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Publication | 27.02.2012

# The EU and Somalia

## Counter-Piracy and the Question of a Comprehensive Approach

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### Executive Summary

Since 2005, violent attacks on maritime traffic off the Somali coast have been steadily increasing. Somali pirates have managed to establish a unique business model: vessels of all kinds are being hijacked with their crews on board for the sole purpose of gaining ransom. During the last few years, they have been improving their capabilities and skills to such a degree that Jack Lang, the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Legal Issues related to Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, has confirmed an industrialization of the phenomenon.

Taking into account the plight of the Somali people after more than two decades of internal conflict, the implications of prolonged insecurity and instability for the country and the region, as well as the impact of terrorist activities and organized piracy for its citizens and the European Union's strategic and economic interests, the EU has tried to tackle the crisis from various angles by instigating what has been labelled a "comprehensive approach". In this, political dialogue as well as humanitarian and development aid have been complemented not only by efforts to prop up the Somali security sector but also by the first naval operation ever established within the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP): EU Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) Atalanta.

Despite all these efforts and despite close cooperation with many partners such as the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and the United States (US), the Somali crisis is however not even close to being solved and Somali pirates continue to pose a risk to global maritime shipping. This clearly indicates that, although the need for coherence when tackling transnational risks is widely uncontested, the planning and implementation of a comprehensive approach is a difficult task, given the complexity of the challenge, the involvement of a multitude of partners and other players, as well as the diversity of the interests at stake. This is all the more true as the EU is itself an actor of composite nature.

Thus, despite the wide range of cooperative efforts that are ongoing in various sectors and some tactical successes, the EU now first and foremost urgently needs to thoroughly reconsider its own approach. The

EU – being only one player amongst many in this international endeavour – has to “get its act together” in a more strategic approach in order to make best use of its various means and instruments: the assessment of this current study shows 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. This refers to both the institutional set-up as well as the actual engagement. However that the EU function well and coherently internally is only a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for effective external security governance and for engagement with and in socalled failing or failed states like Somalia: even if the EU had a perfect comprehensive approach, this would not guarantee success given the manifold local, regional and international intricacies of the Somalia issue. Nonetheless, improving its own strategies and mechanisms of engagement will raise the odds for a more stable Somalia in a more stable region.

It is furthermore common sense that, because it is primarily rooted in Somalia’s political and socio-economic conditions, the solution for the piracy challenge is to be found on land. Therefore the EU should follow an explicit “Somalia first” approach – in contrast to a possible “piracy first” point of departure – whereby the lead has to be in the hands of the Somali people themselves. In this regard, the EU should critically assess the practices and outcomes of its previous state-building efforts and use the insights gained from this for future sound strategy-building. It should consider supporting alternative approaches to centralized forms of governance and de-facto trusteeships such as decentralized systems of governance or non-state oligopolies of power if this better suits local power relations – because, in the end, it is up to the Somali people themselves to decide on the form of governance they wish to establish.

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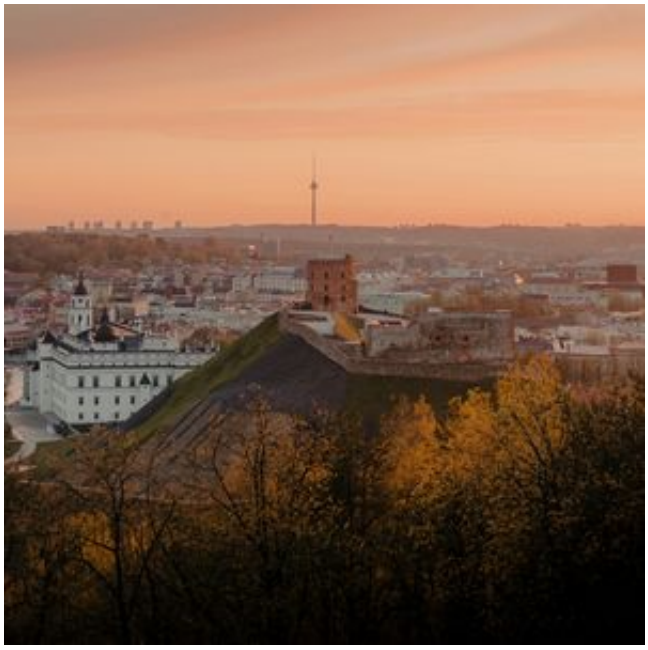
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