Strategic Insights

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Feeding the crocodile: A military solution to Somali piracy *p4*

FGS BAYERN escorts the SEA MASTER I
[Source: EUNAVFOR]

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Introduction

GUY WILSON-ROBERTS
EDITOR

Despite a recent fall in the hijacking success rate for Somali pirates, piracy remains a major threat off the Horn of Africa. The first article in this issue looks at a military solution to the threat. Sjoerd J.J. Both, Senior Consultant at Risk Intelligence, challenges the idea that Somali piracy can only be countered by an all-encompassing approach that will 'fix' Somalia. Both argues that the alternative to 'feeding the crocodile' is to give more prominence to military action and his article provides a formatted planning structure to do so.

Naval forces have been in action for some time in the Indian Ocean and the second article in this issue discusses the three-year anniversary of Operation ATALANTA, consisting of naval forces from the European Union (EU). Security policy analyst Sebastian Bruns identifies successes as well as shortcomings. Concerns remain that as long as European resources continue to be strained by the financial and economic crises, and an austere defence budget cycle, the number of warships in the area is constrained by national caveats.

In the first of two articles on current threats, analysts from Risk Intelligence review that threat of domestic terrorism in Nigeria, focusing on the Islamic-based group Boko Haram. The group has captured international headlines with its bomb attacks, used to foment instability and increase ethno-religious tensions. There are specific geographical risk areas, largely in the north of the country. Apart from Abuja, Boko Haram has not staged attacks in areas with significant international assets, but there is a risk that the group will be able to stage isolated attacks in the south-west as well.

Also dominating the news in recent months has been the uprisings in Syria and Libya. The final article in this issue provides an update on both locations. Despite the widespread protests in Syria, there are big questions to answer as to the opposition's organisation, unity of purpose, strength and ability to overturn the Assad regime. It seems any change of government is still some way off but maritime operations in the country are for now largely unaffected. In contrast, at least in the country's ports, the situation in Libya is stabilising after its civil war. The National Transitional Council will need much domestic and international support to establish effective governance and there are a number of worst-case scenarios for the future.

A guide to MaRisk: Risk Intelligence's online threat monotoring solution, MaRisk, uses zoomable maps with multiple icons for more enhanced threat classification. Please refer to the reference chart for MaRisk icons in order to better utilise the accompanied maps. Visit marisk.dk for more information.

HORN OF AFRICA

Feeding the crocodile: A military solution to Somali piracy

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Despite a number of operational constraints, the navies deployed in the Gulf of Aden and Somali Basin have successfully disrupted a great number of piracy operations and forced the pirates to operate at long distances from home. Without this naval presence the waters off Somalia would have been a true pirate bonanza by now. Nevertheless, much of the naval capabilities remain unused. While political and military policy and decision makers all appear to sing from the same sheet of music stating that "the Somali piracy problem must be resolved on land", Somali piracy could well be rooted out by a much bolder approach. By taking a look at the problem from a naval operations point of view, which focuses at resolving the problem by force, decisively, at and from the sea, this article challenges the generally held opinion that Somali piracy can only be countered effectively as part of an all-encompassing comprehensive approach which ultimately aims to "fix" Somalia.

Comprehensive approach or feinting resolve?

Arguably, due to its common-sense multidisciplinary features, the comprehensive approach concept enjoys broad popularity among political and military decision makers. It clearly makes sense to take a look at security problems through a holistic lens and consider the use of military force in conjunction with non-military courses of action available to resolve a security problem. Another feature that explains the attractiveness of the comprehensive approach, however, is the opportunity it offers to very different actors with oftentimes very different views to embark on a common cause. As a result, the comprehensive approach provides a convenient political tool to feint effective action whilst effectively curtailing or inhibiting any military options, also in cases where the use of force is the obvious primary option to resolve an outstanding security problem. Countering Somali piracy could well be such a case.

Another explanation why the international community and political decision makers are grappling with piracy and its

consequences may be the actual nature of the maritime environment. By virtue of its definition, piracy is committed in international waters, so outside of territorial waters, out in what the U.S. naval strategist A.T. Mahan referred to as "the great common". In this vast area of sea space, sea power and international law are the sole means for maintaining the good order at sea. Piracy is a maritime threat that has a criminal and a strategic dimension. While the criminal aspect of piracy is obvious, the strategic aspect it poses against our Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) remains underexposed. While a similar threat posed by a nation would trigger a firm naval response, pirates get away with it. As a consequence, nations could choose to tag pirates as irregular fighters posing a threat to vital maritime interests and fight them accordingly. Basically, that would restore the pirates' historical status as hostis humanis generis, an enemy of all mankind, rather than being regarded as just another branch of organised crime.

While nation building in Somalia and the comprehensive approach coming with it continue to have great appeal to European decision makers, very few of them would assert that the concept has been very successful in countries with a comparable social fabric, such as Afghanistan. In fact the degree of disorder and the size and location of the country cause the chances for successful nation building in Somalia to be even slimmer. Also, those who are of the opinion that "the Somali piracy problem must be resolved on land" should ask themselves what level of stability and law enforcement capabilities should be in place in Somalia to prevent the pirates from deploying to sea.

South Korea on patrol in August 2009
[Source: South Korean Navy]

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Fortunately, counter piracy first and foremost is about stopping acts of piracy and dealing with its consequences in terms of crews and vessels taken hostage. Firm military action has all the potential to do just that. Fixing Somalia for the sake of regional stability and because of humanitarian reasons simply is another much more complex issue, which will do little to hamper or stop the highly lucrative piracy business until the moment Somalia or parts of the country transform into a functioning state. While restoring a Somali state might be regarded as the most important issue, stopping the pirates' ongoing assault on our sea lines of communication is one of the most urgent issues the international community has to deal with regarding Somalia. Moreover, and provided the military gets the latitude to act decisively, piracy and its grim consequences for the crews of the hijacked ships can be effectively dealt with by military means at sea and from the sea. And, yes, it is this maritime vulnerability of the pirates that should be exploited.

*A skiff destroyed by the Dutch Navy in
September 2010*
[Source: EUNAVFOR]

The art of warfare

While a number of scientific disciplines address warfare and warfare related topics, the actual planning and conduct of warfare and military operations, often referred to as (military) operational art, is much closer affiliated with the realm of art than it is with science. This is because of the decisive role intangible and unpredictable factors play in what arguably is one of humanity's most complex, extreme and challenging endeavours.

Nevertheless, the technological complexity of modern warfare along with its far-reaching consequences requires that military practitioners take full advantage of scientific principles and plan and conduct their operations accordingly by means of a methodological yet flexible approach. Such an approach always should leave sufficient latitude for the intangibles of warfare including the kind of gut-feeling based decisive decision-making, which so often has proved to be the hallmark of successful military leaders at all levels of command throughout military history.

Appreciation of the Situation

To look at some of the aspects of a naval plan, which has the aim to decisively defeat Somali piracy, we will go through some of the motions of a classical naval practitioner's operational planning tool: the Appreciation of the Situation (AoS). An AoS is a formatted planning structure. Though several AoS versions exist, the basic features of the various versions are similar. An AoS provides an operational commander with a practical mental framework to quickly identify the main elements of an operational plan and draft a Concept of Operations (COP-NOPS), based on an analysis of the mission, operational factors and the courses of actions available to the enemy and one's own forces.

Mission: Analysis and aim
Somali piracy has become a challenge against international and regional security and interests well beyond Somali territory and waters. Moreover, and yet another reason for more decisive action, is that such action may deter others from joining the piracy business, in Somalia and elsewhere. What makes piracy different from other types of organised crime is the environment in which it is committed and the strategic interests that are at stake. Conducted in international waters, and consequently outside the jurisdiction of any nation, state piracy threatens the maritime trade routes which cross the area where pirates are active. As already noted, no state actor would be allowed to do just that without triggering a forceful naval reaction from other countries. Piracy thus poses a threat to the freedom of navigation and consequently should be regarded as a maritime threat posed by irregular combatants rather than just another type of organised crime.

Taking into account the contents of UN Security Council Resolutions on Somali piracy, the principles of proportionality, minimum required force and the prevention of collateral damage, the mission aim for decisive naval action against Somali pirates could read as follows:

> *Decisively neutralise Somali piracy in international waters and Somali territorial waters. To that end, and in accordance with the Rules of Engagement (ROE) in force, take all necessary action, including the use of minimum force required to (1) free the crews and retake the vessels currently held hostage by Somali pirates, (2) effectively put end to all pirate activity at sea by arresting the pirates and destroying their assets at sea, (3) attack and destroy all real estate and shore based facilities known to be used by pirates as designated by higher command.*

Operational factors
In order to assess the "enemy's" possible courses of action and subsequently derive our own options for a courseof action, we first need to have a closer look the theatre of operations defined by the operational factors TIME, FORCE and SPACE.

TIME - The least controllable of operational factors, time will be a critical factor as soon as the military action begins to free the vessels and crews held hostage. Pirates will continue their operations as they are used to until the moment they become aware of our plans or actions. Consequently, secrecy, stealth and covertness are of paramount importance until all vessels and crews have been rendered safe. Time will be as critical a factor for pirates and own forces during the liberation phase of the hijacked ships. Endurance, speed and C4I capabilities will cause this operational factor to be on the naval coalition's side.

FORCE - Naval forces with their superior command and control and weapons capabilities are absolutely dominant in this area. The chances for pirates to successfully engage naval units are limited to engaging helicopters or RHIB boats and crews. In general, pirates have no realistic chance to fight naval forces with any chance of success. The force escalation dominance of navies in the face of the pirates is uncontested. The pirate threat to crew held hostage is the pirates' most powerful weapon and bargaining tool to repel naval action. At the same time, the fact that the crews and ships are the pirates' main source of revenue will likely constrain their options to harm the hostages. Maintaining the pirates' impression that there is an acceptable way out thus is an important issue.

SPACE - While naval forces are far superior to pirate forces in terms of speed, endurance, command and control and surveillance capabilities, the theatre of operation covers the entire one million-square-miles-plus area in which the pirates operate. Moreover, pirate vessels are small and hard to distinguish from vessels involved in other business. Because of their endurance and surveillance capabilities and the option to intercept pirate forces within Somali territorial waters, naval forces likely have the upper hand exploiting this operational factor.

A pirate mother ship is investigated by a naval boarding team
[Source: EUNAVFOR]

Pirate courses of action
Most likely course of action - Pirates will continue their regular operations until they become aware of the naval action. Pirates will go public to stop naval action by threatening to do harm to hostages. Pirates will surrender when boarded by Special Forces, particularly in close vicinity to a naval vessel or when a vessel is towed away or disabled. Pirates will try to escape with hijacked vessels and crew. Pirates will surrender when confronted with overwhelming accurately projected force, also when in control of a hijacked vessel and crew.

A suspected mother ship towing a skiff is targeted prior to boarding
[Source: EUNAVFOR]

Most dangerous course of action - When no longer in control of any pirated vessel and crew: desperate extremely violent attempts to hijack other targets of opportunity. When still in control of pirated vessels and crew: transfer hostages to shore and/or threaten to do harm to hijacked vessels and crew. Fight Special Forces on board. Attack naval vessels with heavy machineguns mounted on pirate mother ships. A coalition with terrorists willing to conduct small boat attacks in coordination with and support of pirate attacks.

Own courses of action
Hijacked vessels - Tow away to open sea, obstruct propellers, insert Special Forces covertly from the sea, disable bridge & wheelhouse by means of close in weapon systems fire, deny pirates' use of portable and ships communication (jam/ignore), overwhelm pirates by surprise using less lethal weapons such as stun grenades and agents which temporarily inhibit the pirates' abilities and resilience to resist a naval assault. Use non-lethal biological and chemical weapons to prepare hijacked vessels for a Special Forces assault.

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Pirate operational logistics, real estate and basing facilities - Interrupt and inhibit pirate supply of hijacked vessels. By means of naval gun bombardment and UAV, attack and destroy pirate basing and real estate after a short notice warning.

Ongoing pirate deployments - Search, capture and destroy all pirate vessels at sea.

Conduct information & psychological operations - Inform Somali pirates that they must surrender or will be chased and neutralised by means of robust force whether on land or deployed at sea.

Operational planning considerations
Any plan that aims to deal with Somali piracy decisively by military means has to deal first and foremost with re-capturing the hijacked vessels and crews. Hijacked vessels and the crew that has been kept on board are to be freed by means of a large, well-coordinated, simultane-ously conducted naval Special Forces action supported by frigates and destroyers and conducted under the cover of darkness. Common operational procedures and C4I are required to conduct this type of operation seam-lessly, which leaves a task group composed of NATO member countries naval units as the obvious choice. A number of NATO navies operate Special Forces who

have trained and practiced this kind of hostage release operations for many years. Following the recapture of the hijacked vessels, an ultimatum for the immediate re-lease of hostages held on Somali soil must be issued in the course of engaging pirate assets at sea and on the Somali coast. These tasks could be conducted by a task group composed of Combined Maritime Forces units and naval forces currently nationally deployed in the area (the so called "independent deployers" such as India, Peoples Republic of China, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation). The current UN resolutions on So-mali piracy require the Somali Transitional Federal Go-vernment's (TFG) consent for any operations conducted within Somali territorial waters and on Somali soil. Of course, this causes a significant risk for the level of se-crecy that needs to be maintained to conduct the hos-tage and ship release phase of the operation.

Conclusion
While posing a significant hindrance to Somali piracy, the current way of engaging piracy will not make it disappear any time soon. On the contrary, Somali piracy is flou-rishing. We can either continue to feed the crocodile in its comprehensive approach habitat and remain a fairly passive bystander while watching the beast grow. Or, we can turn it into a handbag and accept the possibility of losing some innocent life in the course of military action to that end. **S**
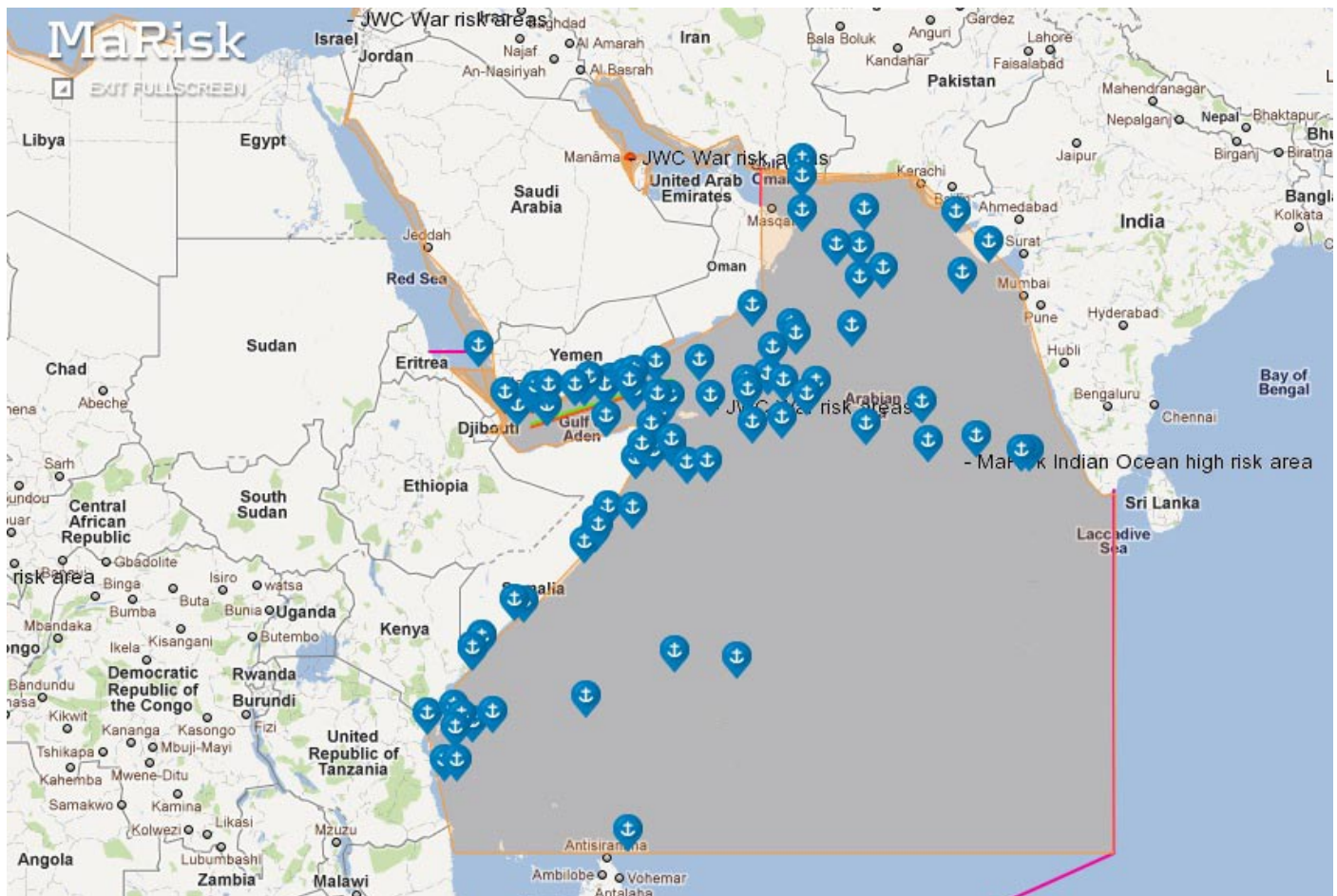
Anti-piracy naval operations to date in 2011
[Source: MaRisk]

HORN OF AFRICA

Operation ATALANTA at three: A success or failure?

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The European Union Naval Force (EU NAV-FOR) Somalia Operation ATALANTA anti-piracy mission is celebrating its third birthday in December 2011. In human terms, a third birthday is hardly the occasion to look back and identify lifetime achievements. Three continuous years of a substantially politicised naval mission such as ATALANTA, on the other hand, warrant such an approach. The simple question whether it is a success or a failure can only be answered by a more nuanced answer.

This article will identify some successes as well as notable shortcomings. It assesses the overall impact that European naval forces under the banner of EU NAVFOR ATALANTA have had in the region. It also looks into what the future could hold for the European Union's naval anti-piracy mission. After all, the mission has already been extended by its political governing body, the European Council, until December 2012 and it is safe to say that piracy will continue to stay with us in the near future.

Background

When it was launched on 8 December 2008, extended activity of naval forces off the Horn of Africa was by no means a new phenomenon, thanks to Operation ENDURING FREEDOM's maritime leg on counter-terrorism operations (frequently also identified by its international task force name, Task Force 150). The operation was established with substantial contributions by European nations and their NATO allies after 9/11. Nor did the threat of piracy in those waters constitute a genuinely uncommon challenge. What was new and groundbreaking though was Europe's first common effort in line with the relevant doctrines and political motifs to stand up and sustain an expeditionary operation.

Although Operation ATALANTA constituted something inherently new – the first naval out-of-area mission of the European Union – at the time it was launched, it was hardly unrelated to previous developments in international relations. In fact, ATALANTA, named for a figure from Greek mythology, is conducted in accordance to the United Nations Security Council's resolutions 1814, 1816, 1838, 1846, and 1851 (2008). The objectives contained in the mandate include: protection of vessels of the United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP) and other vulnerable shipping; deterrence, prevention and repression of acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea; and monitoring of fishing activities off the coast of Somalia. It should be noted that these activities are in fact prioritised in accordance with national interests and political compromises rather than sorted by the significance of each of these tasks. Thus, in a landmark case of hijacking involving the multi-purpose heavy lift vessel BELUGA NOMINATION on 22 January 2011, circa 800 nautical miles north of the Seychelles, while a number of EU warships were in port to replenish and rest, a EU NAVFOR vessel detached for World Food Programme escort duties did not come to the rescue of the embattled commercial freighter. The reasoning behind it was that the WFP transport itself would have been subject to piracy – a tough operational choice, but a devastating political signal.

The mission's headquarters are hosted by the United Kingdom and are located in Northwood, near London. EU member states and associated countries contribute operationally to EU NAVFOR by providing: navy vessels (combatants well as auxiliary ships); maritime patrol aircraft for reconnaissance duty; vessel protection detachments; military staff to Northwood or on board units deployed. The area of operations covers a vast area 1.5 times the size of the European mainland, including the southern Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden (GoA) and a large part of the Indian Ocean. The operative hub for Operation ATALANTA akin to a forward-operating base is the port of Djibouti near the Bab el Mandeb strait.

Some sustained successes

Operation ATALANTA replaced national attempts by individual countries to safeguard World Food Programme vessels from attack. It is now one of several missions tasked to combat piracy: NATO's "Ocean Shield" operation, the Combined Maritime Forces' Task Force 151 (CTF-151), and individual countries' navies all contribute in one way or another to the fight against piracy. Task Force 150, on counter-terrorism mission, is still operating in the area as well. Politically, the European Union's operation can be regarded as an achievement. The EU's

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inherent challenge to reach common decisions as a community has often been lamented and is often scrutinised as merely reaching the lowest common denominator. It is, however, by no means a small feat to mount a maritime operation such as this, keeping in mind that this was indeed a first for the EU. Furthermore, one needs to consider the challenging institutional learning process that multinational maritime missions undergo. A certain head start for interoperability did exist, thanks to common standards, strategic and tactical assimilation and, in the case of many European nations, even practical experience in standing NATO maritime groups.

by the EU's history and contributes to the EU's aspiration to tackle the problem of piracy off Somalia with a "comprehensive approach". The imperfection, or desired end-state, of the European Union and its fragility as seen in the economic crisis as lately also contribute to a much more diffuse approach to hard military action and their combination with political objectives.

To a significant degree, however, 'learning-by-doing' is a very prominent development to consider: operational experiences, national leadership efforts and the dynamics of the maritime domain all have influenced and

A pirate vessel destroyed as part of
Operation ATALANTA
[Source: FInnish Navy]

Operationally, it is slightly more complicated to assess the real impact of EU NAVFOR. While it is difficult to rate international naval forces in relation to each other, it is an even more significant challenge to compare the individual mandates to measure the international naval forces' successes. Various rules of engagement, the corresponding units deployed, national priorities, training and equipment all form part of this equation. For EU NAVFOR, it can be asserted that it needs to consider political vindication for their action. To a much larger degree than naval forces operating under national commands or NATO – which is primarily a military organisation and a political organisation only in a secondary sense – the EU's raison d'être is a primacy of peaceful means. This can be explained

continue to do so how Operation ATALANTA is conducted. A significant limitation for the operation continues to be the challenging dynamics of EU politics, which form the background to virtually every EU decision. Thus, EU NAVFOR vessels were not as punchy as they could have been. National caveats still governed most of the counter-piracy operations.

But faced with an escalation of piracy off the Horn of Africa, both in absolute numbers and public perception, EU NAVFOR finally adopted a more robust stance, which was to a degree still limited by the reactive (rather than active) counter-piracy approach. A potential landmark case in point occurred in the freeing of the German con-

tainer vessel TAIPAN on 5 April 2010. Forces from the Dutch frigate HNLMS TROMP fast-roped on the deck of the vessel after it was made clear that the crew had safely retreated to a citadel just before the pirates came on board. In what continues to be a mastery of public relations effects, thanks to a YouTube video recorded by one member of the Special Forces team, the vessel was secured; the perpetrators were arrested and extradited to Germany, where they await conviction.

Speaking of public relations, hard facts published by EU NAVFOR convey a successful campaign altogether. According to the website of EU NAVFOR (as of 11 November 2011), Operation ATALANTA forces were responsible for 118 World Food Programme vessels escorts, ensuring delivery of 673,622 tonnes of food to the starving people in Somalia since December 2008. Another 117 vessels of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Africa's very own attempt to bring order to the Horn of Africa, were escorted as well. All the while, the report goes on to say, 111 pirates have been transferred and remanded/convicted. Has the mission been a success, then? Yes and no – yes, because none of the WFP freighters with EU NAVFOR escorts was hijacked, a figure that a corresponding EU press release boosted as a "100% success rate providing escorts to WFP vessels delivering 673,622 tons (as at 20 October 2011) of food to the Somali people". No, because as IMB data (and that of Risk Intelligence itself) shows: pirate attacks in the region are more numerous than ever. In fact, some of the hijackings of the past have been nothing short of spectacular.

An EU naval ship escorts merchant vessels
[Source: EUNAVFOR]

Continuing challenges

The number of pirate arrests seems relatively low to the unsuspecting eye, given the regular reports of hijackings and attacks off Somalia. What are some of the reasons for this, other than the fact that PR is all about underlining positive effects while negating negatives? For one, the arrests, detentions and convictions by other navies are not accounted for in this statistic. Moreover, a look at

the ratio of attempted to successful hijackings since 2008 reveals less of a success rate for pirates. This is due to a combination of weather factors (notably the monsoon season), the adoption of Best Management Practices (BMP) set forth for commercial shipping, selected arrests of pirate groups and their leaders, and a sustained anti-mother ship campaign by naval forces. Some of these developments have clearly been learned the hard way – BMP, for example, is not mandatory and many operators continued to forgo these elementary security measures. Vessel protection detachments and armed private security guards have proven their worth for high-risk vessels.

Yet, some basic challenges of combating piracy continue to pose a serious risk for effectiveness. EU NAVFOR has very long opted to err on the side of caution when confronting potential pirates. In other words, the criminals had to be caught in the act in order to make the case for arresting them. Three unresolved issues stood in the way. Firstly, a host of operational challenges abounded. The 'tyranny of distance' for naval units made it difficult in the first place to be on scene when and where a pirate attack group (PAG) approached a commercial vessel. If naval forces did encounter PAGs and were able to make their case, new challenges emerged. Most warships – designed and fitted for many other roles but policing the oceans – are not equipped to detain, feed and house pirates for an extended period of time. Secondly, a warship involved in such a criminal case meant it virtually detached from the battle fleet, for it has to make a port call, deliver the suspects and paraphernalia, and possibly even testify in court.

Thirdly, there is the political task of trying the pirates for their crime. Little appetite continues to exist in European capitals to bring suspects to Europe where they will be safe from extradition to their war-torn home country and are highly likely to ask for, and be granted, asylum. In a striking turn of events, countries in the region were courted to try suspects, but only after the first pirates had already been detained. One of the first of these cases occurred with the German frigate FGS KARLSRUHE on Christmas Day 2008. Few provisions had been made by the military leadership, which scrambled over the holidays to solve the situation. To be fair, this is not a problem exclusively reserved for the EU NAVFOR units, as seen with the Danish support ship HDMS ABSALON in September 2010. The vessel, which operated under a separate mandate, had a number of suspected pirates on board, but opted to release them later due to a lack of legal clarity.

The central challenge aside from the broader, general problem of piracy as faced by all nations and missions in the area of operations for the EU is the end-state of its postulated comprehensive approach. In the words of Rear Admiral (RN) Duncan L. Potts, Commander EU NAVOR, the existing package of mandate and rules of engagements allows for opportunities to effectively fulfil

the mission. At the same time, he goes on to say, due to the prevailing jurisdiction, there will time and again be the necessity to consider each individual case on its own merits.

Various shortcomings

The number of successful pirate attacks can only be explained by pointing to a combination of factors. As pirates learned to manoeuvre from the coastal area of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden to the full extent of the Arabian Sea, the need to cover an increasingly greater area of operations – both for the pirates to find their prey and for naval forces to interdict – became apparent. In fact, the area became so huge that it is virtually impossible for naval forces to guard commercial traffic. They have thus increasingly focused on staging areas and mother ships, something that EU NAVFOR has picked up only recently.

The ballooning of piracy from the Gulf of Aden to the whole Arabian Sea and beyond thus mandates a critical view of the development beyond the sheer numbers. The discussion about vessel protection detachments or private security guards has also gained new momentum as a successful piracy repellent. However, the outsourcing of security tasks inherent to armed forces draws wide criticism in some circles, warning that this would amount to a country's filing for bankruptcy, policy-wise. The challenge will be for this largely academic discussion not to be overtaken by the events. The bad news, moreover, is that pirated vessels tend to stay hijacked for longer periods of time than used to be the case (because the pirate leaders need to assume that a new capture is much more risky than in 2008 and 2009). Additionally, ransoms are increasingly on the rise, thus giving pirate leaders more leverage when negotiating release sums with ship owners and operators.

According to a public list on the website of EU NAVFOR, Operation ATALANTA draws contingents from an impressive list of member states, as well as non-EU countries. This politically overwhelming number needs to be checked against the number of countries that actually provide a sustained number of warships, auxiliary vessels, and maritime patrol aircraft. As of 11 October 2011, after the latest larger rotation of forces, only Germany (two frigates including force commander and flagship duties, one P-3C Orion MPA), The Netherlands (one auxiliary), France (one frigate), Spain (one frigate, one dock-landing ship, one P-3C Orion MPA) and Luxembourg (one Fairchild Merlin MPA) provided hard-power assets. As the European idea seems to slither into chaos due to the financial and Euro crisis, it is difficult to predict how much appetite (or, quite frankly, money) there is in European capitals for the continuation of a common European security and foreign policy in general, and EU NAVFOR in particular.

Given the fluctuating number of warships and MPAs that constitute the informal order of battle on the Horn of Africa (25-30), the EU provides between roughly 1/6 and 1/5 of the assets. Even when one considers the hard-to-quantify effects of the Djibouti base and the relatively higher face-value of MPAs and helicopters versus blue-water navy warships, it is striking how comparatively little Europe – whose main trade route to Asia runs through the piracy-prone area – can (or is willing to) bring to the table. Estonia, Belgium, Greece, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom are also listed in the pool of regularly contributing nations (missing, for example, is Finland, which brought their minelayer POHJANMAA into the operation in early 2011).

Countries in ATALANTA

Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, Lithuania, Latvia

Non-members

Croatia, Montenegro, Norway, Switzerland and Ukraine

In essence, therefore, it is a coalition of the able behind the somewhat glamorous front-page projection of an EU-wide effort. To which a pundit might point out that, thanks to budget cuts in European defence, there are a small and declining number of capable naval forces involved. The budget question will be central to the sustainability of EU NAVFOR. Indeed, maritime capabilities of countries of the European Union have increasingly been stretched beyond their limits, which a look at the down-scaling of the British Royal Navy in light of their Strategic and Defence Review 2010 or the European nations' involvement in the war on Libya in 2011 will underline. Thought and practice in European security and defence policy are likely to be increasingly under pressure to come into compliance.

What does the future hold for EU NAVFOR?

It is safe to assume that EU NAVFOR will continue to evolve in the face of the situation off the Horn of Africa. It can only be modestly successful by enforcing closer cooperation with other naval forces operating in the area. The situation on land, various solutions to which are so often cited as the only real cure to piracy, is unclear – but drone strikes or a sustained successful anti-Al Shebab campaign by Kenya could have their own, yet somewhat limited, effects on the number of pirate attacks. The relative success of piracy will continue to be determined by factors such as the weather, the evolution (and, more importantly, the adoption) of the shipping industry's Best Management Practices, and above all the political appetite for a robust anti-piracy campaign.

Yet, even a forceful anti-piracy operation focused on staging areas and mother ships could eventually not come to fruition. As long as European resources continue to be strained by the financial and economic crises and an austere defence budget cycle, the number of warships in the area is constrained by national caveats and limited availability in theatre, and the platforms used to scramble the anti-piracy effort are largely oversized, there are many challenges for EU NAVFOR to overcome. In the coalition realm, ideas have been floated for a new, updated UN mandate, which could have its own ramifications for the EU operation – while some argue for burden-sharing by non-EU navies and a truly joint effort of EU, NATO, and national naval forces, others fear that only the lowest common denominator could be achieved by a common mandate. This is a politico-operational challenge, as has been pointed out, all too familiar to the Europeans. ⬛

*The SEA MASTER I escorted by German
naval helicopters*
[Source: EUNAVFOR]

WEST AFRICA

Domestic terrorism in Nigeria: Assessing the threat

RISK INTELLIGENCE ANALYSTS

Terrorism might be one of the lesser headaches for the hard-hit maritime sector in Nigeria, but the threat of terrorism in Nigeria is rapidly evolving and has assumed multiple forms over the last two years. A Nigerian national linked with international Islamist terrorism attempted to bring down a Detroit-bound passenger jet in December 2009. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb has claimed to be behind the kidnapping of two expatriates in Kebbi State in May 2011. Of note, domestic terrorism was first pursued on a large scale by a MEND faction around arms dealer Henry Okah. These attacks inspired the use of terrorist tactics in electoral politics in the lead-up to the April 2011 polls. However, it is domestic Islamist groups such as Boko Haram that have increasingly used bomb attacks to foment instability and increase ethno-religious tensions. Boko Haram has moved to target the international community in Nigeria and is alleged to have increasingly close ties with international Al Qaeda franchises. This article assesses this particular threat.

Overview

The religious fault lines and sectarian violence of Nigeria have led to Western concerns that the country would provide a foothold for international Islamist terrorism. Nigerian policy makers tend to claim that terrorism is 'un-Nigerian' but terrorist tactics have become increasingly used by local groups.

Nigeria is a soft target and a potential point of origin for international Islamist terrorism, as shown by the failed 2009 Christmas Day bombing of a Detroit-bound jet, the first tangible link between Nigeria and international Islamist terrorism. The choice of Lagos as a transit airport in the attempted bombing was likely related to poor airport security. For international Islamist terrorist groups, Nigeria's main appeal is as a soft target and a point of origin due to poor security. Boko Haram bomb attacks are likely to continue in the north and centre of

Nigeria and isolated attacks may occur in Lagos. High-profile locations frequently by the Nigerian elite and international visitors, such as the Abuja Hilton, are likely targets for Boko Haram.

Boko Haram is engaged in an escalating insurgent campaign against the state in the northeast of Nigeria. It has turned to terrorist tactics in this campaign: assassinating local government and police officials, and detonating improvised explosive devices, often aimed at police posts. Boko Haram has aimed to position itself as a Nigerian representative of the global jihadi movement - despite its origins in local politics - and there are allegations that the group has links with Al Qaeda affiliates as well as Al Shebab in Somalia, but the exact nature of these links remains unclear. The group is geographically based and has so far been unable to carry out attacks in the south of Nigeria, although isolated attacks may be possible.

Domestic Islamist terrorism

Domestic Islamist groups in northern Nigeria are likely to use terrorist tactics against the government; these tactics have been targeted at government and Christians in the north and centre of the country. The main actor, Boko Haram, has also been blamed for blasts in the north-east, Abuja and the Middle Belt (Jos), targeted at Christian churches, army barracks, police stations and government offices. On 26 August 2011, Boko Haram carried out a suicide car bombing of the UN building in Abuja, killing 23 people. This was the first large-scale attack against an international target, although previous bomb attacks in Abuja have also targeted locations popular with foreigners.

On 5 November 2011, the US Embassy in Abuja warned that Boko Haram could attack luxury hotels popular with foreigners and the political elite, specifically naming the Transcorp Hilton, the Sheraton and the NICON Luxury. Boko Haram is likely to persist in this target selection in the short and medium terms. Terrorist attacks by Boko Haram have been aimed at government offices and army barracks as well as bars (due to Boko Haram's views on alcohol) and churches. The aim of the attacks has been to destabilise government and foment ethno-religious tension in the already tense Middle Belt of Nigeria. The bloodiest attacks so far were directed at Christians in Jos on Christmas Eve 2010, while army

barracks were targeted on New Year's Eve and on the day of Goodluck Jonathan's inauguration.

Boko Haram has been engaged in an escalating insurgency in north-eastern Nigeria since July 2009. On 26 July 2009, the group attacked a police station in Bauchi, resulting in a security crackdown in which Boko Haram leader Mohammed Yusuf was killed (after his detention by police). Since then, Boko Haram has waged a low-level insurgent campaign mixing terrorist tactics with classic asymmetric warfare. Some 721 inmates (including hundreds of Boko Haram members) escaped in a large-scale attack on Bauchi Central Prison on 7 September 2010. On 12 October 2010, a police station in Maiduguri, Borno State, was attacked and destroyed. In the preceding month, Boko Haram members had assassinated an Islamic scholar and up to 18 police and local government officials in the vicinity of Maiduguri.

Boko Haram has used motorcycle riders in assassinations of local government and security officials and targeted Islamic scholars opposed to the sect. The main target of the Boko Haram insurgency is the local Islamic establishment in the north, closely tied in with northern traditional rule. Boko Haram is relatively poorly funded (compared to southern insurgent groups, for example), although it is alleged to have support from some northern powerbrokers unhappy with the transfer of power to a southern presidency. It is also believed by several Risk Intelligence sources to be supported with arms and fighters from Niger and Chad.

The results of the Christmas eve bombing in 2010
[Source: uncredited]

The absence of oil industry targets in the north (and by implication, a source of easy leverage) has led Boko Haram to pursue terrorist tactics by carrying out bomb attacks in the north and northeast as well as Abuja and the Middle Belt. In late 2010, Boko Haram moved to target Christian communities in Jos, the capital of Plateau State, which has a history of ethno-religious violence. At least 80 people were killed in bomb attacks directed at the Christian community on Christmas Eve and the attacks were seemingly aimed at triggering ethno-religious violence. On 20 March, a bomb detonated pre-

maturely in Jos, allegedly destined for a church. Such attacks are likely to continue to the extent Boko Haram has the capacity to carry them out.

President Goodluck Jonathan and military officers
[Source: uncredited]

Government response

On 8 June 2011, President Jonathan said that the federal government would pursue a "stick and carrot" approach to Boko Haram and the government confirmed that it was working on an amnesty plan. Boko Haram rejected the amnesty plan and on 16 June, the Police Headquarters in Abuja were hit by a bomb attack. The bomb detonated in a car that had entered a parking space adjacent to the building. Initial reports suggested that the bombing was a deliberate suicide attack (which would be a new tactical development), but there was initially little evidence to support this claim.

Boko Haram claimed the attack, which was ostensibly in response to a statement by Inspector-General of Police, Hafiz Ringim, that the police could remove Boko Haram from Nigeria in the space of ten days. The attacker reportedly followed Ringim to the Police Headquarters and he may have been the target. On 29 June, a 10pm curfew was imposed in Abuja to reduce the risk of more bomb attacks targeting the city's nightlife.

On 26 August 2011, 23 people were killed in a car bombing directed at the UN building in Garki, Abuja. The vehicle carrying the bomb managed to pass through security checkpoints to impact the building itself, a wing of which was badly damaged. Boko Haram claimed responsibility for the attack, which was the first large-scale attack primarily directed at the international community. On 18 September 2011, the State Security Service (SSS) named Mamman Nur as the alleged mastermind of the Abuja attack and offered a N25 million ransom for information leading to his arrest.

A Nigerian government panel headed by Usman Galtimari has recommended for the government to open talks with Boko Haram through the Sultan of Sokoto,

the spiritual leader of Nigeria's Muslims. However, the panel did not consult directly with Boko Haram. On 2 October 2011, a purported spokesman of the group, Abu Qaqa, stated that the release of all detained Boko Haram members was a precondition for talks and that the Sultan of Sokoto was not a credible representative. Boko Haram emerged out of local northern politics and there are indications of internal splits in its leadership. On 15 September 2011, Babakura Fugu, the brother-in-law of killed Boko Haram leader Mohammed Yusuf, met with former President Obasanjo in Maiduguri. Fugu was killed within days of this public meeting, allegedly by a faction aligned with Mamman Nur.

The international connection

Western policy makers have been concerned with the prospects of international Islamist terrorist networks establishing a foothold in Nigeria. These concerns have mainly been fuelled by religious and sectarian violence and the sizeable impoverished Muslim population in northern Nigeria. Moreover, Islamic (and Christian) missionary activities have received much international funding in recent years, increasing the risks of radicalisation and a shift to more radical interpretations of Islam. Boko Haram has increasingly sought to brand itself as an Al Qaeda affiliate and has used tactics associated with Al Qaeda, but the group's agenda appears to be mainly domestic in nature. There are – yet unverified – reports that arms from Libyan stockpiles (including man portable anti-aircraft missiles) may have been transported to northern Nigeria through the Sahel.

The failed 25 December 2009 bombing of Northwest Airlines Flight 253 was carried out by Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a Nigerian from a prominent northern family. The fact that the attack was carried out by a Muslim Nigerian who had transited through Lagos led to concerns that Nigeria was becoming linked with international Islamist terrorism. However, the connection with Nigeria was limited. Abdulmutallab appears to have been radicalised at university in London and the attack was reportedly planned from Yemen by Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

On 3 August 2011, a video was released by a group claiming to be Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The video allegedly showed a British and an Italian national that had been kidnapped in Kebbi State in the north-west of Nigeria on 12 May 2011. If verified, this would be the first time that AQIM has carried out operations in Nigeria. However, Kebbi State is bordering the Sahel region and easily infiltrated from the north.

On 31 August 2011, it was reported that a leaked intelligence report claimed that Boko Haram had received training from "Al Qaeda-affiliated groups in Afghanistan and Algeria", most notably AQIM. Previously, General Carter Ham of the US Africa Command had claimed that there were indications of links between Boko Haram and Al Qaeda groups as well as Al Shebab in Somalia. An alleged statement from a Boko Haram leader Sheikh Muhammed Abu Bakr bin Muhammed al-Shakwa in October 2010 appears to call for a jihad and pledges allegiance to AQIM, but the extent of this connection remains unclear and is likely to be closer in light of Nigeria's porous northern border. However, a perceived affiliation with Al Qaeda may serve to raise Boko Haram's domestic and international profile.

Conclusion

The sphere of operations of Boko Haram has expanded from the north-east of Nigeria to Abuja and the Middle Belt. Apart from Abuja, Boko Haram has not staged attacks in areas with significant international assets, but there is a risk that Boko Haram will be able to stage isolated attacks in the south-west as well. The absence of significant international/Western targets in that region, however, implies that the risk of Boko Haram attacking international/Western assets is limited for Nigeria overall.

Nigeria remains a country of interest to international Islamist terrorist groups. Nigeria offers a relatively easy operational environment for these groups due to police corruption and generally poor security standards. Airport and aviation security remains lax, making it an attractive point of origin for terrorist groups seeking to target international or domestic aviation. There are Western assets and targets in Abuja and Lagos, including shipping, oil & gas and offshore facilities, although security around these assets is higher. Overall, local support for and cooperation with international Islamist terrorism is likely to be limited, particularly in the south. ▪

A bombing in Maiduguri in 2009
[Source: Newstime Africa]

Selected terrorist incidents attributed to Boko Haram:

24 December 2010: Three bombs targeted at Christians in and around Jos, Plateau State, kill at least 80 people. Boko Haram claims responsibility for the bombings in the ethnically and religiously volatile state.

25 December 2010: Government officials claim to have arrested three men carrying an explosive device destined for a church in Jos, Plateau State.

31 December 2010: 11 people are killed in a bomb blast in the mammy market at the Sani Abacha Barracks in Abuja. Boko Haram claims responsibility.

20 March 2011: Two people are killed when an explosive device destined for a church detonates prematurely in Jos, Plateau State.

25 April 2011: Four bombs kill at least three people in Maiduguri in north-east Nigeria.

29 May 2011: Two people are killed as a bomb detonates in an outdoor bar in Zuba near Abuja.

29 May 2011: At least 14 people are killed and 40 wounded as three IEDs detonate at the mammy market of the 33 Artillery Brigade Barracks in Bauchi. The attack comes as Goodluck Jonathan is inaugurated.

30 May 2011: The brother of the Shehu of Borno (the second-most senior Islamic leader in Nigeria) is killed by Boko Haram.

16 June 2011: A car bomb detonates at the Police Head-quarters in Abuja and at least two people are killed. Initial reports suggest a high number of fatalities and falsely claim that the bombing was a (deliberate) suicide attack. Boko Haram claims the attack and states that it was targeted at the Inspector-General of Police, Hafiz Ringim.

20 June 2011: At least seven people are killed in bomb and gun attacks on a police station and a bank in Kankara, Katsina State.

26 June 2011: At least 25 people are reported killed in bomb attacks on outdoor bars in Maiduguri, Borno State.

26 August 2011: A suicide car bombing of the UN building in Garki, Abuja, kills 23 people. Boko Harm claims responsibility. Mamman Nur is subsequently named as the mastermind by the State Security Service (SSS).

17 September 2011: Babakura Fugu, the brother-in-law of Boko Haram leader Mohammed Yusuf (killed in July 2009), is shot dead after meeting with former President Obasanjo for talks in Maiduguri. The SSS blames the Mamman Nur faction.

16 October 2011: MP Modu Bintube is shot dead in Maiduguri, Borno State. Boko Haram is blamed by police.

4 November 2011: Military headquarters in Maiduguri, Borno State, are attacked by three suicide bombers. The building of an anti-terrorist police squad in Damaturu, Yobe State, is bombed and multiple churches set on fire with IEDs. Reports ranged from 63 to 135 killed in the coordinated attacks, which were claimed by Boko Haram.

Nigerian forces in the Delta
[Source: uncredited]

THE MIDDLE EAST

Budding and blooming: The Arab Spring and security in Syria and Libya

RISK INTELLIGENCE ANALYSTS

President Bashar al-Assad's Ba'athist regime in Syria is facing a popular and widespread challenge from the 'Syrian Street'. But the opposition movement is divided and lacks a common voice. This makes it difficult for the international community to identify and support a realistic movement opposed to Assad. Initial attempts to counter demonstrations using overwhelming force failed. The Assad regime attempted to introduce a series of so-called reforms designed to placate and divide opposition to government rule. In light of continued state violence it is clear these reforms are little more than presentational. There is little threat towards maritime operations. This article provides an overview of the current situation.

Background

President Bashar al-Assad assumed control of Syria on the death of his father Hafez al-Assad in 2000. Both men have exercised control under the State of Emergency laws, which were first introduced in 1963. Their total domination of the country has been underpinned by a well-established and often ruthless state security apparatus that enjoys a reputation for violence, torture and execution of dissident elements.

President Assad greets supporters
[Source: AFP]

In mid March 2011 a group of teenagers in Dara'a, close to the Jordanian border, posted some anti-government graffiti and demonstrated against the regime. This was the start of a serious of demonstrations that quickly spread across Syria and which initially reflected the same anti-government 'Arab Spring' mood noted elsewhere in the region. Syrian demonstrations were met with a violent reaction from the authorities. Casualties led to funerals, funerals became the catalyst for further protest, and so on.

During the initial stages of Syrian unrest the international community gave credit to Bashar al-Assad for exercising some restraining influence on state security forces. He was regarded as a reformer at heart and it was widely held that the main excesses were being perpetrated by elements of the ruling family who were using state security to pursue personal and private gain agendas. In light of the continued state crack down on protests, in which the UN assesses some 2,700 civilians have been killed, this collective international assessment is clearly disintegrating. What remains beyond doubt is that Assad and the Ba'ath Party is determined to hold power using all means available.

Assad's first reaction to the civil uprising was to blame external influence from the US, France, Lebanon and Salafist groups for being behind the demonstrations. This was implausible to both an international and Syrian domestic audience and has been abandoned as a political tactic. What appears to be emerging is a twin track approach of concession and repression.

A new Cabinet was created in government to oversee reforms focused on the liberalisation of the media, lifting of restrictions on the formation of political parties and the introduction of anti-corruption measures. In mid-April 2011 the announcement was made that the emergency laws in force since 1963 were to be lifted thus restoring the right to peaceful demonstration for the first time in a generation. What is so illustrative of the government's real intent with this measure is that the small print went on to say that gatherings still needed to be sanctioned by the Interior Ministry. In other words, the government created the conditions in which further demonstrations could be characterised as anti-reformist and therefore dealt with harshly: the precise approach that they continue to follow today.

The promised reforms turned out to be a chimera and in any case were regarded as too little too late. When accompanied by continued security operations, including the use of live ammunition against demonstrators, they are now totally mistrusted by the majority of the population.

Protests

Unlike elsewhere in the Middle East, tight restrictions on foreign media and reporting have been effectively enforced by the Assad regime. This means that definitive statistics on deaths and the state of civil unrest have been difficult to verify. But what does seem clear is that thus far violence has been 'Syrian against Syrian' with no sign of foreign institutions or businesses being deliberately targeted. The recent mass movement of Syrians to the Turkish land border has been triggered by fighting or fear of security clampdowns and is a good indication of the harsh measures that are being deployed against dissenting factions.

Protests are now widespread across the country and include disturbances at the ports of Banias and Latakia, although the littoral is no more or less prone to civil unrest than the remainder of the country. That said, in August 2011 the Sunni districts of Latakia (al-Ramleh, al-Shaab and al-Filistini) were subjected to a strong security clamp down involving the use of armoured fighting vehicles using their main armaments against housing areas. The area was also targeted by a naval bombardment from the port approaches. This resulted in the near total evacuation of the Palestinian camp at al-Raml. To date there are no reports of any disturbances to Latakia port operations. In March 2011 the port closed briefly for two days, but given the ruling Assad family's personal commercial interests in Latakia a repeat closure is thought unlikely other than in extreme circumstances.
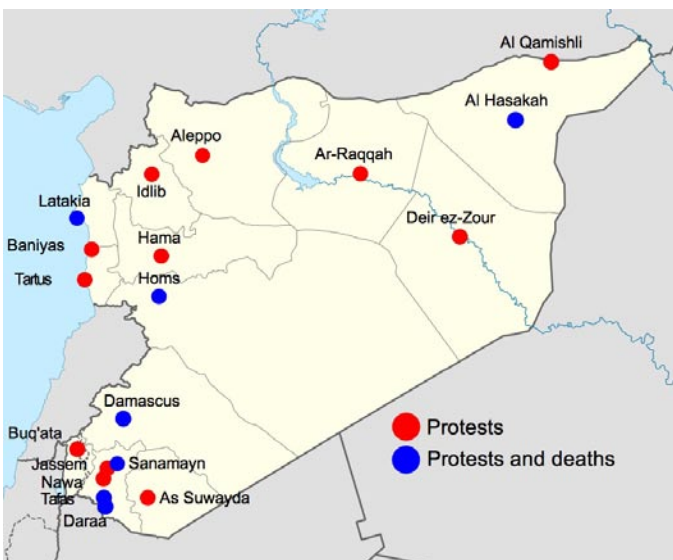
Map showing unrest in Syria
[Source: Wikimedia]

How powerful is Assad?

The Ba'ath Party clearly have no intention of performing a single leap to Western-style democracy, but neither can they do so. Assad is reliant upon the security forces in order to maintain control, and the largely Alawite officer corps have a vested interest in him remaining in power. Life under a post-Assad reformist government could be an uncomfortable proposition for a number of officials linked to former hard-line, brutalist regime. Besides, with a strong possibility that the International Criminal Court (ICC) would wish to try Assad and his lieutenants, they have no place to go and no choice but to stand and resist the assault on his regime.

President Assad remains in control of the Army, Special Forces and intelligence organisation and while this remains the case he has the means of delivering violence against protestors and areas of insurrection at a time and place of his choosing.

Protesters take to the streets
[Source: Al Jazeera]

Who are the opposition?

Besides a general call for political reform and the removal of Assad, it is not clear who the main opposition groups are within Syria and how much support each faction enjoys. Seeking to emulate the Libyan National Transitional Council the Syrian exiles in Turkey have needed two attempts to establish the Syrian National Council (SNC). It is still not clear who or what the SNC represents and the organisation is struggling to find a common voice. The result is that the SNC suffers a credibility gap both inside Syria and internationally. Within Syria the Free Syrian Army under General Riad Asaad is attempting to establish a safe haven in north Syria and win international support for a no fly zone. From this enclave they propose to launch a military campaign against Damascus.

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The fact remains that the opposition to Assad's rule is divided and lacks cohesion while state security remains largely intact. The influence of exiled Syrians and the broader diaspora are also culpable in overstating the strength of organised opposition to Assad within the country.

The international response

What remains unclear is the extent to which outside influences will play into the current situation. The UN, US, UK, EU, GCC and Syria's near neighbours have criticised Assad for his brutality and called for an end to state administered violence. There are sanctions in place against individuals and corporate bodies but this is as far as it goes. With a disunited opposition movement it is difficult for third parties to focus on where and who they should back.

The US, France and UK are already engaged in Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan, and have little appetite or capacity for further intervention in the Islamic world. That said, they have a considerable interest in the outcome in Syria and are fearful that a disintegration of the state could result in any one of a number of armed fundamentalist groups opportunistically seizing control. If Assad remains there is also the unwelcome prospect of extended Iranian influence operating in Syria as Tehran calls in the favour for materially supporting the regime.

Time is running out for the international community to do nothing. International military intervention is highly unlikely, but the UN may decide to enforce stronger trade and other diplomatic sanctions against Damascus. This could have an effect on maritime trade and the movement of ships and personnel in and out of Syria.

Outlook

The US, European and Middle East states have an interest in the outcome of the uprising in Syria. They fear any power vacuum may be filled by an Islamic fundamentalist group opposed to the West, but no party has the capacity or appetite to intervene. No foreign interests, either business or diplomatic, appear to have been specifically targeted by the demonstrators.

Spurred on by what is perceived as the success of populist uprisings in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, it seems the Syrians have an appetite to continue their protests. The inertia of facing up to a brutal police state has been overcome and for many there is nothing to lose and all to gain by continuing to push for reform. But there are big questions to answer as to the opposition's organisation, unity of purpose, strength and ability to overturn Assad. It seems any change of regime is still some way off. **S**

Assad and Qaddafi in Sirte, Libya in 2010
[Source: AP]

Libya

After a brutal civil war and 8 months of fighting in Libya, the beginning of November now presents further problems for the fledgling National Transitional Council (NTC) in that they will need to begin the election of a body charged with writing a new constitution and quickly bringing full democratic elections before internal squabbling and disputes drive the country further from stability. However, full elections are not expected until at least 2013, and this maybe too long for the country to bear, leading to further problems, anarchy and violence.

The death of Qaddafi may have brought an end to the fighting, but following this civil war, the country is awash with weapons and disparate factions each with their own agendas on establishing a power base in the post-Qaddafi Libya. The current problem is the lack of an effective police enforcement agency, and currently this is being achieved through local militias and tribal members. The problem with this has been seen in Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia, and there are certain parallels with the problems that surfaced in the Balkans in the late 1980s early 1990s, in that although the fighting may have finished, peace is by no means guaranteed. Opposition groups including the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) and other militant Islamic groups, including those that are sympathetic to the Al Qaeda franchise, will attempt to gain support in certain areas of the country. Should that support be strong, it will create further problems for any new government.

Within the country, port operations are returning to normal, and the port of Sirte, although still fragile in respects of potential outbreaks of gunfire, could be considered operational. Oil production, which recently was barely 25% of potential output, is beginning to rise and output capacity is currently approaching 500,000 barrels per day. This is still less than 33%, but the increase capacity is an encouraging. Foreign workers, who prior to the civil war underpinned the countries industry, will most certainly be required for the production to rise significantly. Many of the foreign workers in the industry were from West Africa, and during the fighting many were killed by NTC forces because they were thought to be mercenaries fighting for Qaddafi. Those that managed to escape the country may be reluctant to return to an atmosphere of intimidation and racial abuse that could turn violent.

With the oil industry key to the countries financial stability and to return the damaged infrastructure to normality, these workers will need to be encouraged to return. Arabic media continues to stir hostility towards foreign oil companies by fuelling fears of exploitation of the countries resources, and tanker operators should monitor the situation in the country to ensure that public sentiment towards the industry, especially foreign companies, is not becoming strained. For the population, fuel prices are rising fast, in part due to the largest oil refinery at Ras Lanuf being offline, which will remain so for at least the next three months.

There still remains the big question of what happens next in Libya. Some intelligence analysts are convinced that the tribal nature and long dormant rivalries between these tribes, recriminations against Qaddafi supporters may force the country into chaos and anarchy. This is of course a worst-case scenario, but the NTC will need a great deal of support from the international community and from its own people.

NATO's Operation Unified Protector officially terminated on 31 October. Navigational Warning 395/1 was cancelled within the following week but ships that intend to call at Libyan ports would be wise to contact the NATO Shipping Centre (NSC) at Northwood, UK. Mariners should also be aware that NATO naval forces continue to operate off the coast of Libya, and although the UN Embargo and Unified Protector have officially ended, vessels maybe routinely hailed by warships.

There remains a significant problem with irregular migration, with a continuous procession of small boats departing the North African coast, en-route to Europe. These vessels pose a very real threat to navigation in the region, and all vessels should be mindful of small, overcrowded vessels, often without lights, moving through shipping lanes.

Libyan ships bombed by NATO in Tripoli
[Source: Pan-African News Wire]

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