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Somalia

Has the EU a Comprehensive Approach to the Crisis?



Somalia is on everyone's lips once more. A Somali [conference](#) in London promises new solutions. The Al-Shabaab militias talk once again of joining Al-Qaeda. And the EU announces it will extend its anti-piracy naval mission. But what impact, if any, will the EU's approach have?

Since 2005, the number of attacks on ships off the coast of Somalia has been steadily increasing. The capabilities and the range of the pirates have improved with the "industrialisation" of the phenomenon.

The EU has tried to tackle the crisis from various angles by instigating what has been labelled a "comprehensive approach". In this, political dialogue and humanitarian and development aid were supposed to go hand in hand with efforts to prop up Somali security forces. More directly, for the first time a naval operation within the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) was established: EU Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) Atalanta.

Atalanta might soon see a significant shift. At stake is a widening of the mission's role, which could enable EU soldiers to fight against pirates and their infrastructure on the Somali shore. Today, EU Foreign Ministers agreed on extending the time period of the current mission until December 2014. Dangerous plans to attack pirates' infrastructure on the ground still remain on the table even if no decision has been taken today.

Against this background the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament recently commissioned a

study, which now provides for an in-depth assessment of EU policies relating to Somalia and its regional context in the area of Common Security and Defence Policy, state building efforts as well as humanitarian and development issues.

One main conclusion of the study: Despite all the efforts of the EU and despite close cooperation with partners such as the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and the United States (US), the Somali crisis is not even close to being solved. Somali pirates continue to pose a risk to global maritime shipping as their range and activities increase.

Does the EU need to reconsider its own approach? The assessment of this current study argues that, although it has placed its own engagement under the rhetorical umbrella of a comprehensive approach, a piecemeal approach by the European Union is still prevalent. The critical analysis by researchers from the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy in Hamburg offers a wide range of policy recommendations aiming to tackle the crisis on land and at sea in a comprehensive manner.

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