

Multipolarity Under the Magnifying-Glass: Establishing Maritime Security Off the Horn of Africa

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Abstract: This essay explores the strategic implications that the fight against piracy off Somalia has for the international community. After giving a summary of what maritime security is, the essay explores how to deal with the threat, surveys the actors, and looks into who can and who is willing to act, and how. Using the case of Somalia as an example, it sketches the realities of 21st century international power relations and outlines the emerging hazards to the global system's stability. The article also addresses the issue of whether piracy and maritime terrorism should be considered as two sides of one coin, or merely two completely separate issues for security policy-makers.

Keywords: Maritime security, piracy, Somalia, multipolarity, navy
Maritime Sicherheit, Piraterie, Somalia, Multipolarität, Marine

1. Introduction

If a future historian were to collect newspaper articles of recent naval engagements off Somalia, an impression could emerge that, back in the year 2009, East African waters were teeming with naval vessels under all flags, attempting to combat the piracy threat. "Well," he or she might conclude, "this was truly a glimpse of multipolarity par excellence." Indeed, little has been said so far about the strategic implications for the world community that go beyond the rapid deployment of naval vessels to the theater.

Maritime security, henceforth understood as the security and safety of maritime shipping lanes and all the vessels using them, is at stake. For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that maritime security also touches upon the issues related to coastlines and territorial waters that each government is exclusively permitted to control by jurisdiction. Furthermore, it includes harbors, oil rigs, wide-spanning bridges, tunnels, and even transoceanic cables – most of which are less relevant in the case of Somalia. Here, the challenge is banditry against the sea lines of communication (SLOC) that pass by the Horn of Africa (HOA), inhibiting freedom of navigation and threatening regional security and economic interests. The area around the HOA, the outlet of the Suez Canal, is one of the world's major choke points. These are characterized as being particularly prone to threats such as collisions, regional political instability and piracy while acting as parts of the world's international maritime trade routes (Donna J. Nincic 2002: 146). Maritime piracy is understood as an attack mounted for private ends on a ship, involving violence, illegal detention of persons or property, or the theft or destruction of goods that is directed on the high seas or in a place outside the jurisdiction of any state, according to the United Nations Convention on the High Seas (1958) and the Convention of the Law of the Sea (1982) (Nincic 2002: 159). Others define it as any illegal act of

violence, detention, or depredation committed outside territorial waters for private rather than political ends by the crew or passengers of a private ship or aircraft against another ship, persons, or crew (James Kraska/Brian Wilson 2008: not paged). The situation on the HOA, where some 16,000 to 21,000 ships pass by on the Europe-Asia route each year, reflects some crucial realities of the international system so vividly that it is worth taking a closer look.

2. The world sets sail for the Horn of Africa

Despite the dramatic images broadcast on various news networks, the troubled waters of the HOA are not exactly crowded with warships. According to internal Bundeswehr sources quoted in several German newspapers, up to 500 vessels will be needed to effectively patrol the area in question. At the same time, this number seems highly overrated given that the same source also limits the number of German military personnel to 1,400 soldiers (DER SPIEGEL Online, 26 November 2008); this is one of the more prominent examples of the discrepancy between means and ends in German military foreign policy. At the same time, domestic politics present a major drawback for effective policy-making. Some fear a creeping back-door legitimization of the use of the *Bundeswehr* for policing duties, which is highly contested in Germany and in part to be explained by Germany's history. This issue as well as an inherent struggle for competence between the ministries involved forms the background to the German naval engagement. Some also hold this – and the lack of a LHD amphibious assault vessel – responsible for the failure of German GSG-9 Special Forces to free the German ship *Hansa Stavanger* from the hands of pirates (May 2009). In any case, the theater is large, and given the complexity of the problem, far more vessels need to be dispatched to effectively combat the threat. This is not just limited to Germany, but needs to be a concern to all powers involved. The current situation is, in the words of a spokesperson from the *Verband Deutscher Reeder* (German ship owners association) quoted in the German weekly DIE ZEIT No. 24/2009, "like putting one single policeman into thirteen European capitals at once".

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Indeed, a number of actors have set out to fight piracy in this region. Their first order of business: securing the SLOC so that trade between Europe and Asia can once again pass freely and uninhibitedly through the Gulf of Aden (the outlet of the Red Sea and Suez Canal), the waters separating Yemen from Somalia, as well as the high seas off the East coast of the African continent. A dramatic increase in recent attacks on and seizures of merchant ships, most notably the 332 m, 318,000 metric tons *MV Sirius Star* on November 15, 2008, has upset the international community. Fortunately enough, this public relations stunt came to a peaceful end as ransom was paid and the pirates allowed the ship to sail on.

Along with the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), powers such as Russia, India, and even China have dispatched vessels to the area. In a rare occurrence, all five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council are working in concert. According to some, these are the only other countries with the economic potential to build navies capable of blue water operations far from their homelands (Dennis Blair/ Kenneth Lieberthal 2007: 11), but this view is highly contentious, as the ranking of navies is usually a rather tricky exercise, and lesser sea-powers such as Malaysia have also sent vessel(s). There is certainly no doubt that the rising threat of piracy in international waters has triggered activism by concerned countries and brought out new naval players (Brian Wilson/James Kraska 2009: not paged).

The long-standing deployment of the U.S.-led Combined Task Force 150 in the so-called Global War on Terror already provided some initial naval presence in the area, albeit it geared towards the different objective of counter-terrorism (Michael Stehr 2009: 6). Meanwhile, the United Nations (UN) Security Council has gone to extraordinary lengths in condemning the situation in Somalia and urging member states to act quickly (cf. Security Council Resolution 1814 (2008), 1816 (2008), 1838 (2008), 1844 (2008), and 1846 (2008)). The message is clear: The world will take measures to safeguard its vital shipping. However, if there are any lessons learned from past engagements, any military solution must inevitably be linked to a stronger political solution. The United Nations in general and the U.S. & the West in particular have a history of ill-fated missions in Somalia, which does not improve the chances for a quick and sustainable solution.

3. A unique challenge: Somalia

Without a doubt, piracy continues to be a problem elsewhere in the world as well. Two of the significant areas are the West Coast of Africa – largely unnoticed due to the fact that international trade routes are hardly affected – and the Strait of Malacca, where piracy has decreased in recent years, largely due to the establishment of an effective coast guard by the littoral states. Some also attribute this development to the fallout of the Boxing Day Tsunami in 2004. In general, bottlenecks, or narrow straits where maritime traffic has to slow down to avoid shallow banks, deal with increased shipping and maneuver carefully are susceptible to sea-borne assaults. Two of these major bottlenecks are the Strait of Malacca and the Gulf of Aden. The

situation off Somalia's coast is notable for the international community because a large fraction of trade between Europe and Asia passes through the now pirate-infested waters off the HOA.

In Somalia, the international community is dealing with a failing (if not failed) state without any sustainable form of centralized government. This is not necessarily a new or unique phenomenon, since Somalia has been without proper governmental authority since 1991, the year of Siad Barre regime's fall. It is important to note the failure of any Somali authorities to provide and maintain adequate coast guard and maritime protection services, and their inability to provide sufficient incentives to dissuade locals from seeking their fortunes in piracy. This is to be taken quite literally, as the estimated per capita GDP of roughly \$600 is easily trumped by piracy profits.

Acts of piracy have generally been on the rise over the last years. The International Maritime Bureau (IMB), a London-based division of the International Chamber of Commerce specialized on acts of crime on the high seas, noted 293 "incidents" for 2008, 111 of which occurred around the Horn of Africa. The latter was a dramatic 200 per cent increase in comparison with 2007. The only period during which piracy virtually disappeared was during a six months rule by the Islamic Court Union (ICU) in late 2006, which suggests that a functioning form of government and rule of law would be able to restrain piracy (Roger Middleton 2008: 3). The ICU government quickly collapsed under a Western-backed invasion of Somalia by Ethiopian forces, and piracy immediately returned along the narrow waters separating Yemen and the northern coast of Somalia, as the previously enforced anti-piracy jurisdiction under the Islamic rule gave way to the lawlessness of earlier years.

Broadly speaking, Somali piracy sheds light on the political and humanitarian grievances that the people in this fractured country have to endure – famine, absence of rule of law, violence, over-fishing of their waters and the illegal dumping of toxic garbage into Somali territorial waters by foreign powers who take advantage of this failing state. All these issues provide an inexpensive self-justification for the bandits.

Whatever the cause, the piracy threat has a massive impact on the global economy. While the immediate economic fallout is certainly manageable, the psychological shock for producers and consumers alike is notable. A regional nuisance is turning into a global problem. Before military means were increasingly dispatched, technical measures drew most of the public attention. This is in part to be explained by the absence of large crews on larger modern cargo vessels, and the resulting inability (or in some cases unwillingness) to man sufficient anti-piracy watch on deck at all times. Cameras on deck, barbed wire, high-pressure water and sound canons, and even the application of soft soap on the planks were discussed as technical counter-measures. All of these ideas may be good when taken for themselves, but the practical effect and implementation can be questioned. At that point, mercenary companies such as Blackwater (recently renamed "Xe") offered their help, providing expensive on-board security for the passage along the HOA and even convoy service with their very own vessel. Piracy, thus, clearly fuels a whole industry that profits from providing security.

Some shipping companies such as the Danish Mærsk Line in November 2008 decided to divert their shipping around the West Coast of Africa and the Cape of Good Hope. But this passage does not provide full security from acts of piracy either, it is prone to strong weather, prolongs the journey and thus raises the costs at the expense of the consumers. It serves as a textbook example of how fragile and interdependent the global “just in time” economy of today is. The coming into common use of the highly efficient cargo container, which can swiftly be moved from ship to train or truck, has led to this economical commercial practice of resupply of goods or products from source to store. Not many people wish to disrupt this efficient flow (Frank Uhlig 2003: 48). Meanwhile, insurance premiums for international traffic along the bottle-neck of the Suez Canal, the Red Sea and the HOA rose.

Maritime terrorism is functionally different from maritime piracy. Pirates seek economic gain; terrorists seek political or social advantage. Pirates did not display the martyr attitude in their assaults that is so common to terrorism. Meanwhile, it is safe to say that transnational terrorist networks such as al-Qaida are closely monitoring the impact that piracy has on the global economy. They may intend to use it for their own advantage or their next major strike (Middleton 2008: 10). In the post-9/11 world, three forms of maritime terrorism are of particular concern: an attack on a large individual ship carrying hazardous goods or a cruise ship; the hijacking of any such ship; and the use of a ship as a weapon to attack port or land facilities. In light of the missing link between the bandits and transnational terrorist networks, and some clear differences between maritime piracy and maritime terrorism, the actual strength of the piracy-terrorism nexus is contested (Peter Chalk 2008: 31-35). At the same time, the *USS Cole* bombing in 2000 and the attack against the *MV Limbourg* in 2002 suggest that a “9/11 at sea” – for example, an attack on a large tanker or, worse, its use as a weapon against other targets – is conceivable (Rolf Tophoven 2008: 24). It is also for this reason that we should be most concerned about how to deal with the issues at hand.

Those, such as the former Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Pacific Command, Dennis Blair and the political scientist Kenneth Lieberthal, who saw maritime *insecurity* simply as an issue of brown- or blue-water navies illegitimately using their power to disrupt international oil shipping, were overly optimistic. They claimed that tankers are floating fortresses, virtually unsinkable by the weaponry of insurgents, and that maritime terrorism was merely limited to hit-and-run robbery (Blair/Lieberthal 2007: 8-11). Scenarios that take into consideration maritime terrorism in any form mentioned in the paragraph above (e.g. the explosion of a liquid-gas tanker in a major port or choke-point) seriously speak to the point that the threat is indeed much more complex, and much more difficult to constrain.

Aside from the floating weapon hazard, the threat to the environment by a leaking tanker or large vessel has repeatedly been stressed. Should a container ship be fatally damaged at sea, not only would the ship’s cargo be lost but hundreds of buoyant or semi-buoyant containers could break loose and form a large floating minefield, endangering all ships and craft nearby, perhaps for months (Uhlig 2003: 49). This is especially important as pirates become bolder and use ever more powerful weaponry

that could set fire to, sink or force ashore a tanker or any other larger cargo vessel. The environmental catastrophe would be devastating for marine and avian life for years to come (Middleton 2008: 9), especially given the less-developed countermeasures in this part of the world that could be applied (as has been the case in major oil spills in Europe or the U. S.). It is safe to assume that while the Somali pirates have no immediate interest in ruining their own fishing grounds by the means of such an action, a frustrated assault on a large vessel with the objective of sinking it and causing a major oil spill can not be ruled out.

4. Looking for distinctive and sustainable solutions

Interests in preserving and defending maritime security form the backdrop of understanding why this matters to the international community. The response of said global community embodies which actors can effectively combat what they perceive as a major disturbance of global trade. Bluntly speaking, it shows *who can* and *who is willing* to act. It also reflects who has an interest in maritime security in this part of the world (and beyond). In such a situation where the problem of failing states, asymmetric warfare, and an issue of global concern coincide, these pirates are causing considerable problems – not just for those directly affected and for naval fleets of major powers in terms of rules of engagement, but also for the governments in places like Berlin or Washington in terms of politico-military responses.

The outgoing George W. Bush administration identified some wide-ranging policy objectives, namely prevention of attacks; deterrence through constabulary forces; reduction of the maritime domain’s vulnerability through technical measures; holding pirates accountable for their crime; preservation of freedom of the seas; protection of SLOCs; and finally leadership and support of international efforts. A central tool is the Global Maritime Partnership (dubbed “1,000-ship-navy”), a key concept identified in the latest U.S. Maritime Strategy (Navy.mil 2007: not paged). There is no reason to believe why President Barack Obama will digress from his predecessor’s policy decisions on this issue, given the fact that Robert Gates continues to lead the Pentagon and given that the problem will stay on the security policy agenda. If anything, Obama will seek a more comprehensive, alliance-based naval approach while retaining U.S. leadership, the latter of which at least implicitly. As Gary Weir has noted, the situation off the HOA may even open the door towards a quicker realization of a global maritime partnership (Gary Weir 2009: 25).

The European Union, often denounced as a paper tiger, was quick to stand up with EU NAVFOR Somalia (*Operation Atalanta*), sending six warships and a number of reconnaissance planes. This is Europe’s chance to give something back to international security. It may not close the capability gap, but it develops confidence and credibility – despite an ongoing struggle between operational and intellectual ideas. The EU, with its diverse and difficult security policy decision making process, will not consider their *Atalanta* mission an end itself. *Atalanta*

replaced NATO's multi-national maritime Operation *Allied Provider*, which had escorted ships of the United Nations' World Food Programme into drought-stricken Somalia (Allied Maritime Component Command Naples 2008: not paged). A European defense identity seems to be forming. Earlier this year, the Standing NATO Maritime Group One (SMNG 1) returned to the HOA to support the ongoing operations with their own mission *Operation Allied Protector*. As of July 1, NATO is mounting an ambitious new mission dubbed *Operation Ocean Shield* scheduled to replace the *Protector* mission.

Simultaneously, some of CTF 150's roughly fifteen ships have been involved in deterring pirate attacks (Middleton 2008: 8). With Combined Task Force 151 (CTF 151), established on January 8, 2009, the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) specifically addressed the complex and confusing legal restrictions of member states, having led to some limitations of CTF 150's anti-piracy efforts (Navy.mil, 8 January 2009: not paged). For the United States of America, the rising activity of pirates represents a threat to life, property, and free navigation of the sea at the southern end of an area that is of great concern to the U.S. Navy Central Command and CTF 150 anyhow (Weir 2009: 22). It did not come as a surprise that the U.S. 5th Fleet is now even more so involved in anti-piracy patrols. India's Navy has also taken a greater effort in combating piracy off Somalia, and so have Saudi-Arabia and Malaysia. Russia was quick to send one of its frigates after, on September 25, 2008, the Ukrainian *MV Faina* (152 m and 13,870 metric tons) was taken over by pirates. A little later, it was revealed that *Faina* was carrying 33 T-72 tanks, rocket-propelled grenades, anti-aircraft guns and a host of other weapons. The vessel was finally released for ransom in January 2009. Even China, in a rare foreign policy move, dispatched naval vessels to HOA (CNN.com, 17 December 2008: not paged) to safeguard Chinese shipping interests. Likewise, the Iranian Navy has dispatched vessels in order to secure and defend the region's vital sea-lanes. All of these moves have to be considered as ambitious quests for political and economic influence in the area and beyond. They are expressions of interests of states and should be seen against the backdrop of large-scale maritime and naval armament programs already underway in many of those countries discussed.

Never before has such a diverse armada with so many different objectives come together to fight what they perceive as a common threat. At the same time, it is quite apparent that tested means of naval commitment – rules of engagement, interoperability, equipment, and tactics – may not suffice in the face of the new situation. It is a strategic imperative to find suitable solutions on how to deal with the issue. At this time, it seems that the international community's response leaves more questions open than it answers.

- **Jurisdiction:** In our time of globalization, which jurisdiction applies when a German cargo freighter under a flag of convenience, with a non-European, multinational crew, is attacked and/or seized? Delicate jurisdictional issues arise which must be carefully balanced.
- **Status of Arrestees:** In the case of Germany, those arrested would have to be transferred to Hamburg where the responsible court is located; any given jail time would have to be in

Germany or in like-minded countries, as Germany (or the EU, for that matter) does not extradite prisoners to a country like Somalia where possible torture awaits prisoners. So, what is the status of pirates who have been captured, and how can states or alliances come to a pragmatic yet humanitarian solution? Should there be a UN or EU tribunal? The arrangement between the EU and Kenya to try suspects is a first step in the right direction, after unclear jurisdiction lead to the need to let suspected pirates go prior to this agreement.

- **Traces of Multilateral Action:** Can states or alliances, on short notice, come to terms with how to deal with a specific maritime issue? There is no unified command for *all* ships or nations combating piracy. Should one be established? Can one be established, given the underlying rivalry of powers and the huge area of operation, where it remains complicated to achieve complete situational awareness? The "Maritime Security Centre" currently located in Northwood (near London, England) may be a first step. Still, the efficiency of the parallel operations has repeatedly been questioned. For this reason, the outgoing NATO Secretary-General Jan de Hoop Schaeffer, recently spoke out in favor of a formalized cooperation between NATO and the Russian Navy.
- **Equipment:** Are weaponry sufficient and tactics applicable, as a number of large warships confront small speedboats, concealed in mother ships?
- **Do-It-Yourself-Approach:** Can the proactive measures undertaken by ship owners and crews (water cannons, high travel speeds, trip-wires, deck guards, barbed wire, high pitch sound cannons, and mercenaries) really do the trick? What can, what must be expected from the commercial vessel operators?
- **Window of Opportunity:** The pirates' method of operation leaves only a marginal window of opportunity for a military interception, which could only come from a surface vessel close to the scene or an aircraft. What is the best means to combat the threat? Maritime Patrol Aircraft, fast military vessels, or a combination of both?
- **Blast from the past:** Will we see a return to expensive and time-consuming maritime convoys, such as during World War II or the "Tanker War" in the Persian Gulf of the late 1980's, or will pragmatic "group transits" prevail?
- **"End date" vs. "End state":** Most current missions have set time-limits (e.g. EU NAVFOR Somalia is set to be relieved in December 2009). But what exactly is the end state that is to be achieved? On the same token: What are effective exit plans?

These are questions that cannot be answered easily. It is imperative that a coherent *modus operandi* will be found. In the stricter sense, pragmatic and applicable solutions must be found quickly. Shuffling off responsibility is no longer an option (Stehr 2009: 6).

Moreover, does the whole problem rather not revolve around the political situation in Somalia – which eventually means that the world needs to go ashore in the failed state of Somalia? In the long run, the little of what is left of Somalia will have to remain an importer of security, if anything. It is unclear whether Jihadists, Islamists like the ICU, or pro-Western pow-

ers will win the upper-hand there. Should the international community not try to cure the disease rather than treating its symptoms (John Patch 2008: 37)? That, in turn, raises the question of regime change by outside actors all over again – and the collapse of 360 years of post-Westphalian practice would, once again, become evident. It is clear that the current solution is only addressing the symptoms rather than the disease. Any long-term solution must go beyond traditional coalitions, formal alliances, the power of regional actors and the destruction of individual targets (Weir 2009: 23).

5. Multipolarity at work

The stepping up of anti-piracy activity at the end of 2008 and in 2009 evinces how the often theoretical notion of multipolarity can quickly turn from concept into action. It is not centrally or even unilaterally planned. There is no single power dominating the anti-piracy issue, and there is no anti-hegemonic alliance. Rather, a multi-layered and combined effort of power stakeholders who work together – or, in some cases, parallel and struggling with each other – to keep pirates from disrupting one of the highways of globalization can be observed. Charles Krauthammer, a conservative columnist who saw the dawn of a unipolar era in 2002, may have been correct in acknowledging the U.S.'s relative supremacy; but he was wrong in his major conception of unipolarity. If the Iraq War of 2003 did not prove him wrong, the anti-piracy activities of the world certainly do.

After all, for naval decision makers and practitioners alike, the situation at hand will be an invaluable testing ground for their approach to combating the complex problems of international relations at sea. The obvious lesson is: multipolarity is a fact. Clearly, multipolarity does not yield multilateralism. At the same time, because much of the ocean's surface is beyond state jurisdiction, effective piracy repression demands international action and coordination (James Kraska/Brian Wilson 2008: not paged). The underlying message is: maritime decisions increasingly need to adapt to the changes confronting them, ask questions previously unheard of and find applicable answers to these problems. The tested methods for the use of maritime forces, from blockade to maritime power projection, should be reviewed and, if need be, adapted to the new challenges. Most important of all, readiness for geopolitical and strategic thought must be assumed. At the same time, in the 21st century world of globalization, naval services may have to return to their operational roots. After all, the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps were created in 1794 for the specific purpose of countering what were then transnational threats – such as Barbary piracy (Kimberley Thachuk/Sam Tangredi 2002: 76). The history of the piracy problem in the Strait of Malacca and the efforts of stakeholders to gain control over it could be a valuable example. The multinational cooperation of Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore since 2004 is a step in the right direction, although the partners continue to differ in their politico-military approach. This goes to show that a multinational response can be set up rather effectively without large-scale foreign power intervention, as long as littoral states with a functioning gov-

ernment can come to terms and are guided by larger (naval) powers and sufficient funds (Lutz Feldt 2009: 19) – something that is, unfortunately, missing completely off the HOA at the moment.

When a multilateral response came into being in earlier conflicts such as the Balkan Wars of the 1990s, long periods of time and agony passed before an emerging multipolar world would react; usually under U.S. leadership. In contrast, there has been a dramatic change today. The urgency of the problem is noteworthy, as is the projected response, which is mostly limited to maritime counter-measures in favor of a sustainable political solution for Somalia itself. It is rather unlikely that the U.S. will take unilateral action in tackling this issue. Despite the fact that the UN has mandated pursuing pirates on land, and albeit CTF-151 contains amphibious landing ships, large-scale freeing of hostages or direct attacks against pirate shelters have not yet taken place. In any case, naval action alone will not solve the problem, nor can navies be the sole solution (although, on an average day for the United States' 5th Fleet used as an example here, there are some 23,000 U.S. sailors stationed in the region, either at sea or at shore facilities).

Africa is just becoming a greater concern to NATO, the EU, and the United States. President Obama, having paternal roots in Kenya (a country bordering Somalia), will put more emphasis on a "New Deal" for Africa. As part of this possible initiative, the newly installed AFRICAN COMMAND (AFRICOM) could be highlighted as a resource for those combating the piracy threat (McNeill 2008: 2).

In conclusion, as we survey the actors, it seems that most major naval powers are both: willing *and* able to act. It is clear that swift action needs to be taken to combat the emerging threats. However, the actors greatly differ in the robustness of their rules of engagement: those of the U.S. being robust, and those of the EU geared more towards deterrence. They differ in their experience in conducting such missions: For the EU, this is their first naval out-of-area mission, whereas China is just beginning to act as naval power as well. The U.S., on the other hand, has a rich experience as a naval power. They contrast in their approach to bureaucracy: Germany's somewhat reluctant style or American and French pragmatism. They differ in their determination to combat the threat effectively. They differ in their leadership aspirations (for the U.S.); and their general sense of seriousness in combating piracy (for Russia or India). There are also substantial differences in the allocation of funds and military spending. These diverging approaches and the various national interests do not reflect the level of efficiency that *could* be achieved. There is a looming danger of a "beauty contest" between EU, NATO and the task forces about which naval vessel will fight under which command. This holds true for both alliance and non-alliance members. It is essential for states and alliances to cooperate and coordinate. Currently, it appears that resources are potentially wasted by duplication of functions, and the inhibition of flow of information, of lessons learned and of best practices (Kimberley Thachuk/Sam Tangredi 2002: 58). This is especially crucial as pirates move now farther away from the Somali coast and extend their radius of operation deep into the Indian Ocean. Some of the more recent attempts to seize vessels occurred more than 600 nautical miles

from Mogadishu. Thus, piracy will continue to be a challenge for the actors in the area.

The situation off the Horn of Africa is a good example for decision makers in Germany and elsewhere on how the international system works at the end of the century's first decade. At the same time, it is not far-fetched to state that the issue of maritime security in general and its security in the Gulf of Aden in particular will soon find its way into political science textbooks and policy guidelines, as a prime example of the power relations of current international relations. The anti-piracy fight is by no means the first case where naval cooperation and coordination is indispensable as a first step towards a sustainable politico-military solution. A view into the history books underlines that. What is unique is the fact that this is the first time that such a vast number of actors need to come to terms about a powerful and decisive response – from anything between cooperation & coordination on the high seas to finding an answer to the impending “What to do with Somalia?” question. For our historians, it will be a first-rate experience for multipolarity under the magnifying-glass, and one of the first examples of conflict and cooperation in the maritime 21st century.

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