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# The EU's response to emerging maritime security threats and capabilities: explaining and evaluating the CRIMGO mission for the Gulf of Guinea.

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In 2013 the EU approved a small anti-piracy mission, CRIMGO (Critical Maritime Routes in the Gulf of Guinea). Such missions reveal the EU's willingness and capability to secure ocean trade routes. However, this mission is different from EUNAVFOR. A core aim is to improve local state capacity to police their own maritime zones, rather than projecting European naval power. This paper asks what were the motivations and origins behind this mission? Moreover, how should we interpret such activities by the EU? Are they evidence of merely a few interested EU states leading the way on 'soft' marine security co-operation of low salience? Or, alternatively, do missions such as CRIMGO reveal the EU as an emerging strategic maritime power? This question feeds into a wider debate concerning the EU's Maritime Security Strategy published in June 2014.

## **I. Introduction.**

In 2013 the EU initiated a dedicated policy to address the growing problem of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, rejoicing under the unhappy acronym CRIMGO (*Critical Maritime Routes in the Gulf of Guinea*). That the EU would do this should not be a surprise. Piracy has become an increasingly salient topic in recent years, and the EU has made a very significant foray into naval security specifically related to combating piracy off the coast of Somalia, with the well-known EUNAVFOR (Operation Atalanta) mission (Riddervold, 2011, Germond, 2011, Germond and Smith 2009).

In fact, the EU's naval security role has received more attention for that particular high profile anti-piracy mission, rather than other possible uses for EU naval forces, notably

maritime blockades in a peace support context as the EU has done in support of the UNIFIL peace keeping mission off the coast of Lebanon during 2008-2009<sup>1</sup> (Carvalho de Oliveira, 2012). EUNAVFOR not only saw extensive and expensive deployment of naval warships, but even a dramatic amphibious raid on Somalia by special forces, suggesting a somewhat surprising willingness to use force as part of an EU mission (Obert, 2013).

However, it may be mistaken to assume that Operation Atalanta and EUNAVFOR provides a standard template for future EU naval co-operation, because EU involvement in maritime security can be less obviously centered on the projection of naval forces. It is in this context that CRIMGO offers us an interesting example of how the EU engages in maritime security in a way which is much less high profile, more focused on low-cost softer security instruments, and whose maritime initiatives are situated within a wider pattern of international maritime governance activities in the context of an era of globalised trade interdependencies.

Indeed it is important to remember that EUNAVFOR was merely one multinational naval counter piracy mission among others led by NATO or under US leadership (Task Force 151). The EU is thus both competing and co-operating as regards counter-piracy with other security organisations, regimes, and states. The development of policies such as CRIMGO, reflect this security regime competition. In particular, what CRIMGO reveals is the ambition of the EU Commission to enter the crowded domain of international actors seeking to respond to the maritime piracy phenomenon, exploring niches and distinct approaches.

With CRIMGO once again we see the Commission as a policy entrepreneur attempting to carve out for itself a niche in the global piracy policy arena. Moreover, such entrepreneurship is fast paced and forward looking because the maritime piracy phenomenon has moved on from a fixation on Somalia to West Africa and the Straits of Malacca, and CRIMGO reflects this. Because piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has grown both in extent and levels of harm, while Somali sourced piracy appears to be in decline, EU policy entrepreneurs have had to rapidly shift their focus toward West Africa if they want to stay relevant. They need to find policies that can replicate some of the success of EUNAVFOR, while avoiding perhaps its heavy costs giving the huge expense of European naval deployments<sup>2</sup>. It is worth keeping in mind that the operational cost

of deploying a standard naval frigate is probably around US\$1.5m dollars per month (in 2012 prices) (Bellish, et al, 2012, p.15) while the (2012-13) annual operational costs of one the Royal Navy's latest Type 45 destroyers was UK£48.6m per annum (HoC, 2013). These have been deployed on anti-piracy missions, but clearly modern warships are an expensive hobby for liberal democracies to use against pirates! Because EUNAVFOR has traditionally kept at least four ships in theatre at any one time, this suggests a monthly cost of around US\$6m falls upon participating member states, and annualised costs of anywhere between \$70-130m, just to pay for the operational costs of warships deployed. As of summer 2014, EUNAVFOR was deploying off the coast of Somalia in a notably lighter guise, with three destroyers and an auxiliary ship<sup>3</sup>.

A reduction in Somalia maritime piracy appears to be due to a mixture of improved security on land in Somalia, increasing use of private security guards on ships, and of course the naval patrols, including those by EUNAVFOR. While the Somalia pirate gangs have mainly focused on securing large ransoms for ships and crew, often holding both for long periods of time, the style of maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea appears to be different. It has usually involved short duration raids aimed at fuel theft, but often with greater violence employed against crews. There is some evidence of a growth in kidnapping for ransoms in the Gulf of Guinea, but fuel cargoes are usually the main objective of West African maritime piracy. Maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is therefore distinctive, and the EU's response to date, through the CRIMGO initiative is markedly different from the high profile EUNAVFOR.

Indeed the need for any European naval force off West Africa is not as obvious given that the African states in the region, notably Nigeria, are not failed states like Somalia with no effective coastguard capabilities. Moreover, many of them are conscious of their maritime sovereignty and can exercise it. Senegal for example recently arrested Russian super-trawlers engaged in allegedly illegal fishing activities, and Nigeria did the same with Chinese owned trawlers in 2014, just prior to the high profile visit of the Chinese premier to Nigeria in May 2014. In this context, a repeat of EUNAVFOR in the Gulf of Guinea does not yet seem likely, and indeed it may well be that many participating EU states in Operation Atalanta have tired of the huge costs of the required naval deployments. European states thus have an interest in addressing the piracy problem in West Africa, but not necessarily in the same way as for Somali sourced piracy.

## 2. Research Questions and Argument.

This paper evaluates the EU's CRIMGO anti-piracy initiative asking a number of research questions: what type of security initiative is involved? What actors have pushed for the project and why? How can we evaluate at this early stage such an initiative in the sense of judging whether it is likely to be effective? Finally, how should we make sense of CRIMGO within the context of the EU's evolving security and defence policy and recent rhetoric over the desirability of an EU maritime strategy?

It is argued here that the EU's CRIMGO initiative should be understood as a rather typical soft-security initiative favoured by the EU, and thus it may well be more representative than the EUNAVFOR mission which has received more attention. Significantly CRIMGO has almost no focus on deploying EU naval forces. Instead the stress is upon using private consultants to improve the capacities of local state navies and other agencies, via training. However, this growing privatisation of the EU's soft maritime security dimension is argued here to be not unproblematic.

Firstly it invokes the wider debate about the nature of the EU as a soft civilian rather than hard military power in the world, raising the question of whether in fact such distinctions really are useful or even desirable. Can largely private actors, whose focus is training and building institutional capacity, actually deliver comprehensive maritime security on the cheap, and without deployed naval force?

Secondly, the nature of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is at least as complex as in Somalia. The EU's efforts in the Gulf of Guinea actually skirt around and ignore the ugly reality of a complex insurgency and inter-ethnic conflict in the wider Niger Delta littoral zone, which underpins the piracy phenomenon (Ukiwo, 2007, Peel, 2009). Seen this way, the security problem in the Gulf of Guinea suggests the need for substantive human security interventions that link development agendas with the anti-piracy concern. CRIMGO thus risks 'falling between two stools' as the British say. CRIMGO may not be 'soft' and developmental enough to engage with the social roots of the West African piracy phenomenon which lie in the marginalisation of the delta region in particular, but also not 'hard' enough to improve effective naval forces in the region which are anyhow being rapidly built up by more traditional security actors, such as an

increasingly assertive China.

Moreover, CRIMGO is the product of a coalition of the willing, clearly led by France apart from the project's origins in Commission entrepreneurship (see below). CRIMGO also strongly reflects attempts by a relatively weak EU to compete with other institutions and states in the market for regional diplomatic influence. It would be mistaken to view CRIMGO as little more than some variant of long standing French diplomacy in West Africa in EU guise. However, there is some tension over the 'recent' boom in EU security and peace-keeping missions in Africa often led by France, and historic French security interests and traditions in the region. Finally, CRIMGO raises questions about what is the purpose of any EU maritime strategy: a liberal rationale of securing maritime commerce in a globalised world by building littoral security partnerships and capacities, or a more neo-realist logic of securing key trade routes, if not actually offshore resources, all at the lowest possible cost?

### **3. “Soft” maritime security? Understanding what CRIMGO is and is not.**

The origins of the project go back to at least 2010 and should be seen as part of the wider EU maritime trade routes security programme, which has emerged since 2009. Labeled the Critical Maritime Routes Programme, and launched at the height of the piracy crisis off the coast of Somalia. This initiative has had a relatively small budget of €16m, but has managed to develop specific projects for each of the main trade routes where piracy is a problem (Somalia/Western Indian Ocean, South East Asia/Straits of Malacca and now the Gulf of Guinea). Figure 1, provides a schematic list of recent EU maritime security initiatives, which helps to situate the CRIMGO project as part of a much more diffuse 'eco-system' of EU maritime security projects.

*Figure 1 about here [Schematic Representation of EU activities on Maritime Security/Counter Piracy. Source: [http://www.crimson.eu.com/projects\\_categories/all-projects/](http://www.crimson.eu.com/projects_categories/all-projects/) ]*

Thus CRIMGO should not be seen as a stand alone or *ad hoc* initiative, but rather stems from a deeper seated EU interest in maritime security. Intriguingly, the Critical Maritime Routes programme is run by the Commission Directorate for Development and Co-operation, and not any of the specialized institutional players for the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy. It is also clear that the project was inspired by

UN Security Council resolutions (2018 of 2011, and 2039 of 2012) both specifically mentioning the Gulf of Guinea, and the consequent flurry of activity from various regional entities to be seen to be responding to the piracy problem.

CRIMGO is therefore a classic manifestation of soft maritime security (Lindley-French, 2004, Gray, 2011) or to some extent what Rao has termed 'soft naval power' (Rao, 2010), although an actual naval element in the policy is muted. It could also be interpreted within a 'naval diplomacy' framework of understanding (Carvalho de Oliveira, 2012), although the actual involvement of EU naval forces is rather limited, even if some EU Members States' navies are frequent visitors to the region<sup>4</sup>. Notably, CRIMGO does not envisage the deployment of any EU naval task force such as EUNAVFOR. Instead the core of the initiative is about training and capacity building and the accent is firmly on the civilian dimension rather than relying on naval or military institutions.

The actual content of CRIMGO is built around four pillars: (1) improving the sharing of information on the piracy problem between the littoral states, including the provision of some communications equipment for this; (2) improving maritime security training in the region generally; (3) improving coastguard and maritime law enforcement capacity and training, exploring whether common legal approaches are possible so that if pirates are apprehended there is a clear legal mechanism for dealing with them locally-something which has been a serious problem in the case of Somalia ; (4) improving the capacity of the littoral states to operate jointly through exercises and drills (FEI, 2014). The focus of CRIMGO's capacity building is then more on the human 'Software' rather than the technology 'Hardware' of maritime security capabilities among the main littoral West African states

These activities are budgeted to run for three years from 2013 to 2016 albeit with a very small budget of some €4.5m (FEI, 2014). With such a relatively limited funding it should also be clear that CRIMGO is not about the EU paying for the transfers of new ships, drones or other significant equipment to West African navies. Whatever impacts it is going to achieve will be reached through spending directed at human capital and personnel. However, as Table I makes clear, notwithstanding recent improvements, the actual material resources of the littoral states as regards naval and coastguard capacity are limited, with the exception possibly of Nigeria.

*Table 2 about here. [Naval strength of West African Littoral states 2014}*

Indeed Walker (2013) makes the observation that only Nigeria has the capacity to deploy significant naval or coastguard forces, recently launching their first domestically built offshore patrol vessel (OPV) (Walker, 2013, p.88). Nigeria, with a security and defence budget of over US\$2bn, has also ordered two new OPVs from China, a sign of that country's rising influence in the region<sup>5</sup> and the scramble for geopolitical influence in Africa (Larik and Weiler, 2013, Kaplan, 2010). In May of 2014 the Nigerian and Chinese Navy even conducted joint 'anti-piracy drills'<sup>6</sup>. The USA has also engaged in significant bilateral activity focused on maritime security in the region, donating ex-US Coastguard patrol ships to Nigeria and Ghana<sup>7</sup>. Such bilateral actions<sup>8</sup> by the classic big powers, stand in stark contrast to the focus of CRIMGO on training and human capital. Where the Americans and Chinese offer bilateral exchange, or even ships and joint naval exercise, the EU offers what is essentially a development project aimed at improving institutional capacities.

For example, as regards the four pillars, the maritime training component is not principally addressed to training operatives in the mechanics of sea based policing and law enforcement. A recent joint exercise with Nigerian agencies as part of the CRIMGO project was partly focused on communicating that the piracy issue was not just something that concerned their navy, but required co-ordination from many civilian agencies- a key lesson which was imparted<sup>9</sup>. The focus is therefore not so much on imparting state of the art techniques for boarding and dealing with pirates at sea, but rather training workshops and tabletop exercises which are aimed both at senior land based personnel of the littoral states and basic courses for ordinary enforcement personnel as well. As regards administrative managers, some 19 of whom were trained in 2013, the objective is to get them to understand the piracy issue, and how best to manage it.<sup>10</sup> For the year 2014 it was envisaged that the CRIMGO project would offer training to 40 persons in English and 40 in French covering the basic and advanced courses<sup>11</sup>.

An operational audit of the CRIMGO project was carried out in early summer 2014 and revised terms of reference were to be issued in September, to better reflect the feedback from African partners. One problem for the execution of the project has been that a parallel process exists centered on the Yaoundé Code of Conduct<sup>12</sup>, which was signed in June 2013, and which established standards for regional co-operation on law enforcement at sea, information sharing, and training. This has absorbed the interests of West African partners so that they have been more concerned with bilateral communications between themselves than with engaging with CRIMGO<sup>13</sup>. For example, as regards the information sharing part of the project there was an original intention to explore technical measures to improve the sharing of information between the littoral states, but increasingly the CRIMGO experts have decided to focus more on scoping the needs and capabilities for information sharing. Thus the stress is now upon discovering with local African partners what types of data are available, what is needed and what can be shared. One problem encountered is that while there may be information on pirates (intelligence, radar tracks, etc.) some states may not want to freely share this with neighbouring states because they view the matter as a military or naval question<sup>14</sup>.

For example Nigeria, where the piracy issue is 'owned' by the state security agencies (principally the Nigerian Navy), this is a sensitive issue. One problem for CRIMGO then, precisely because it is styled more as a civilian development project rather than a security mission, lies in overcoming the civil–military culture gap<sup>15</sup>. In fact, CRIMGO has mostly succeeded in getting around some initial caution towards the initiative by states such as Nigeria. A key principal of the way CRIMGO is implemented is to seek consent from national governments. For example, in Nigeria this has meant working with the Nigerian National Security Advisor directly, in order to win consent. Thus Nigerians get to decide and control what Nigerian agencies and staff, participate in any joint training under CRIMGO<sup>16</sup>.

The Nigerian state elite is quite sensitive about their own maritime sovereignty and their own capacity and rights to deal with maritime security threats. Operation Pulo Shield in 2012 was a recent example of Nigeria's own efforts at stamping out littoral piracy, with under 2,000 arrested and 18 ships confiscated (Walker, 2013, p.88). In fact such operations should be seen as part of a wider, and much more chaotic and bloodier counter insurgency campaign, which the Nigerian states has waged in the

Delta since at least 2009. This sort of 'security solution' favoured by the Nigerian state, stands very much at variance with the effort of liberal institutional security capacity building, which is at the heart of CRIMGO!

As regards the sharing of information issue, there is as yet some uncertainty about what exactly the Integrated Maritime Regional Co-ordination centre in Yaoundé (Cameroon), scheduled to be operational by mid 2014, will do regarding liaison with national littoral state authorities. One suggestion is that the regional centre will not be engaged in immediate technical information pooling, but more strategic interventions in the region to focus on analysis and political diplomacy at a higher level that may be required to deal with specific situations<sup>17</sup>.

To deliver CRIMGO a syndicate of diverse European actors is employed. CRIMGO is therefore led by a semi-private consultancy, *France Expertise International*, an entity that enjoys strong links to the French state. The other partners include: the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Directorate for Security and Defence Co-operation; a Spanish government associated international co-operation agency (FIIAP, the *Fundación Internacional y para Iberoamérica de Administración y Políticas Públicas* or in English, the *International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies*); the British Foreign Office's Maritime Security and Piracy-Security Policy Group; the Portuguese General Directorate for Sea Policy; the Polish Szczecin Maritime University; the Italian International Maritime Safety Security Environment Academy; and the Finnish School of Maritime Management, at Satakunta University. Together these partners represent seven member states of the EU, although the major leadership role played by two French actors should be evident. The West African states formally included in CRIMGO include: Benin, Cameroon, Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo (all ex-French colonies); Nigeria and Ghana (ex-British colonies); and Equatorial Guinea and São Tomé (ex-Spanish colonies).

Some African states are notable in their absence from CRIMGO, such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Senegal, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola. While it might be assumed these states are too far away from the locus of the piracy activity in the Gulf of Guinea, in fact maritime piracy events have occurred in their waters (Kashi, 2013). The most notorious of these has been the seizure of the Greek owned, but Liberian registered, oil tanker MV Kerala off the coast of Luanda in January 2014. Indeed it is

clear that some West African pirates, probably of Nigerian origin, have developed the ability to travel long distances using disguised mother ships to target vessels well outside their usual stalking ground which is the triangle of water, between Lagos, Port Harcourt and São Tomé. In the case of Sierra Leone, there have been only a few reports of piracy at sea (BBC, 2008) but instead a more usual pattern of littoral thievery has occurred at the Freetown anchorage and the same phenomenon at the Point Noire anchorage in Congo (IMO, 2014). Intriguingly, the Liberian coastguard, although not a member of CRIMGO, have been involved in bilateral training with the French Navy and US Coastguard in at least one joint training exercise in April 2013 (McGarry, 2013). Therefore, it is a little puzzling why these states have not joined the CRIMGO initiative.

In fact the reason why these states are not formal participants in CRIMGO stems from rather mundane bureaucratic rationality: the European Commission decided to scope the projects based on those states that were most interested and best able to participate. A few states that were interested, such as land-locked Chad, were obviously excluded because the Commission's thinking was to focus on a narrow definition of coastal security strictly in the Gulf of Guinea<sup>18</sup>. However, it is likely that a future evolution of CRIMGO will widen the countries involved to include all littoral states from Senegal to Angola<sup>19</sup>, and indeed all such states are included in the EU's Maritime Strategy Plan which was published in May 2014.

#### **4. Explaining CRIMGO's origins: security regime competition and innovation.**

It is important to situate the emergence of the CRIMGO initiative by the EU within a much wider and diffuse context of regional institutional co-operation as regards the problem of West African maritime piracy. As Walker (2013, p.88) explains, CRIMGO is but one of many initiatives focused on maritime piracy in the region, including those advocated by the Maritime Organization of West and Central Africa (MOWCA), the Gulf of Guinea Commission, the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African states (ECCAS).

However, the plethora of regional initiatives makes for a quite competitive institutional

environment, with many diverse actors capable of securing influence. One can suggest a key motive then for the EU is to retain influence in this marketplace of institutional competition for a role as regards West African piracy, which has an important geo-political dimension to it. The fact that Nigeria, the most significant littoral state is actively co-operating with China for investment in her oil industry (Izuchukwu and Ofori, 2014) and now even as regards naval ships, is surely a challenge to the historic predominance of Europeans in the region.

The USA is also a security competitor here, as in recent years, the USA has been consistently active in developing naval and coastguard diplomacy in West Africa led by the US Military's own specialist African regional command (AFRICOM). The American military continue to transfer equipment to the Nigerian military especially in the context of the high profile Boko Haram terrorism<sup>20</sup>. As evidenced by the transfer of ex-Coastguard vessels, the US has had a longstanding interest in improving the security of West Africa, in part no doubt reflecting its strategic importance in terms of global oil supply. The US has also brokered and led multi-national naval exercises in the Gulf of Guinea (Exercise Obangame 2014) and these drew most of the West African littoral states as participants, along with Brazil and some NATO navies such as those of Germany and Turkey.

While France continues to wield influence over, and at times even militarily intervene in the affairs of several of its ex-colonial West African states, historically she has had a frostier relationship with Nigeria. France sided with Biafra secessionists in the late 1960s, and even with Cameroon during a brief early 1980s maritime stand-off centered around the Bakassi peninsula (this dispute was resolved in 2006). These features have meant French diplomats treaded more cautiously with Nigeria in the past, even though the significant role of French oil firms such as Total in Nigeria's petro-economy reveals the relationship is today mostly pragmatic. In this context, it is possible that an EU policy initiative is more attractive to both France and Nigeria, instead of perhaps a narrower bilateral Franco-Nigerian scheme.

However, while a rather traditional French readiness to intervene in the region remains, France recently seeks to do so in more subtle ways that accentuate the role for local African partner state<sup>21</sup>. There is also a desire to ensure that French actions and interests in the region are Europeanised, so that their legitimacy, and to some

extent costs and support are more acceptable and shared. CRIMGO fits this approach and unquestionably French leadership has been a feature of the project design from the earliest stages. However, the extent to which the policy is understood as an EU policy with a significant French state contribution may be missed on the ground. As one interviewee admitted some of the African participants of the training sessions had difficulty distinguishing French from EU patronage for the project, something the field staff do appear to try to make very clear.

Two other sets of actors should be considered when explaining why CRIMGO emerged the way it has. The first of these is the global shipping and oil industry, which has important European clusters of influence. It is clear that European shipping interests have grown steadily worried about the scope for losses in their West Africa trade. Related to these are European oil firms, such as French firm Total, Italian energy firm ENI and Anglo-Dutch giant BP. All have extensive commercial interests in West Africa. Indeed the EU imports as much as 13 per cent of its oil and 6 per cent of natural gas from West Africa (European Commission, 2013), and much of it is high quality lighter crude. Given geopolitical uncertainties for oil supply related to the "Arab spring", it is obvious that the EU's interest in curbing piracy is connected to such commercial interests.

Moreover, such commercial players are very influential in the IMO and other global maritime governance regimes. Equally it is worth pointing out that the West African oil fields are expanding with output expected to increase over the coming years (Neumann, 2004). West Africa is becoming more important for European shipping, oil and gas firms not less. Hughes (2012), has highlighted the extensive permeation of commercial firms and their interests, together combining with state agencies in the global anti-piracy agenda. Dutch Naval vessels protection teams (guards) are now hired out to merchant ships, while ex-Royal Marines and other states' forces abound in the lucrative private maritime security industry, which is especially booming for the West African offshore oil sector. It is unclear just how much lobbying of the Commission and other EU actors has occurred to tackle maritime piracy and develop policies such as CRIMGO, but there is at least evidence that such lobbying has occurred at a generic level (Olsen, 2012, Van Leeuwen and Kern, 2013).

By way of contrast to such hard-nosed commercial interests pushing the EU to innovate with anti-piracy security initiatives, we can conjecture that bureaucratic

entrepreneurship has also played an important part in the logic of CRIMGO and indeed the wider CRIMSON 'secure trade routes' agenda. Once piracy became a hot security topic of the last few years, it has become crucial for bureaucratic actors to be seen to respond. Obviously NATO and the UN have found ample scope to respond to the piracy threat, but the deployment of EUNAVFOR has also been a real coup for the Council and the EU's much touted security and defence policy.

What CRIMGO shows though is that the Commission is not content to see the 'limelight' stolen by the Council or indeed other strong security institutions such as NATO. Such rivalry between EU actors is very well known (Dijkstra, 2009). Indeed Menon has recently described EU inter-institutional rivalry and competition as something of a 'cliché' in the field of the security and defence policy of the EU (Menon, 2011, p.77). This may be true, but it makes it no less a powerful force driving policy innovation and entrepreneurship. Moreover, as Menon notes explicitly, the Commission's preference for using the Development policy setting and its budget for security issues is now a clear trend, and this exactly fits what has happened in the case of CRIMGO (*Ibid.*).

## **5. Conclusion: the (in)significance of CRIMGO?**

It might be tempting to dismiss this case study as not yet capable of being evaluated because it is ongoing (CRIMGO will not end formally until 2016). Moreover, it seems very likely there will be an expansion of the existing CRIMGO project beyond 2016, however, that will depend on assessments and the stakeholders support for this. Nonetheless, there are indications that increased funding (€7.5m) might be available from the Commission.<sup>22</sup> A second objection could be that the CRIMGO project is simply insignificant and small-scale.

In fact, my point here is that such initiatives as CRIMGO may well be more representative and revealing of the EU's role in maritime security than the more glamorous EUNAVFOR operation. CRIMGO is a good example of what the EU finds relatively easy to do in security policy and why. The EU can put together 'soft' security instruments which center on liberal-institutional conceptions of security and do so because bureaucratic policy entrepreneurs within the EU institutions seek to find niches for their EU in competition with other security regimes. What is obviously missing

here is the projection of naval force based on more existential core interests. Yet even in the case of Somalian piracy it is clear that naval force was only part of the solution, and sometimes it was quite ineffective as much as it was horrendously expensive. Many Somali pirates learned to adapt, dump their arms when confronted with European or other states' naval might. Indeed they were often simply released by naval forces, because effective legal machinery for their prosecution was not always reliable.

Notwithstanding extensive rhetoric about a comprehensive approach to EU security, which includes human, environmental and human rights security linkages, CRIMGO arguably reveals the EU's core liberal security preferences; the protection of globalised trade routes and energy flows. The EU adopted published a Maritime Security Strategy in June 2014 (Council, 2014). As a document it can be described as somewhat rambling and generalised, reflecting classic liberal security rhetoric, and certainly not making any clear strategic choices. It purports to identify common maritime security interests for the EU, but these are widely pitched. For example, they include: *"the protection of economic interests, including the safeguarding of maritime energy resources"*, alongside, *"the protection of the environment and the management of the impact of climate change in maritime areas and coastal regions, as well as the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity to avoid future security risks"* (Council, 2014, p.7). The fact that one of these interests may be in profound conflict with the other is entirely glossed over. In short it is a rather typical 'curate's egg' of an EU document-by-committee.

Whatever the real purpose of an EU maritime strategy is, it is probably no more and no less than to secure the use of the global seas for (European) trade. It does not reflect a military-geospatial concept of dominance. In this sense, the EU would appear to be stumbling into a type of maritime strategy by default of its actions (which speak more clearly than the EU's use of words). This result is something very far away from any grand 'naval strategy', of the type which some nation states have historically adopted, to project their power, defend key marine territory, and not just secure maritime trade routes. The EU's maritime strategy is not going to be like China's evolving projection of naval and maritime power! In part this should be obvious, because the EU is nothing like a state such as China. It is, much scholarship notwithstanding, probably best described as a weak confederation of some European nations (and not others).

As far back as 1993 the European Union has dabbled with the issue of maritime security and the related issue of naval capability. A multi-national naval force was proposed for Petersburg Tasks, under the auspices of the wider *rapprochement* that was then in vogue between the WEU and the EU on security matters. A European Maritime Force (EUROMARFOR) in name emerged, but it has never created anything approaching a standing naval force in reality. Moreover, it was and remains very much a product of the usual "coalition of the willing", led by Mediterranean states, notably France, Spain and Italy. The result is that, while EUNAVFOR shows us that the EU can organize what may be called a properly naval force, such remains for the EU a relatively unusual trend. The EU is no naval power, even if it can occasionally muster some naval forces (for rather limited ends). Any maritime strategy the EU wishes to develop and implement, will of necessity therefore be most likely delivered by largely civilian and diplomatic initiatives. In short, it will be driven by projects not unlike CRIMGO.

This does not mean CRIMGO or indeed an emerging EU maritime strategy are effective solutions or unproblematic policies. A key weakness is precisely the thorny question of the projection and use of (naval) force. EUNAVFOR has demonstrated that EU states, or at least some of the more willing and able ones, can get together to do this. Without such a capability what power and efficiency would any EU maritime strategy have?

CRIMGO suggests a partial answer is a rather limited influence on partner nations through soft institutional instruments and learning, but not much more. CRIMGO avoids the sticky issue of an EU security policy which necessitates some use of, or threat of, (naval) force, by glossing over the use of force, as a matter for the littoral states. It is *they* who authorise and are responsible for any use of force against pirates. However, this is not completely satisfactory because there is in question the content of training and doctrine which projects like CRIMGO disseminate. What lessons are imparted to partner nations about the use of force, the rule of law (at sea) and the wider framing of the maritime piracy issue?

Downplaying the question of the use force in dealing with piracy may ultimately be counterproductive, even if it seems obvious that a naval deployment such as EUNAVFOR is not called for in the case of the Gulf Guinea, nor for that matter

acceptable to the local states. Walker (2013), for example, has argued that the key to defeating maritime piracy lies in effective naval and coastguard forces: “*combating... piracy... is therefore contingent upon an improved capacity to put naval resources to sea, either unilaterally, bilaterally or multilaterally as part of a cooperative regional effort, and of attaining better Maritime Domain Awareness*” (Walker, 2013, p.89).

Yet, CRIMGO does little here to actually build up anything by way of a ‘hardware’ infrastructure of new ships and monitoring assets for the West African littoral states. Instead the focus is on the soft infrastructure of training, procedures, drills and the ability for West African states to act jointly at sea, or through various legal measures on land. By Walker’s standards it is thus of limited significance, although hardly a failure.

We can also say that in the scramble for regional maritime influence, the EU appears to be much weaker here than China or the USA, both of whom are unsubtle in transferring ships, arranging joint naval exercises and placing the accent firmly on ‘kinetic’ (i.e. force) responses to the piracy phenomenon. Judged by the standards of ‘hard security’ initiatives, CRIMGO might seem of little importance, perhaps most of all by regional security elites who may esteem Chinese or American maritime security aid and co-operation more than EU development projects.

However, one could dispute to what extent the deeper solution to the West African piracy problem rests upon greater sea based enforcement capacity. In the case of Somalia, very sophisticated naval forces have found themselves frustrated because of weak legal infrastructures to bring suspected pirates to trial. Moreover, if the roots of the piracy problem lie on land, in particular in a dense weave of underdevelopment, insurgency and systematic littoral state corruption, then surely it is these root causes of piracy that should be tackled?

It is here that the most serious problem with CRIMGO arises: a naivety surrounding the motives and character of local state actors. As regards Nigerian oil piracy, there are at least in some cases murky connections between the pirate gangs who steal oil from hijacked vessels, the illegal land based bunkering industry, and corrupt local officials or even factions of the state apparatus, including it is likely military and naval elements (Peel, 2009, Walker, 2013, p.87). Bizarre and chaotic stories have emerged of

elements of the Nigerian maritime (Port) police being employed as security guards for transiting ships, but being challenged by the Nigerian navy-as pirates!

If a more substantive solution to the phenomenon of West African maritime piracy is really sought, it seems there is no substitute for a deeper engagement with the complex social and political troubles of the Niger delta region, in the same way that engagement with the politics of Puntland has proven vital to confront Somali piracy. This would require a type of structured EU intervention that places the accent on human rights, development and human security. The EU has arguably at least tried this in some contexts, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict. As Faleti (2012) explains, the situation in the Delta is complex and direct links with the piracy phenomenon are opaque, although it does seem that former insurgents have in the context of a pause in the conflict, 'reinvented' themselves as pirates. However, notwithstanding such complexity there is a consensus (Francis, et al, 2011) that security through a development, social justice and environmental focus offers the best hope of tackling the root cause of problems in the region, of which maritime piracy is but one of the worst and most visible manifestations.

Ends

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Combined Task Force 448 was an activation of the European Maritime Force to support the UNIFIL mandate for securing the seas around Lebanon after the war between Israel and Hezbollah in 2006. The EMF has also been activated within Operation Atalanta.

<sup>2</sup> The official costs of Operation Atalanta under the EU budget were set out as €14.9m for the period from Spring 2012 to December 2014, when the Council extended its mandate in March 2012. See: Council (2012). Originally when the Operation was established in 2008 annual common costs paid for by the EU were about €8m. However, the actual running or operational costs of ship deployment are borne by the Member States. See for example the statement by Rear Admiral Philip Jones, Royal Navy, in House of Lords (2009, Question 23, p.6.).

<sup>3</sup> See: <http://eunavfor.eu/deployed-units/surface-vessels/>

<sup>4</sup> The French navy as a matter of policy keep one vessel in the region, while in March 2014, the British destroyer HMS

Portland visited Lagos in what was a classic example of defence diplomacy.

<sup>5</sup> The Nigerian army have also order mine proof vehicles from Chinese manufacturers while Cameroon has apparently purchased Chinese fighting vehicles (heavy armored cars). See: <https://beegeagle.wordpress.com/2014/06/19/first-non-screengrab-shot-of-the-nigerian-armys-new-chinese-built-csvp3-bigfoot-mrap-emerges-deployed-in-the-northeastern-theatre/> and <https://beegeagle.wordpress.com/2014/06/08/cameroon-army-display-new-stocks-of-chinese-built-armor/>

<sup>6</sup> See: <https://beegeagle.wordpress.com/2014/06/16/photo-newsreel-chinese-and-nigerian-navies-conduct-first-anti-piracy-joint-drill/>

<sup>7</sup> The Chinese vessels are modern designs that may have some stealth capabilities to reduce their radar footprint, while the second vessel will be completed in Nigeria. A third Chinese patrol may be donated to Nigeria following the high profile Chinese naval visit of May 2014. The ex-US Coastguard cutter (frigate) *Chase* arrived in Nigerian in 2011 and in May 2014 the ex-Coastguard vessel *Gallatin* arrived. These have been renamed NNS *Thunder* and NNS *Okpabana*, and although welcome additions are very old vessels (commissioned in the late 1960s) and not especially fuel-efficient. See: <https://beegeagle.wordpress.com/2014/05/25/china-donate-unnamed-combat-vessel-to-the-nigerian-navy-handover-formalities-already-initiated/>

<sup>8</sup> For example Ghana's Coastguard has received significant assistance from Finland during the period 2011-2013, and it seems that two out of four new Chinese built patrol vessels may have been donated by the Chinese government. See: <https://beegeagle.wordpress.com/2014/05/03/poly-technologies-of-china-building-76mm-gun-armed-large-patrol-craft-for-cameroon-navy/>. There has also been some bilateral co-operation between African states in the region, For example both Nigerian and Benin naval patrol boats have engaged in joint patrols.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with French policy expert involved in the project (Ms. Genia Simon, France Expertise Internationale). July 15<sup>th</sup> 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with French policy expert involved in the project (Jean Baptiste Bazot, France Expertise Internationale). July 11<sup>th</sup> 2014, and see: [http://www.crimson.eu.com/assets/2013/09/Crimgo\\_presentation\\_cluster.pdf](http://www.crimson.eu.com/assets/2013/09/Crimgo_presentation_cluster.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> See: [http://www.crimson.eu.com/assets/2013/09/Crimgo\\_presentation\\_cluster.pdf](http://www.crimson.eu.com/assets/2013/09/Crimgo_presentation_cluster.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> See: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2013/sc11091.doc.htm>

<sup>13</sup> Interview with French policy expert involved in the project (Ms. Genia Simon, France Expertise Internationale). July 15<sup>th</sup> 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with French policy expert involved in the project (Jean Baptiste Bazot, France Expertise Internationale). July 11<sup>th</sup> 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with French policy expert involved in the project (Jean Baptiste Bazot, France Expertise Internationale). July 11<sup>th</sup> 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with French policy expert involved in the project (Ms. Genia Simon, France Expertise Internationale). July 15<sup>th</sup> 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with French policy expert involved in the project (Jean Baptiste Bazot, France Expertise Internationale). July 11<sup>th</sup> 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with French policy expert involved in the project (Ms. Genia Simon, France Expertise Internationale). July 15<sup>th</sup> 2014.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with French policy expert involved in the project (Ms. Genia Simon, France Expertise Internationale). July 15<sup>th</sup> 2014.

<sup>20</sup> See: <https://beegeagle.wordpress.com/2014/06/26/united-states-govt-transfer-military-equipment-to-the-nigerian-army-2/>

<sup>21</sup> President François Holland in a recent 2013 speech on African security stressed such themes: "But I remind you now: it's above all for the Africans to ensure their security." *That's the purpose of the Elysée summit to be held in December, eight months after the African Union decided to create a crisis response capability, and six months after the meeting on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, at which actions were undertaken against piracy. Europe will be represented at the Paris summit, because we must respond together to the African countries' requests for training, support and equipment of their armed forces, because that continent has a bright future. It must be able to control its destiny by itself. France will stand alongside it, without seeking anything for itself.*

From: <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/the-ministry-of-foreign-affairs-158/events-5815/article/21st-ambassadors-conference-speech>

<sup>22</sup> Interview with French policy expert involved in the project (Ms. Genia Simon, France Expertise Internationale). July 15<sup>th</sup> 2014.