

## SEAPOWER IN THE FIGHT AGAINST SOMALI PIRACY

### *O PODER MILITAR NO MAR NO COMBATE À PIRATARIA SOMALI*

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#### ABSTRACT

Piracy in the Horn of Africa took on prominence in the early 21st century, when it endangered two international maritime trade routes: the Suez and the Cape. Freedom of navigation was severely affected and the lives of crew members were put at risk, contributing to maritime (in) security in the region. The hijacking of ships carrying humanitarian aid had a direct impact on the lives of Somali populations, depriving them of basic goods and therefore affecting their (human) security. The region then witnessed the largest multilateral naval operation in the post-Cold War era, in which naval forces from three important international organizations (NATO, the European Union and the Combined Maritime Forces) joined efforts to counter this threat, alongside several States that engaged resources autonomously under independent national mandates, in particular China, Russia, India and Japan. This article analyses the influence of seapower on maritime security in the Horn of Africa region in the current century. The findings show that since late 2008, the use of seapower was decisive in controlling the phenomenon of maritime piracy.

**Keywords:** Horn of Africa, seapower, maritime security, maritime piracy.

#### RESUMO

*A pirataria no Corno de África no início do século XXI assumiu particular destaque ao ter colocado em causa o comércio marítimo internacional através de duas rotas globais: do Suez e do Cabo. A liberdade de navegação ficou fortemente condicionada e a vida de tripulantes foi posta em risco, o que contribuiu para a (in)segurança marítima da região. Os sequestros de navios com ajuda humanitária para as populações somalis tiveram impacto direto no seu modo de vida, privando-as de bens de primeira necessidade, pelo que afetaram a sua segurança (humana). Para combater aquela ameaça, a região assistiu à maior operação naval multilateral no pós-Guerra Fria, com forças navais de três proeminentes organizações internacionais, como a NATO, a União Europeia e o Combined Maritime Forces, a par de diversos Estados que*

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*empenharam meios de forma autónoma, em missões nacionais independentes, destacando-se a China, a Rússia, a Índia e o Japão. Pretende-se com este artigo analisar a influência do poder militar no mar na segurança marítima na região do Corno de África no corrente século. Os resultados mostram que a intervenção do poder militar no mar ocorrida a partir do final de 2008 foi decisiva no controlo do fenómeno da pirataria marítima.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Corno de África, poder militar no mar, segurança marítima, pirataria marítima.*

## **1. Introduction**

In the early years of the current century, the Horn of Africa region was confronted with an unsustainable climate of widespread insecurity that was largely caused by the collapse of the Somali State in 1991, with the fall of the Siad Barre regime. The ensuing decline of Somalia's fishing industry added to the difficult economic conditions faced by ordinary citizens. Somali fishing communities were left virtually unprotected due to the lack of security structures. Some populations then attempted to regain sovereignty over fish stocks by boarding foreign fishing vessels and detaining and fining their crews. This first phase of contemporary Somali piracy, which Lucas (2013) called "subsistence piracy", lasted until 2005. In 2007, there was a gradual resurgence of the phenomenon of piracy originating in Somalia. This time, it generated considerable wealth for pirate organizations and grew almost exponentially in 2009. During that year, according to the International Maritime Bureau (2010), more than half of all piracy incidents worldwide had originated in the Horn of Africa.

Maritime insecurity caused by Somali piracy significantly affected freedom of navigation in those important waters, hindered international maritime trade and endangered the lives of countless people that depend on the ocean. The military instrument was the mechanism chosen by States and international organizations to control the threat and ensure the region's security.

The key concepts addressed in this study are, thus, maritime security (which is endangered by the phenomenon of Somali piracy), seapower (the preferred instrument of power to combat the threat) and maritime security operations (the model used to project seapower in the region). The next section will briefly describe the above concepts and demonstrate that they are inextricably linked.

With regards to the concept of maritime security, Natalie Klein (2011) was among those who argued that interests related to security in the oceans were traditionally linked to the military interests of individual States, and that this dimension still strongly influenced inter-State relations and internal decisions on military priorities. However, even though protecting national sovereignty and interests remained a vital aspect of maritime security, there was, according to the author, an increasing acceptance that States have a common interest in addressing the range of threats to maritime security, which she described as "the protection of a state's land and maritime territory, infrastructure, economy, environment and society from certain harmful acts occurring at sea" (Klein, 2011, p. 11).

Feldt, Roell and Thile (2013, p. 2) stressed that the concept of maritime security, which many find "large and sometimes nebulous", had taken on a significant dimension and now

involved numerous international organizations, both public and private, working together with the goal of “preserving the freedom of the seas, facilitating and defending commerce and maintaining good governance at sea.”

The above definitions show that maritime security is linked to threats in the maritime domain, freedom of navigation and good order at sea. This, then, is the concept of maritime security used in this article.

On the other hand, the maritime security matrix devised by Christian Bueger (2015, p. 160) brought four relevant concepts to the discussion: seapower, marine safety<sup>1</sup>, blue economy and human resilience. Each of these concepts points to different dimensions of maritime security. The concepts of seapower and marine safety are centuries old while the latter two are contemporary to the maritime dimension of security. The concept of maritime security was coined in the late 20th century, but only became autonomous and relevant in the early 21st century, with the intensification of concerns related to maritime terrorism and especially with the rise in piracy incidents, particularly of Somali origin (Bueger & Edmunds, 2017). According to Bueger (2015, p. 160), the traditional discourse on “security at sea” was based on the notion that it referred to “naval warfare, the importance of maritime power projection, and the concept of seapower”. In addition to being “firmly based in a traditionalist understanding of national security as the protection of survival of states, the concept of seapower aims at laying out the role of naval forces and at elaborating strategies for their use”. Nevertheless, as Bueger adds, “the concept of seapower is related to maritime security in several ways.” First, because naval forces are a key provider of maritime security. Second, because discussions on the concept focus on how far a State’s seapower should operate outside its neighbouring and national territory, deploy forces to distant regions and have a presence in international waters. This approach to seapower is clearly closer to the traditional concept of naval power.

Referring to the challenges in characterising seapower, Geoffrey Till (2009, p. 21) offered a different perspective on the concept, dividing it into means and ends. Means are navies, coast guards, shipbuilding and ship repair industries, and, if and when applicable, land and air forces. The author also included non-military aspects related to the use of the sea (such as shipping, fishing, and the construction and repair of merchant ships, among others). Ends refer to the ability to influence the behaviour of others through the sea or from the sea. This range of means and ends is what the author describes as seapower.

The term seapower has multiple definitions, and even meanings, which are briefly addressed above. In this article it refers to “military power at sea”.

The third key concept, “maritime security operations” (MSO), is a recent addition to the naval military lexicon. The Royal Navy defined MSO as “[A set of] actions performed by military units in partnership with other government departments, agencies and international partners in the maritime environment to counter illegal activity and support freedom of the

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<sup>1</sup> This concept encompasses aspects such as the safety of ships and maritime infrastructure, and its primary purpose is to protect maritime professionals. Its tasks include regulating the construction of ships, vessels and maritime infrastructure, monitoring safety procedures, and training maritime professionals in complying with the regulations in force (Bueger, 2015).

seas, in order to protect [the UK's] national and international interests" (Till, 2009, p. 286). MSO thus aim to ensure "good order at sea", and are necessary because the oceans face a range of risks and threats that may "threaten [...] their contribution to human development". Till (2009, p. 286) added that navies were become increasingly involved in maintaining that "good order", referring to these interventions as "soft security", in contrast to their traditional role, that is, to "foster, maintain or contest political power", which he called "hard security", and that such responsibilities may even be expanded in the future.

The MSO developed under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) are operations carried out by EU naval forces, either in coordination with other EU stakeholders / specialised instruments or autonomously, to counter threats and mitigate the risk of illegal activities in the maritime domain (CEU, 2012).

On the other hand, NATO's maritime strategy defines the role that Alliance forces can play in the maritime domain to contribute to allies' defence and security through deterrence and collective defence, crisis management, cooperative security and maritime security. The Alliance operations and activities that contribute to maritime security include patrolling and surveillance of maritime spaces, information sharing, conducting maritime interdiction operations, safeguarding freedom of navigation and protecting critical maritime infrastructure (NATO, 2011).

This study addresses maritime security in the Horn of Africa. Its main focus is the threat posed by the phenomenon of Somali piracy and the use of seapower in maritime security operations as an important aspect of "soft security".

This study aims to demonstrate that seapower, as a relevant co-provider of security in the maritime environment, was decisive in controlling the phenomenon of contemporary Somali piracy. The study will focus on the MSO conducted by three international organizations with considerable influence on the Horn of Africa region: NATO, the European Union (EU) and the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF). The study analyses the period between 2008, when the first military operations were launched, and 2016, when Operation Ocean Shield was terminated, marking the end of NATO's participation.

In addition to this introduction, the study is divided into three chapters and a conclusions section. The first chapter will address NATO's intervention. The second chapter focuses on the role of the EU. The third chapter describes the actions of the CMF, a multinational naval partnership led by the US. The conclusions highlight that the involvement of these three international organizations was vital to control piracy in the Horn of Africa region.

## **2. NATO's intervention**

The core tasks of the Atlantic Alliance are identified in the NATO Strategic Concept 2010 and consist of collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security. The new Maritime Strategy adopted in January 2011 referred to maritime security as one of NATO's roles. This chapter addresses this role as it pertains to the operations conducted in the Horn of Africa.

The above strategy stated that all Allies had a common interest in safeguarding freedom of navigation, securing maritime routes, critical infrastructure and the energy trade, protecting marine resources and environmental safety, and that the world's oceans and seas had become increasingly permeable to transnational criminal and terrorist activities such as

the transport of weapons of mass destruction and related materials. Criminal activity in the maritime environment now included a growing range and rate of pirate attacks, which had inevitably raised concerns regarding the safety of ship crews and private citizens with links to the sea in high risk areas (NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 2012, p. 7).

NATO deployed its first military capabilities in the Western Indian Ocean in 2008. From 2009 until the end of 2014, it engaged its two Standing NATO Maritime Groups (SNMG)<sup>2</sup> on a rotating basis (NATO, 2016).

The first of these NATO operations, Operation Allied Provider, was launched in response to a request from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on 25 September 2008. The Atlantic Alliance immediately deployed capabilities to combat piracy in the Horn of Africa region, in support of Security Council Resolutions 1814, 1816 and 1838 (all of which were issued in 2008) in coordination with other international actors, including the EU. To that end, it activated one of its two Standing NATO Maritime Groups, SNMG2. Both groups (SNMG1 and SNMG2) are part of NATO's Maritime Immediate Reaction Forces (NATO, 2016).

These groups were tasked with escorting merchant ships chartered by the World Food Programme (WFP) and conducting patrols off the coast of Somalia to contain the acts of piracy in that region. The operation began on 24 October and ended on 12 December 2008. During this period, SNMG2 escorted eight ships chartered by the WFP and ensured the safe arrival in Somalia of about 30,000 tons of food. It also disrupted several attacks by pirate groups on merchant ships travelling through the region's waters and deterred many more planned attacks (NATO, 2008).

On 24 March 2009, the Atlantic Alliance resumed its counter piracy operations in the Horn of Africa. The new operation, titled Allied Protector (OAP), was NATO's contribution to the International Community's efforts to improve the security of the region's maritime trade routes.

The new mission was coordinated with other international actors and its goal was to build on what had been achieved during Operation Allied Provider in 2008. SNMG1 took over operational organization Task Force (TF) 410 and assumed a highly visible profile, conducting maritime operations in the area from the Gulf of Aden to the Somali basin, which includes Somali territorial waters, to prevent and suppress piracy and armed robbery in those relevant maritime routes (NATO, 2009a). The Area of Operations (AOO) of OAP was about one million square miles. The following tasks were inferred from the mission mandate: conducting routine patrol and surveillance operations; conducting operations in a specific area for a defined time frame; escorting vessels chartered by the WFP and vessels considered to be at high risk (due to their characteristics or cargo); and gathering operational intelligence (NRP Corte-Real, 2009).

Between 24 March and 28 June, SNMG1 escorted 26 high risk vessels, many of which were chartered by the WFP. All vessels successfully reached their ports of destination (NATO, 2009b). Several actions were conducted to disrupt pirate attacks on various merchant ships,

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<sup>2</sup> SNMG are multinational maritime forces composed of ships from various Allied countries. Their composition is variable and usually comprises between six and ten surface units. These ships and their aircraft are permanently at the disposal of the Alliance to perform different tasks, which can range from simply participating in exercises to actual intervention in operational missions (NATO, 2016).



Over time, the operation evolved to respond to new piracy tactics. A strategic assessment of March 2012 highlighted the need to erode the pirates' logistics and support-base by, for instance, disabling pirate vessels (*dhow*s, which are traditionally used in the Indian Ocean as mother ships, and *skiffs*, used in attacks on targeted ships), resorting to the use of force to destroy them, if necessary, as well as their land-based logistics infrastructure. That is, NATO's mission was to prevent and deter piracy through direct actions against pirate attack groups by providing naval escorts and deterrence, while increasing cooperation with other counter piracy operations in the region, in particular those under the auspices of the EU and the US-led multinational partnership, as well as with autonomous forces from countries such as China, Japan and South Korea, in order to optimise efforts and respond to evolving pirate trends and tactics (NATO, 2016).

Following the sharp drop in piracy incidents since January 2015, the TF 508 ships contributed to counter piracy efforts through a "focused presence", in line with the decision taken at the 2014 Wales Summit, where the Alliance's Heads of State and Government agreed to extend OOS until the end of 2016 (NATO, 2015). In practice, this meant that naval capabilities were deployed mainly during inter-monsoon periods (spring and autumn), even though they could be deployed at other times, but only if needed. Maritime patrol aircraft continued to conduct regular sorties during periods when no surface ships were assigned (NATO, 2016).

As mentioned above, regional maritime capacity building was another important contribution to improve maritime security in the region on the short term, but especially to prepare the handover of the international community's counter piracy efforts to Somalia and other Horn of Africa countries. Using the means and capabilities available, and focusing on areas where it could provide added value, NATO's capability-building efforts aimed to help these countries develop their own counter piracy capabilities. These programmes included training Somali Coast Guard personnel and Tanzanian Navy personnel, preparing specific training programmes, participating in military exercises at sea with regional States, sending local officers to attend NATO courses, and advise on security sector reforms to increase regional stability by strengthening the State's ability to defend itself against external threats (NATO, 2014).

According to a November 2012 report prepared by Raymond Knops and presented at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (2012), the OOS helped define NATO's role in the maritime domain, contributing to the doctrine on the new maritime strategy and to the discussion that was taking place in the Organization at that time regarding the role that NATO should play in law enforcement at sea, as opposed to defence and crisis management at sea.

Table 1 lists the most relevant actions involving NATO's seapower between 2008 and 2014.

**Table 1 – Actions from 2008 - 2014**

PLACE	YEAR	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
SOMALI BASIN	HIJACKS	8	26	26	4	2	0	0
	ATTACKS	11	58	68	52	5	5	0
	DISRUPTIONS	N/A	15	88	52	16	6	0
GULF OF ADEN	HIJACKS	33	18	12	1	0	0	0
	ATTACKS	42	67	33	29	7	1	0
	DISRUPTIONS	N/A	47	56	21	7	2	0
ARABIAN SEA	HIJACKS	N/A	1	7	19	5	0	0
	ATTACKS	N/A	5	31	48	10	0	1
	DISRUPTIONS	N/A	N/A	3	23	14	0	0
TOTAL	HIJACKS	41	45	45	24	7	0	0
	ATTACKS	53	130	132	129	22	6	1
	DISRUPTIONS	N/A	62	147	96	37	8	0

Source: Adapted from NATO (2014).

“Hijacks” refer to incidents in which pirates took control of the ships they attacked. “Attacks” refer to encounters with groups of pirates that did not result in hijackings thanks to the defensive measures implemented by merchant ships. Disruptions refer to direct actions by military forces that prevented ships from being boarded and hijacked by pirate groups.

In his annual report of 2014, NATO’s Secretary General stated that the international efforts to combat piracy in the Horn of Africa region were an ongoing success. That year, the number of piracy incidents off the coast of Somalia had reached the lowest in recent years, with only five incidents and no ship hijackings since May 2012. The number of ships seized by pirates and the number of captured hostages dropped significantly in 2012 and even further in 2013. No incidents related to Somali piracy occurred in 2015, and only two in 2016, both of which had no practical consequences (NATO, 2015).

According to Mr Jens Stoltenberg, NATO’s Operation Ocean Shield, in close cooperation with US-led combined maritime forces, EU naval force and forces from contributing States acting autonomously had effectively reduced pirate activity in the region. Mr Stoltenberg added that such a significant reduction in piracy incidents was important for the global economy and regional security. However, while these efforts were clearly being successful, Somali piracy was not fully eradicated, and a continued international naval presence off the coast of Somalia would be needed to allow time and space for the long-term efforts to address the root causes of piracy to yield the expected results.

That is, NATO’s efforts in the Horn of Africa region have focused on counter-piracy maritime operations, where it has achieved remarkable results. However, the Alliance has also liaised with regional actors to develop capabilities to better address the root causes of piracy on land. While it may not be the main provider in this field, NATO’s capability-building programmes include training, education courses, participating in military exercises and advising the Somali Government on security sector reforms, all of which have contributed to build a safer maritime environment in the region (NATO, 2015).

### 3. The role of the European Union

This chapter briefly analyses the reasons for the EU's participation in operations to counter Somali piracy and the subsequent decision to engage its seapower capabilities for the first time in a CSDP operation. The chapter concludes by presenting some relevant findings.

On 14 November 2011, the Council of the EU showed that it was strongly committed to the region by deciding to create a strategic framework for the Horn of Africa, addressing five main areas: partnership for development, political dialogue, crisis response, crisis management and trade relations. Crisis management was to be conducted through the CSDP and the Instrument for Stability (IfS), and covered negotiations, mediation efforts, strengthening the rule of law, direct support to referenda and response capacity. This was the case in Somalia, where, in addition to humanitarian support, the EU provided financing for Transitional Federal Institutions through governance cooperation activities managed by the UN and civilian organizations, for the African Union (AU) mission (AMISOM) through the African Peace Facility, and for two military operations – naval operation ATALANTA, which aimed to counter piracy in the Western Indian Ocean, and the EU training mission (EUTM Somalia) in Uganda, which supported the training of Somali National Security Forces in partnership with Uganda and the US. To complement and support its counter piracy operations, the EU agreed to transfer the criminals apprehended by the naval forces assigned to operation Atalanta to third countries (Kenya, the Seychelles and Mauritius), also providing support to the penal, judicial, police and prison services in those three countries through its IfS (The Council of The European Union, 2011, pp. 5-7).

At the same Council meeting, the High Representative proposed that an EU Special Representative be appointed for the Horn of Africa, whose initial focus would be on Somalia, the regional dimension of the conflict and piracy, pending the development of action plans to support the implementation of the Strategic Framework. The Council outlined the reasons for “the EU's long-term commitment to the Horn of Africa”, stating that it was “rooted in the region's geostrategic importance”, the Union's desire to “support the welfare of the people of the Horn” and to help “lift them from poverty into self-sustaining economic growth”. The Council added that “instability in the region poses a growing challenge not only to the security of its peoples but also to the rest of the world” (The Council of The European Union, 2011, p. 1).

In a paper examining the comprehensive approach presented by the EU as the solution to Somali piracy, Robert Paige states that “restoring peace and security to the [Horn of Africa] region” is the main reason for the EU's intervention to combat the phenomenon. The “protection of global trade” and the “human security dimension” of the problem are other important reasons cited by Paige for the EU's involvement in the Somali issue. Finally, Paige stresses that the EU's “desire to prove its worth as a global security actor” may be another reason for its involvement in the fight against piracy (Paige, 2013, p. 12).

An article by Damien Helly published in 2009 by the European Union Institute for Security Studies states that the pirates' attacks on WFP-chartered ships pose a direct threat to Somali populations that depend on that aid. Particularly in Europe, several States have felt compelled

by a moral and humanitarian imperative to help people who need this aid to survive<sup>3</sup>. These countries have placed a high priority on improving the human security of these populations<sup>4</sup>. Thus, in 2007, they began using their military capabilities to provide escorts for WFP convoys. Contributing countries include France, Denmark, the Netherlands and Canada. On the other hand, important economic and commercial interests were at stake. In the early 21st century, more than 15 percent of global maritime trade traveled through the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aden. Europe's exports and energy imports depended on safe transit through those spaces. Sea freight in this area was therefore a highly sensitive security issue not only for the EU and Europe, but for all major markets, including the US, China and India (Helly, 2009, pp. 393-394).

Finally, at a time of financial crisis and fluctuating oil prices, insecurity in the region could have too high an economic cost. War risk insurance premiums surged and alternative routes through the Cape of Good Hope entailed excessive extra costs (e.g. increased fuel expenses due to longer transport distances) or losses for the economies of coastal countries (especially Egypt, whose revenue from the Suez Canal dropped significantly). On the other hand, for countries such as Spain, France and Italy, where the fishing industry (including in the Indian Ocean) played an important economic role, piracy represented an actual threat to national economic interests (Helly, 2009, p. 394).

The next section will briefly analyse the European Union's Naval Force (EU NAVFOR) Atalanta, which led operational organization TF 465 since the first stages of the operation until 2016. In support of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions 1814, 1816 and 1838, all of which were issued in 2008, on 10 November 2008 the Council of the European Union approved, through Joint Action 851, and pursuant to the provisions of Article 100 et seq. of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), a military operation codenamed "Atalanta", which aimed to contribute to: the protection of merchant ships chartered by the WFP carrying food aid for displaced persons in Somalia, in accordance with the mandate set out in Resolution 1814; the protection of vulnerable merchant ships and vessels off the Somali coast by deterring, preventing and repressing acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea in those waters, in accordance with Resolution 1816 (The Council of The European Union, 2008). This marked the official launch of the first CSDP naval operation.

Under the conditions set by the applicable international law, specifically UNCLOS, and by UNSC Resolutions 1814, 1816 and 1836 of 2008, the operation mandate included using available capabilities to: provide protection to vessels chartered by the WFP, including the presence of armed teams on board ships sailing through Somali territorial waters; protect merchant vessels cruising in the areas where military capabilities are conducting maritime surveillance tasks, based on a case-by-case assessment; conduct surveillance over areas off the coast of Somalia, including its territorial waters, in which there is an increased risk to

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<sup>3</sup> In 2008, the French Permanent Representative to the UN, Jean-Maurice Ripert, stated that piracy was effectively killing people, as over 3 million Somalis depended on the emergency food aid provided by the WFP each day, and that 95% of this support arrived by sea (Ripert, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> The 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS) addresses the concept of "human security", which consists, in broad terms, of the idea that "the security of the individual is crucial to the security and stability of the State as a whole" (Paige, 2013, pp. 11-12). The assumption is that one is far less likely to commit a crime or violence if one feels safe and secure in one's environment (Kaldor et al., 2007).

maritime activities, particularly to maritime traffic; take the necessary measures, including the use of force, to deter, prevent and intervene to stop acts of piracy or armed robbery at sea which may be (or were being) committed in the areas under its surveillance; arrest and transfer persons who had committed, or were suspected of having committed, acts of piracy or armed robbery at sea, so they could be prosecuted by the relevant States, and seizing vessels under the control of pirates or armed robbers, or vessels captured during acts of piracy or armed robbery at sea; and liaise with other organizations, entities and States with military capabilities operating in the region (The Council of The European Union, 2008).

The AOO was 1.4 million square miles and comprised several areas: the south of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, an area up to 500 miles offshore the Somali basin, and the area surrounding the Seychelles Islands. The mandate included not only operational intelligence gathering and monitoring of the AOO, but also measures to ensure the safe passage of maritime trade ships through those areas. The law enforcement dimension consisted of arresting and transferring persons suspected of acts of piracy, and went beyond exclusively military action, requiring States to contribute judicial experts. The rules of engagement included boarding ships suspected of engaging in piracy and using force against pirates when required (Helly, 2009, p. 395).

Operation Atalanta was scheduled to end 12 months after the declaration of initial operational capacity. However, the operation's initial mandate was continually renewed and extended well beyond December 2016, the date that temporally delimits this study.

Only two significant changes were made to the operation between 2008 and 2014. The first was in 2009, through Council Decision 2009/907/CFSP of 8 December, which added monitoring fishing activity off the coast of Somalia to the operation mandate. This task was concluded in 2014 (The Council of The European Union, 2009). The second change occurred in 2014, through Council Decision 2014/827/CFSP of 21 November, which approved the participation of operation Atalanta in secondary missions using the means and capabilities available, upon request, as part of the EU's comprehensive approach towards Somalia, as well as to carry out activities relevant to the International Community which addressed the root causes of piracy and the origin of its networks (The Council of The European Union, 2014). This Decision extended the operation until 12 December 2016.

Table 2 presents data compiled between January 2009 and December 2016, detailing the outcome of the actions of EU military capabilities assigned to escort merchant vessels chartered by the WFP and AMISOM, as well as the number of pirates arrested and transferred to competent authorities for further prosecution (EUNAVFOR Somalia, 2020).

**Table 2 – No. of ships escorted, food delivered and pirates transferred from 2009 - 2016**

Operation results between 2009 and 2016			
WFP vessels escorted	485		
AMISOM vessels escorted	140		
Food delivered by the WFP (in tonnes)	1.890.612		
Pirates transferred to competent authorities for prosecution	Total	Remanded	Convicted
	171	0	150

Source: Adapted from EU NAVFOR Somalia (2020).

Moreover, the results achieved by this counter-piracy operation had an intangible effect: it increased Europe's awareness of the need to bolster its contribution to long-term stabilisation efforts in Somalia. The EU had already been involved in Somalia through its support to the Djibouti process and other diplomatic efforts, such as the support provided to the African Union mission (AMISOM) and the implementation of Commission programmes focusing on humanitarian aid, support to civil society and police training. However, in the spring and summer of 2009 the crisis substantially worsened, hindering international efforts to support stability in the country. Despite this, the European Commission used its stability instrument to support the judicial systems of Kenya and the Seychelles, leading to agreements for the transfer of suspected pirates to stand trial in these two States (Helly, 2009, p. 398).

Finally, Operation Atalanta, the Union's first naval operation, broke new ground in many respects, one of which was allowing the development of linkages with NATO. On the other hand, the sudden increase in the presence of various naval forces and capabilities in the waters of the Horn of Africa reflected the emergence of new maritime power games. Against this backdrop, Operation Atalanta proved an essential tool available to the EU, allowing it to establish a dialogue with global and regional maritime actors such as China, India, Japan and Russia, in addition to enhancing its linkages to the US-led coalition. Thanks to this comprehensive approach, which involved using EU instruments to support the region's judicial systems, the EU ensured that piracy suspects were prosecuted under international law (Helly, 2009, pp. 399-402).

#### **4. The impact of the multinational partnership led by the US**

The Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) are the third multilateral organization actively involved in operations to fight contemporary piracy in the Horn of Africa region, alongside NATO and the EU. This chapter addresses this organization's role in providing naval capabilities to carry out assigned tasks, but also in coordinating and deciding on the use of those capabilities at sea at any given time.

This partnership dates back to the events that followed the attack on the USA on 11 September 2001. It emerged as a response to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001) of 28 September, which reiterated the unequivocal condemnation of the terrorist attacks that occurred on that date in New York, Washington, D.C. and Pennsylvania, and expressed the Council's determination to prevent future attacks. Among numerous other measures, it urged States to take the necessary measures to prevent terrorist acts (UNSC, 2001).

Originally consisting of capabilities from 12 like-minded States, after only a few years the CMF already comprised 33 nations from all parts of the world and had the active support of the six Arabian Gulf countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council – Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait. Furthermore, Southeast Asian States were getting increasingly involved (CMF, 2018). It was, as stated above, expressly created to help contain the threat of international terrorism, but its mission was later expanded to include counter piracy operations in the Western Indian Ocean.

The CMF's main focus areas are countering drug trafficking, countering smuggling, suppressing piracy, encouraging regional cooperation, and engaging with various partners to strengthen the capabilities required to improve overall security and stability, and promoting a safe maritime

environment. When called upon, the CMF's military capabilities can respond to environmental and humanitarian crises through three combined task forces: Combined Task Force (CTF) 150 (maritime security operations outside the Arabian Gulf); CTF 151 (counter-piracy operations in the Indian Ocean); and CTF 152 (maritime security operations in the Arabian Gulf) (CMF, 2020).

The CMF's mission is to promote and protect the freedom of navigation of all those who use the sea for legitimate purposes, by countering terrorism, piracy, drug trafficking, various types of smuggling and any other emerging threats to the maritime environment, through the following actions: supporting the free flow of legitimate maritime trade in the region; denying the use of the ocean by terrorist groups and illicit non-state actors, and; strategic engagement with regional partners and other key stakeholders in the region (CMF, 2018).

The last task force to be established was CTF 151. It was launched in 2009, and its mission was to counter piracy and armed robbery in the maritime environment. Its aim was to engage with various partners to improve relevant capabilities, in order to ensure freedom of navigation and protect global maritime trade in those waters. Alongside forces from NATO and the EU, as well as from nations acting independently such as China, India, Japan, South Korea, and Russia, among others, the CTF 151 capabilities helped patrol the Somali basin and the Maritime Security Transit Corridor (MSTC), which includes the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC) in the Gulf of Aden, which extends through the Bab el Mandeb Strait into the southern Red Sea. In addition to being an important deterrent, the presence of the CTF 151 capabilities encouraged merchant ships to implement preventive measures to reduce their vulnerability to attacks by pirate vessels. These measures are detailed in a Best Management Practice manual published by a consortium of shipping industry and military organizations engaged in counter-piracy operations (CMF, 2018).

Another aspect worth addressing are the events that led to the creation of a specific counter piracy taskforce when there was already another one (CTF 150) engaged in MSO in the same areas. At the time of publication of UN Security Council Resolution 1816, the multinational partnership efforts included the CTF 150 capabilities, which patrolled the Horn of Africa region with ships and aircraft. However, CTF 150 was launched at the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom to conduct MSO in the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. The operations included deterring illicit activities such as drug smuggling and arms trafficking. Therefore, while both were engaged in MSO, the deployment of CTF 151 allowed CTF 150 to focus on those specific activities and the new taskforce to focus exclusively on counter piracy tasks (Global Security, 2009).

There was, however, another important reason for creating a CMF force exclusively dedicated to countering piracy. Then CMF Commander Vice Admiral Bill Gortney stated that "some navies in our coalition did not have the authority to conduct counter-piracy missions," therefore, "the establishment of CTF 151 will allow those nations to operate under the auspices of CTF 150, while allowing other nations to join CTF 151, to support our goal of deterring, disrupting and eventually bringing to justice the maritime criminals involved in piracy events" (Global Security, 2009).

Gortney added that reducing piracy incidents in the region would require merchant ships to be actively involved by adopting suitable proactive measures, as the efforts of the coalition and international navies alone could not solve the piracy problem. In such circumstances, Gortney stressed, "the most effective measures we've seen to defeat piracy are non-kinetic and defensive in nature" and "merchant ships have been doing a great job stepping up and

utilizing these methods to defeat piracy attempts”. Gortney concluded that this was a good first step, but added that piracy remained a problem that began ashore, and was therefore an international issue that required an international solution. Thus, “the establishment of CTF 151 was a significant step in the right direction” (Global Security, 2009).

Among other initiatives, in August 2008 the CMF created the abovementioned MSTC, which extended from the Gulf of Aden to the Red Sea, to address the rise in attacks against merchant ships in the areas surrounding the northern end of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. The MSTC was established to provide a recommended route for merchant ships, along which the military vessels operating there could focus their naval presence and maritime surveillance. Despite the recommendation that merchant ships use the MSTC to benefit from the presence of these military forces, cruising in those waters required meticulous planning and the use of all available intelligence. The CMF frequently warned merchant ships that the threat was not only permanent but constantly changing, therefore the risks might not be the same on every transit. Therefore, it urged ship commanders and security officers and shipping companies’ security officers to conduct detailed risk assessments for each journey that included transiting those waters and for all activities in the region (CMF, 2021).

To coordinate these capabilities, regular meetings at sea were held between the staffs of the commanders of the naval forces engaged in counter-piracy operations. These meetings served to share operational information and keep open lines of communication, a crucial element in the fight against piracy. On the other hand, it was acknowledged that the force commanders had to work with regional leaders ashore because, ultimately, it was on land that acts of piracy began and ended. The task force commanders agreed that the solution had to come from coastal States and continued to work with those leaders to ensure that the conditions conducive to breeding pirates on land were eliminated from the region (CMF, 2013).

The naval military capabilities were coordinated using CENTRIX, a web-based system that allowed the closest naval resources to be directed to a given position where a piracy incident was taking place. This coordination was carried out by the staffs of the three task force commanders. These regular meetings in the high seas were thus crucial because they allowed the officers who would be responsible for activating the capabilities called upon to intervene when incidents occurred to share experiences and knowledge.

At the operational level, the CMF participated in the Shared Awareness and De-confliction (SHADE), a tactical operations coordination mechanism, by coordinating naval activities in the region. Monthly meetings were held in Bahrain, at the United States Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT), co-chaired on a rotational basis by EU NAVFOR, NATO and the CMF. In addition to representatives from the three multilateral forces, these meetings were attended by representatives from other States with military capabilities deployed in the region, organizations with links to international maritime transport and trade, security agencies and police authorities. In addition to discussing how to improve cooperation and coordination of the maritime forces operating in the region, SHADE meetings served to identify new initiatives and programmes to disrupt and prevent future pirate attacks. The participants received updates on the counter-piracy operations of each represented naval force and were also provided campaign assessment reports elaborated by analysts from the different missions (CMF, 2011).

In addition to SHADE meetings, there were also bi-weekly meetings restricted to EU NAVFOR, NATO and CMF military personnel. A network of liaison officers from the EU

(stationed in Mombasa, the Seychelles and Bahrain), NATO (stationed in Djibouti and Bahrain) and the CMF (also in Bahrain) facilitated the daily coordination of naval aircraft in the different maritime areas. This cooperation included task-sharing at the operational and tactical level. The EU managed a logistics centre in Djibouti (Atalanta Support Area) which provided support to the maritime reconnaissance component, NATO coordinated aircraft movements and analysed collected data, and the CMF provided access to the US tanker fleet in the Indian Ocean, which are essential for ship refuelling at sea (Ehrhart & Petretto, 2012).

CTF 151 operated under the operational command of NAVCENT, and the tactical command of the capabilities in the AOO was sometimes taken over by partner nations (Ehrhart & Petretto, 2012). This tactical command was rotated every three to six months (CMF, 2011).

The activity of another US Naval Forces Logistics Command taskforce, also based in Bahrain, played a critical role in enabling the sustainment of naval assets at sea. TF 53 not only provided refuelling support to the CTF 150 and CTF 151 naval capabilities but also to EU NAVFOR, NATO and other independent military capabilities escorting merchant ships chartered by the WFP. TF 53 had several fleet replenishment tankers that provided vital support at sea, especially when the other TFs in the AOO did not include tankers. Underway replenishment, particularly of fuel, enabled ships to remain on mission at sea for longer periods.

To avoid lengthy transits that would remove patrol vessels from their assigned areas, the TF 53 tankers travelled the Western Indian Ocean (including the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea) along a defined route, at regular intervals, refuelling ships as they conducted their patrols (CTF 53, 2009). Figure 2 provides a general outline of the routes of TF 53 tankers in a vast AOO (it does not show the number of days in each logistics cycle – days between replenishments – or the exact locations where those replenishments occurred).



Figure 2 – CTF 53 tanker routes

Source: Adapted from CTF 53 (2009).

In conclusion, through the collaboration of the three task forces engaged in the fight against Somali piracy and the resources of several States operating autonomously, it was possible to build a vast multilateral naval partnership in which more than 55 nations collectively contributed to maritime security in crucial areas, which the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea (including the Gulf of Oman) undoubtedly are.

## 5. Conclusions

At the beginning of this century, maritime piracy was the most relevant security threat in the Horn of Africa region. It had a significant impact on two of the world's most important sea lines of communication – the Suez Canal route and the Cape of Good Hope route –, restricting the free transit of transport vessels and hindering international maritime trade. Furthermore, it increased local tensions by endangering the lives of countless people who depended on the sea for their livelihood, especially fisher crews and the crews of attacked merchant ships, as well as Somali populations in dire need of emergency food aid from the WFP to survive.

Seapower, a relevant element of “soft security”, was the mechanism used by the International Community to control the threat and ensure maritime security in the region. The counter piracy operations that took place in the waters of the Horn of Africa brought together military capabilities from at least 55 countries, integrated in multinational naval forces or acting independently under national mandates, in what was the largest multilateral naval force since the end of the Cold War.

The naval aircraft of the three international organizations analysed in this study, which were stationed in the Western Indian Ocean as part of different MSO, were directly responsible for destroying a large number of pirate vessels and several logistic bases on land, disrupting a large number of attacks against merchant ships, local cargo ships, and fishing and recreational vessels sailing through the Horn of Africa, as well as for detaining a large number of pirates. Numerous WFP vessels were able to safely deliver emergency food aid to about 3.5 million Somalis in need thanks to these escorts. The participation of representatives from all naval forces in the SHADE coordination mechanism was especially important, as it allowed commanders to share operational information which was critical to the success of the different operations, and coordinate the available naval aircraft to mitigate identified constraints, particularly those related to the size of the area of operations, thus improving response capacity.

The previous chapters provided reasons to support the position that specific actions by the naval forces of the international organizations analysed in this study to neutralise pirate groups' support infrastructure, prevent planned attacks or disrupt an attack, have helped increase maritime security in the Horn of Africa region in a very concrete way. The global numbers show this unequivocally: in 2012, the number of piracy incidents, hijacked ships and captured crew plummeted; in 2013 these numbers dropped even further; and from 2014 onwards piracy incidents were virtually residual. None of the incidents reported in 2015 were linked to Somali piracy, and in 2016, the year that temporally delimits this study, only two incidents occurred, neither of which had practical consequences.

However, the other aspect of the fight against the phenomenon of Somali piracy concerns the eradication of its root causes. Due to the limits of the object of the study, this aspect has not been addressed, and such a study would entail a considerably longer temporal horizon. Moreover, some of the programmes that have been initiated have not yet concluded. However, fully addressing the threat of piracy will require strengthening regional security capabilities, increasing the operational information obtained and shared, more effective law enforcement, and developing multilateral coordination both at sea and on land. Therefore, this limitation should be mitigated by conducting a study that analyses the different programmes implemented by the International Community to train the security structures and forces of the countries of the Horn of Africa region, particularly Somalia.

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