Naval Coordination Cell (EUNAVCO), in the framework of which a European commercial ship was first escorted through the Gulf of Aden by a French warship on 12 October 2008. EUNAVCO served as the European coordination network of the fight against piracy at sea. Among its tasks, it partly coordinated measures taken by member states within their national missions with regard to the battle against piracy, and also informed European ship-owners about military assets. Within its framework France made it possible for 20 commercial ships altogether to safely pass the Gulf of Aden. The Coordination Unit ceased to exist once Operation Atalanta was launched, with no legal successor.²⁰ On 24 October of the same year, Operation Allied Provider was launched, being the first NATO operation in the fight against Somali pirate activities.²¹

The UN-mandated EUNAVFOR, commonly known as Operation Atalanta, was launched on 8 December 2008 by the EU as the first European operation at sea with the hope of successfully countering, preventing, and tackling piracy and armed robbery along the Somali coastline. Their mandate was for a one-year period, which has been prolonged several times. The event itself was preceded by an Action Plan approved on 10 November 2008 in the Council of the European Union regarding the launch of the first naval operation of the

of 2011 – were much better, for which Viktor Marsai in a 2015 article of his provides a less scientific but even more interesting and telling example: ‘...in January 2013 an al-Jazeera journalist interviewed gravediggers from Mogadishu. One of them, Ali Hassan took up this profession in 1991. (...) In 2011 there were still 14 gravediggers in the cemetery called Abdirrahid Ahmed Sharmake in the capital, working seven days a week, whilst today only two of them are still doing the job, Hassan and another undertaker. The decreasing number of the deceased – also meaning less income for the undertakers – is reported by other providers in the funeral and related services, such as textile sellers, who sell white caftans to wrap the deceased with.’ Marsai, V. “A szomáli szövetségi kormány első két éve és az al-Sabáb elleni katonai műveletek 2012–2014. (I.)”. *Nemzet és Biztonság* 8/1. 2015. 72. http://www.nemzetesbiztonsag.hu/cikkek/nb_2015_1_08_marsai.pdf, Accessed on 4 November 2018.

¹⁹ You can read more about the IMB on their official website. “International Maritime Bureau”. ICC CSS. <https://www.icc-css.org/icc/imb>, Accessed on 2 June 2018.

²⁰ “L’action de la France dans la lutte contre le piraterie”. France, Ministry of Defence. 12 July 2010. <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/operations/piraterie/dossier-de-presentation-des-operations/l-action-de-la-france-dans-la-lutte-contre-la-piraterie>, Accessed on 2 June 2018.

²¹ “Operation Allied Provider”. NATO Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe. <https://shape.nato.int/page13984631>, Accessed on 2 June 2018.

integration. The latter was backed by the UN Security Council as closely related to their resolutions (numbers 1814, 1816, 1838, 1846 and 1851) regarding the fight against Somali piracy. Among the aims of Operation Atalanta are listed the protection of WFP and other ships²² in danger which navigate in the Gulf of Aden as well as off the Somali coasts and near the Seychelles Islands, the prevention of and measures taken against pirate activities and armed robberies along the coastline, as well as controlling fishing along Somali coastal areas. EUNAVFOR became the integral part of the European integration's security and defence policy. Another goal is to support other EU missions and international organizations that aim to promote maritime security and strengthen capacity in the region. Regarding the operation's mandate, apart from protecting the WFP, AMISOM and commercial ships, the participants were authorized to employ any means – including armed force – to attain the above-mentioned goals only and exclusively in the zone where these activities are carried out. Numerous countries – based on their military potential – participated in the operation, namely: the Netherlands, Spain, Germany, France, Greece, Italy, Sweden, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Estonia – indicating that Atalanta is indeed a European military action. Moreover, on 3 January 2014, a Ukrainian frigate joined the operation. The French have been present from the very beginning in the EUNAVFOR units, continuously represented by one frigate²³ and occasionally dispatching their Atlantique 2 maritime patrol aircraft, based in Djibouti, where the Joint Force Command Headquarters is located. The French assist in the operation's success with the logistics base in Djibouti, too.²⁴ The Area of Operations covers the southern territories of the Red Sea, the area of the Gulf of Aden and part of the Indian Ocean, including the Seychelles Islands. EUNAVFOR units deter attacks and show military presence in the Area of Operations and Somali coastal waters, as well as constantly escort ships, in accordance with the UN Security Council's relevant regulations. Naturally, in the area in question several nations' navies are operating, with which EUNAVFOR has developed a broad network of connections by now.²⁵

²² For example, consignments launched by AMISOM as well as commercial and passenger ships.

²³ On 1 July 2009, the French (at the request of a group of ship-owners) established the so-called onboard protection teams (EPE – équipes de protection embarquées) Seychelles mission, with the help of which French fishing boats are directly protected on board, when they operate along the Seychelles. The number of states involved in the EPE as well as their operational area has increased year by year. In June 2011 Estonia joined the EPE which has contributed to the success of Operation Atalanta since November 2010. "Atalante: les équipes de protection embarquées, image de la coopération européenne". France, Ministry of Defence. 3 August 2011. <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/operations/piraterie/actualites/atalante-les-equipes-de-protection-embarquees-image-de-la-cooperation-europeenne>, Accessed on 19 February 2018.

²⁴ "Opération EU NAVFOR Somalia/Atalante". France, Ministry of Defence. <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/operations/piraterie/dossier-de-presentations/operation-eu-navfor-somalie-atalante>, Accessed on 15 March 2017.

²⁵ Since the end of 2008 more and more countries have been sending battleships to the Gulf of Aden as well as to the Somali coasts, which do not belong to any multinational forces, yet closely cooperate with the EUNAVFOR. It means about 10-15 battleships. "Opération EU NAVFOR Somalia/Atalante". France, Ministry of Defence. <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/operations/piraterie/dossier-de-presentations/operation-eu-navfor-somalie-atalante>, Accessed on 15 March 2017.



Figure 3: Fight against Somali piracy – Area of Operations

Source: Maritime security chart: Q6099: Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Arabian Sea. UK Hydrographic Office. https://www.admiralty.co.uk/AdmiraltyDownloadMedia/Security%20Related%20Information%20to%20Mariners/Q6099_A4.pdf, Accessed on 23 October 2018.

In June 2010 the EU Foreign Affairs Council somewhat altered the concept of the operation, requiring states in the region to actively participate in restoring order and peace in the vicinity of the Horn of Africa. Another significant development was the extension of the Area of operations both eastward and southward, and to address the roots of the problems the European Union Somalia Training Mission (EUTM)²⁶ had also been launched, which

²⁶ In the battle against modern-day piracy, relying only on high-tech navy forces is not sufficient; efficient maritime and air force cooperation with the local armed forces is more and more necessary. The mission's mandate was prolonged until 31 August 2018.

was expected to reinforce security forces in Somalia.²⁷ Besides particularly representing the member states' economic interests in the area, the operation also served humanitarian purposes in the form of humanitarian aid transferred by sea.²⁸

The two following tables' data on the EU Naval Force – Somalia clearly show that the political, legal, diplomatic, and military efforts have been fruitful. The number of pirate attacks has significantly decreased, the route of commercial ships in the region has become more secure, and owing to the extended alarm system and offers of the European Union and the IMB, they are more prepared against attacks.

Table 1: *EU Naval Force Somalia – Operation Atalanta*

CURRENTLY HELD BY PIRATES											
Vessels Held*						Hostages Held**					
0						0					
SINCE 2009											
WFP Vessels Protected						438					
AMISOM Vessels Protected						139					
Tonnes of Food/Aid Delivered by WFP						1,726,497***					
Pirates Transferred to Competent Authorities with a View to their Prosecution						Total 166		Remanded 6		Convicted 145	
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	166	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Suspicious Events	8	59	99	166	74	20	5	1	2	6	1
Total Attacks	24	163	174	176	34	7	2	0	1	7	1
Of Which Pirated****	14	46	47	25	4	0	0	0	0	2	0
Disruptions*****	0	14	65	28	16	10	1	0	0	2	0

* Plus, an unknown number of unreported/unconfirmed dhows and smaller vessels

** Estimated

*** Reported metric tonnes of food/aid delivered to Somali ports by World Food Programme shipping protected by EU NAVFOR

**** TOTAL ATTACK is the combined number of all attacks mounted by suspect pirates; those repelled/aborted and those leading to ships being in pirate hands and crews taken hostage

***** An action that renders a pirate group incapable of further pirate operation

Source: "Key facts and figures". *EU Naval Force Somalia*. <http://eunavfor.eu/key-facts-and-figures/>, Accessed on 3 June 2018

²⁷ "European Union Training Mission Somalia". <https://www.eutm-somalia.eu/>, Accessed on 2 June 2018.

²⁸ "EU NAVFOR: Proud to have protected by sea over 1.5 million tonnes of WFP humanitarian aid for people of Somalia". *EU NAVFOR Somalia*. 4 July 2017. <http://eunavfor.eu/eu-navfor-proud-to-have-protected-by-sea-over-1-5-million-tonnes-of-wfp-humanitarian-aid-for-people-of-somalia/>, Accessed on 2 June 2018.

Table 2: Latest piracy incidents

Latest Piracy Incidents							
Date	Type of Vessel	Approximate Position of Incident	Attack or Suspicious Event	BMP	PASC	Unknown	Pirated/ Safe
2018/03/08	Cargo Vessel		Suspicious Event	X	X		Safe
2018/02/22	Chemical Tanker	Somali Basin	Attack	X	X		Safe
2017/11/22	Bulk Carrier		Suspicious Event	X			Safe
2017/11/18	Fishing Vessel		Suspicious Event				Safe
2017/11/18	Container		Attack	X			Safe
BMP: Best Management Practises PASC: Private (armed) Security Company							

Source: “Key facts and figures”. EU Naval Force Somalia. <http://eunavfor.eu/key-facts-and-figures/>, Accessed on 3 June 2018.

THE FRENCH CONTRIBUTION AND SUCCESSES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST PIRATES

According to French opinions, the success story of EUNAVFOR really began in March 2010.²⁹ In February 2010 the frigate *Nivôse* joined the operation, replacing another vessel of the same class *Surcouf*, serving till then along the East-African coastline and in the Gulf of Aden. First and foremost, it was ordered to provide protection – correspondingly – for commercial, WFP and AMISOM ships as well as participate actively in the fight against pirates. Soon after it began its mission, the *Nivôse* and its crew achieved success as on 5 March 2010 they successfully fended off two separate attacks. On 6 and 7 March, just off the Somali coast, some participating EUNAVFOR units with French leadership foiled an attack on either day. The results at that time, however, amounted to something much greater than ever before. Within the course of three days, altogether 35 pirates, five mother ships and eight boats were taken hold of. The action executed on 7 March proved just how essential the naval power provided by the participating European states was in the fight against piracy, when applied in a combined, concerted way. The united action executed by the *Nivôse*, together with the *Etna*, the flagship of the operation since December 2009, their helicopters as well

²⁹ French authorities can only come to help against pirate attacks if the given vessel is flying a French flag and operates in a French economic sector, or if it belongs to the especially endangered ships that are protected in the framework of Operation Atalanta. In such cases the ships under protection must agree to change course, and also have to share costs regarding their safety. When a French ship is attacked, or there are French sailors and passengers among the pirates’ hostages, France may consider dispatching warships. “Lutter contre la piraterie”. France, Ministry of Defence. <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/lutterContrePiraterieWeb/>, Accessed on 3 June 2018.

as Spanish Navy reconnaissance aircraft guaranteed the eventual success. The helicopters played a significant role in spotting the pirates' boats and the mother ship. Warning shots encouraged the African pirates to lay down their weapons, and then following their capture they were – together with their boats – taken on board the ships participating in the action. The pirates' mother ship was, as always, sunk on the spot.³⁰

The story, however, did not and could not end here. A great number of successful actions had justified the participation of French forces, too. On 14 August 2010 France took command of Operation Atalanta for four months under the leadership of Rear Adm. Philippe Coindreau.³¹ Consequently, beside their frigate and naval reconnaissance aircraft, France deployed a warship to the operation. During the French leadership, the French frigate *de Grasse*, joined by the frigate *Floréal* on 6 September 2010, and accomplished several successful actions against the pirates in the Somali Basin. Within the four months of French command, over 120 suspected pirates were captured in over 20 actions. Coindreau handed over the command of the operation to the Spanish Rear Adm. Juan Rodriguez Garat in Djibouti on 10 December 2010.³² In the end of March 2012, France made another warship available for Operation Atalanta. Between 7 April and 6 August 2012, France again commanded the operation under the leadership of Rear Adm. Dupuis, who handed over the command of the operation to his Italian colleague Enrico Credendino. For some months after 12 April 2012, four French vessels were involved in Operation Atalanta. On 6 December 2013, in Djibouti, France – for the third time – took over the command of the operation's Task Force (TF) 465 under the leadership of Rear Adm. Hervé Bléjean for another four months.³³ Under French leadership, the Amphibious Landing Dock (ALD) *Siroco*'s multinational staff proved to be able to successfully cope not only with combating the pirates, but also the training of personnel from African states that cooperated with EUNAVFOR, showing that both the European operation as well as the French naval forces in the region are capable of development and renewal. This has been proven to date by countless examples. The French frigate *La Fayette*, currently serving under the ALINDIEN³⁴, contributed to the success of Atalanta – through the suppression, deterrence, and prevention of piracy – in the Indian Ocean.³⁵

For the forces taking part in the national and international cooperative effort, special watercraft is needed to bring firepower to bear, and prevent the pirates from succeeding or to attempt to free hostages. Arresting pirates, bringing them to justice and sentencing them appear to be complicated even today, despite the fact that there is now an international

³⁰ "Atalante: 35 pirates interceptés en trois jours par la frégate Nivôse". France, Ministry of Defence. 3 July 2010. <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/operations/piraterie/actualites/07-03-10-atalante-35-pirates-interceptes-en-trois-jours-par-la-fregate-nivose>, Accessed on 19 February 2018.

³¹ "Atalante: la France prend le commandement de la force maritime européenne: vidéo". France, Ministry of Defence. 17 August 2010. <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/operations/piraterie/actualites/atalante-la-france-prend-le-commandement-de-la-force-maritime-europeenne-video>, Accessed on 19 February 2018.

³² "Atalante: la France rend le commandement de la force de l'opération". France, Ministry of Defence. 18 December 2010. <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/operations/piraterie/actualites/atalante-la-france-rend-le-commandement-de-la-force-de-l-operation>, Accessed on 19 February 2018.

³³ "Piraterie: la France prend le commandement de la force Atalante". France, Ministry of Defence. 6 December 2013. <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/operations/piraterie/actualites/piraterie-la-france-prend-le-commandement-de-la-force-atalante2>, Accessed on 19 February 2018.

³⁴ Amiral commandant de la zone maritime de l'océan Indien et les forces maritimes de l'océan Indien.

³⁵ "Opération Atalante: la frigate La Fayette reçoit le commandant adjoint de l'opération". France, Ministry of Defence. 18 April 2018. <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/operations/piraterie/actualites/operation-atalante-la-fregate-la-fayette-recoit-le-commandant-adjoint-de-l-operation>, Accessed on 3 June 2018.

agreement that makes it possible. On 6 March 2009, the EU and Kenya signed an agreement ordering persons accused of piracy in the framework of Operation Atalanta to be taken to Kenya and be tried in court there. The Seychelles Islands can also be counted on in this regard, although pirates are often set free there³⁶. In the battle against piracy the most common strategy is eliminating the mother ship. There seem to be some options for commercial ships, too. They can, for instance, increase speed, or can attempt to cross the danger zone when strong wind is producing high waves that set the pirates back. Some shipping offices have begun to employ armed security guards, and there is also an interesting method that could be called maritime electric fences. This device surrounds the body of the ship and causes an electric shock, which may offer efficient protection. If, despite all precautions, the pirates' attack is successful, ransom negotiations begin and may take weeks, even months. The ransom may be dropped with a parachute but if food and fuel also feature among the negotiated claims, it can be delivered by ship. The most important factor during a negotiation is to guarantee safety for the crew and the passengers, i.e. human life, which the pirates also take advantage of.³⁷

For decades France has been maintaining constant military presence in the Indian Ocean, whilst in the Gulf of Aden the country is active in the frameworks of both national and multinational operations. ALINDIEN is in charge of the command of naval forces in the Indian Ocean maritime zone which extends from the Red Sea and West Africa to the Philippines as well as East Vietnam. Apart from military control these forces actively provide intense defence diplomacy. The active participation of the French Navy in the Indian Ocean increased in the Gulf War of the 1990s and has not ceased since. The fight against Afghan terrorism also took place in this context, as well as aiding the victims of the tsunami that occurred on 26 December 2004. After December 2001, on the basis of the report by Control Naval Volontaire,³⁸ France set in motion an information channel for ships, battleships and their crews in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. By promoting interactions between the civilian sphere and the military, this helps avoid potential threats or efficiently tackle them. The idea was also adopted by EU Operation Atalanta, which launched the Maritime Security Center – Horn of Africa (MSCHOA) with Northwood, UK, as its headquarters; they can offer help to all vessels in the zone and a kind of passive protection, thanks to its website. The MSCHOA has proven to be useful: due to their advice a huge percentage of ships have avoided pirate attacks when crossing the high-risk territory.³⁹

CONCLUSION

After the turn of the millennium the EU appeared as a new player in international crisis management. The EUNAVFOR operation, launched in December 2008, can be considered as one of the largest-scale military operations of the EU as I view it. The success of the integration's foreign and defence policy was particularly palpable in this operation, in which

³⁶ Moreover, besides these two countries EUNAVFOR, during their operations, is already cooperating with Tanzania, Uganda, Djibouti, Oman, Madagascar and Mauritius.

³⁷ "Lutter contre la piraterie". France, Ministry of Defence. <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/lutterContrePiraterieWeb/>, Accessed on 3 June 2018.

³⁸ Voluntary Navy Control (VNC)

³⁹ "Maritime Security Centre - Horn of Africa". MSCHOA. <http://www.mschoa.org/on-shore/about-us>, Accessed on 3 June 2018.

France had an important role from the very outset, and according to relevant literature: the French state viewed itself as one of the most decisive participants in it. Apart from the EU integration's operation France flourished in the region on its own, too – for instance, within the framework of the above-mentioned ALINDIEN. In addition, in the course of the EU-NAVFOR, France took initiative on several occasions and proved to be successful, showing that France preferred to go its own separate ways from their European partners (too). As an example of the latter, they launched an information channel for ships, naval vessels and their crews in the Pacific and Indian Ocean after December 2001, on the basis of which the still active and successfully operating MSCHOA was introduced; or another example is the EPE Seychelles mission.

In light of the above we can state that in the course of the multinational naval operation of the European integration not only military but also diplomatic and legislative means were used to fight the Somali pirates. With its naval forces France successfully participated in the operation – due to its nature, often in an unorthodox manner – in order to fight the asymmetric challenge of the day in a greatly altered security environment.

When talking of today's Somalia, it is no longer pirate attacks that come to our mind, since piracy as such has shifted to the region of the Gulf of Guinea and Southeast Asian waters. Nonetheless, in my opinion it is indisputable that as long as there is a chance for piracy to occur in the African continent, as it occurred in the case of Somalia, there will be pirates as well.

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