

SEPTEMBER 2023



**EU MISSIONS IN SOMALIA:
SUCCESSSES, CHALLENGES AND
FUTURE PROSPECTS**

WRITTEN BY: CLAIRE ROTH

WRITTEN BY

CLAIRE ROTH

EDITED BY

STEF CLEMENT & MIGUEL ANDRES
REYES CASTRO

SUPERVISED BY

GINEVRA BERTAMINI

Introduction

Since the overthrow of dictator Siad Barre in 1991, Somalia has been widely considered a failed state. For over three decades, the country has been afflicted by violent conflict, clan rivalries, corruption, piracy, terrorism and humanitarian disasters (Düsterhöft & Gerlach, 2013, p. 18). These issues have had significant implications for regional and global security and stability, prompting numerous international interventions. While there have been notable successes, Somalia continues to face substantial challenges towards lasting peace, security, and socio-economic development.

The European Union (EU) is one of Somalia's most prominent supporters, providing large amounts of aid (Hauck, 2023). Somalia currently hosts three EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions, more than any other country. Last year, their mandates were prolonged until 2024 (Council of the European Union, 2022). However, as Somalia's largest and most important mission, the African Union (AU) Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and its replacement, the African Union Transition Mission (ATMIS), will end that year, it is unclear what will happen with the CSDP action in Somalia after 2024 (Dessu, 2022).

This Info Flash will evaluate the situation and discuss the successes, challenges and prospects of the EU missions in Somalia. The first section will provide the historical context, including the most critical international interventions. The second section will outline the three EU-led missions in Somalia: the European Training Mission (EUTM) Somalia, the EU Naval Force (EUNAFVOR) Somalia, and the EU Capacity Building Missions (EUCAP) Somalia. The third section will discuss the achievements and difficulties of the EU-led missions. Finally, the last section presents a conclusion and explores possible scenarios for the future of EU missions in Somalia.

Historical Context

For a long time, Somalia has been plagued by ongoing conflicts, political instability and lawlessness. This situation can be traced back to the overthrow of dictator Siad Barre in 1991, which created a power vacuum that persists today. The absence of a stable central government has allowed for the emergence of numerous paramilitary groups, clan rivalries, and local warlords competing for control over Somalia's regions (Düsterhöft & Gerlach, 2013, p. 18). The country's deep humanitarian crisis is a combination of violence, corruption, piracy and terrorism, along with famine and frequent droughts. This resulted in approximately 1.5 million internally displaced people and 1.5 million people being exiled (Rodríguez, 2016, p. 771). As a failed state, Somalia lacks the cohesion and rule of law to effectively deal with these severe crises. Moreover, the international community's policies have faced criticism for making different errors, such as applying universal templates on Somalia without considering the political and cultural context (Menkhaus, 2014, p. 162).

Due to its geographical location in the Horn of Africa, Somalia is considered relevant for global stability. Therefore, numerous international initiatives have been ongoing to support Somalia's quest for stability and effective governance (Rodríguez, 2016, p. 771). In the early 1990s, interventions by the United States and the United Nations failed to re-establish order and were quickly terminated due to significant casualties among international troops (Oksamytna, 2011, p. 100). In 2007, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) was deployed. With over 20,000 military and police personnel worldwide, AMISOM has been the largest Somalia mission to date (Arconada-Ledesma, 2021, p. 5). Its main tasks involve providing security, training Somali security forces and creating conditions for political and economic development. In April 2022, AMISOM was replaced by the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). This mission will remain operational until the end of 2024, after which all responsibilities will be transferred to the Somali Security Forces (Dessu, 2022).

The EU is the largest donor to AMISOM/ATMIS, providing €2.4 billion since 2007 (Council of the European Union, 2023). In addition, the EU financially sustains other Somalian projects and supplies humanitarian aid. Its contributions have exceeded €4.3 billion since 2009 (General Secretariat of the Council, 2023). Brussels recognised the threat of instability in a geopolitically important area like the Horn of Africa. However, the EU's main reasons for providing aid to Somalia were the dangers of piracy and terrorism. Specifically, the Union's primary maritime trade route to the Indian Ocean was affected by acts of piracy in the Gulf of Aden, and the Member States' access to fishery resources in the Western Indian Ocean was limited by instability in the Somalian waters. Moreover, terrorist organisations like al-Shabaab received a substantial portion of the funds raised from acts of piracy. The instability on the ground also presented the potential danger of Somalia becoming a haven for these groups (Arconada-Ledesma, 2021, pp. 3-6). As a result, the EU has launched a range of CSDP missions in Somalia.

EU-led Missions in Somalia

The EU has three ongoing CSDP missions in Somalia: the EU Training Mission (EUTM) Somalia, the EU Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) Somalia, and the EU Capacity Building Missions (EUCAP) Somalia.

European Training Mission (EUTM) Somalia

EUTM Somalia is a military mission launched in February 2010. Its main objective was to train Somali troops to support the newly created Somali National Army (SNA). EU trainers taught basic fighting and specialised skills such as urban warfare techniques, countering explosive devices and medical evacuation (Rodríguez, 2016, p. 771). An essential part of the EUTM is its cooperation with AMISOM. At the outset, the aim was to develop forces that could collaborate with AMISOM, thus allowing peacekeepers to concentrate on fighting al-Shabaab. In the longer term, establishing a proficient Somali security force became crucial for AMISOM's exit strategy.

The mission implements its mandate through a three-pillar approach that, besides training, also focuses on mentoring and providing strategic advice (Council of the European Union, 2022). The advisory activities started in 2014 and primarily involve collaboration with senior Somali security officials (Williams & Ali, 2020, p. 6).

EU Naval Force (EUNAFVOR) Somalia

The military operation EUNAFVOR Somalia, also known as Operation Atalanta, was established in response to the growing threat of piracy off the coast of Somalia. Launched in 2008, it was the EU's first mission in Somalia and its first-ever maritime operation (Oksamytna, 2011, p. 101). Initially, the primary objective was to monitor the waters and protect merchant vessels and World Food Programme ships delivering aid to Somalia (Arconada-Ledesma, 2021, p. 6). Operation Atalanta since monitors fishing activities beyond Somalia's territorial waters and assists other EU CSDP missions and international organisations dedicated to enhancing maritime security and capacity in the region (Council of the European Union, 2022).

EU Capacity Building Missions (EUCAP) Somalia

EUCAP Somalia, previously known as EUCAP Nestor, was launched in 2012. Its main objective is to assist Somalia in developing and enhancing its maritime security and law enforcement capabilities (Oksamytna, 2022). It does so by supporting the regional and federal authorities in developing legislation, bolstering the criminal justice system in the maritime domain and providing policy advice to the Somali Police Force and the Somali Ministry of Internal Security (Council of the European Union, 2022). The work revolves around training and advising coastal and military agents, judges, prosecutors, ministries and forensic experts, among other tasks. This mission has a civilian character and complements the other two EU military missions (Arconada-Ledesma, 2021, p. 7).

Successes and Challenges

In operational terms, EUTM Somalia's impact was minimal until recently. There was no clear link between the training efforts and field operations by the SNA due to several factors. Firstly, the mission carried out a predominantly technical and tactical agenda in an environment where the political dynamics within Somalia's security sector did not favour the development of a professional national security force (Williams & Ali, 2020, pp. 9-10). Three decades of state collapse and complex clan dynamics created a difficult context with an asymmetry of interests between the international community and the Somali authorities. Accordingly, there was no consensus on the national security architecture, and key Somali elites lacked the political will to establish national security forces (Williams, 2020, p. 388). Secondly, EUTM Somalia lacked the resources and mandate to equip and pay its trainees, which limited their potential effectiveness and diminished the mission's political influence. Finally, the mission lacked a field mentoring capacity. The narrow focus on training forced the EU to run a 'train and release' program (Williams & Ali, 2020, p. 10).

However, significant progress has been made since 2016. In 2019, evidence showed a direct correlation between EUTM Somalia training and the deployment of operational units in stabilisation and offensive operations (Williams & Ali, 2020, p. 12). By August 2020, EUTM Somalia had trained 6,891 SNA personnel (Williams & Ali, 2020, p. 3). Additionally, the mission's success in providing human rights training, recruiting female trainers and soldiers, and employing a quota-based selection of the Somali population indicates the EU's commitment to engaging with complex and multidisciplinary realities (Arconada-Ledesma, 2021, p. 8). In political terms, the presence of EUTM Somalia enhanced the EU's credibility as a consistent and legitimate partner to Somalia and the African Union (Williams & Ali, 2020, p. 8).

EUNAVFOR Somalia is generally considered a great success since it addresses the issues it was designed to tackle. In its first two years, the operation witnessed a rise in piracy attacks, followed by a consistent decrease from the end of 2011 (Rodríguez, 2016, p. 776). Between 2015 and 2016, there were no reported piracy attacks on foreign ships. Hence, Operation Atalanta successfully secured the Indian Ocean waters, facilitated the delivery of humanitarian aid, halted attacks on trade routes, and ensured the safe resumption of fishing (Arconada-Ledesma, 2021, p. 7).

EUCAP Somalia complements the achievements because this capacity-building operation creates local solutions for maritime surveillance. Reports indicate that the mission significantly improved the situation (Rodríguez, 2016, p. 776). The mission successfully provided training, training facilities and equipment in Somalia's three main ports, assisted in constructing the Somali Police Force's maritime unit Headquarters, enhanced the Somali Maritime Administration's capacity, and supported the adoption and integration of international maritime conventions into Somalia's legal framework. Moreover, the mission increased the interoperability of Somali Security Forces and promoted police development (Oksamytna, 2022, p. 1).

Overall, Somalia has made significant progress in its national leadership, economic development, state capacity and security in the last decade. However, the country still faces considerable challenges in achieving full autonomy. The missions in Somalia have not triggered systemic change. The fact that the EU's objectives have not yet been fully achieved is evident in the continuous need for mission renewal. Despite considerable investments, the returns have been significantly lower than hoped (Hauck, 2023). Furthermore, some critics argue that the missions employ an ineffective top-down approach because they were imposed without proper negotiation with local stakeholders. Piracy is not the main concern of Somali citizens, so maritime operations would primarily align with the EU's priorities and interests (Arconada-Ledesma, 2021, p. 10).

Conclusion and Future Prospects

With three operations, Somalia currently hosts more EU CSDP missions than any other country. However, the effectiveness of these missions varies. They have addressed mainly specific issues they were designed to tackle and have complemented other operations in the country, particularly AMISOM/ATMIS. Nevertheless, Somalia is still regarded as a failed state and encounters considerable challenges in achieving lasting peace, security and socio-economic development. This raises questions about whether the limited outcomes have been worth the EU's significant investments. While the missions' effectiveness improved over the past decade and their mandates have been prolonged until 31 December 2024, Somalia's largest mission will conclude in 2024. The uncertain future of EU missions in Somalia leaves several possible scenarios to consider:

- The first option is to extend the mission's mandates beyond 2024. Supporters of EUNAVFOR and EUCAP Somalia highlight the decline in piracy attacks, and supporters of EUTM Somalia argue that this mission has finally bridged the gap between training and operational deployments after a long period of little operational impact (Williams & Ali, 2020, p. 17). In this year's Council Conclusions on Somalia, the Council of the European Union reaffirmed the 'EU's commitment to its long-standing partnership with Somalia and willingness to deepen its strategic cooperation'. The EU would 'continue to mobilise its entire toolbox in support of Somalia, including through CSDP missions' (General Secretariat of the Council, 2023, p. 1).
- The second option is to reform and/or scale up the mission(s). For example, EUTM Somalia could increase the number of trainees and training activities, use a more diverse curriculum, or include field mentoring. This way, the mission could become more valuable (Williams & Ali, 2020, p. 17). Moreover, with the conclusion of AMISOM/ATMIS, the Somali security forces might need more assistance. The EU already agreed to gradually increase support in 2023-2024 to accompany the security transition (General Secretariat of the Council, 2023, p. 5).
- The final option is to terminate one or more of the EU-led missions in Somalia. While they have contributed to the decline of piracy and decreased influence of al-Shabaab, Somalia is still in a state of chaos. Some argue for a regional solution, suggesting that the EU cannot facilitate systemic change, especially after the exit of AMISOM/ATMIS. Therefore, the minimal operational impact of EUTM Somalia may not be worth the invested resources. Nevertheless, experts are concerned that the withdrawal of the international community would lead to more problems and the re-emergence of piracy (Arconada-Ledesma, 2011, pp. 10-11; Williams & Ali, 2020, pp. 17-18). Another suggested solution is to maintain the EU missions that target the symptoms of Somalia's instability, namely piracy and terrorism, until longer-term solutions are identified (Düsterhöft & Gerlach, 2013, p. 22).

In conclusion, making predictions about Somalia's future is neither realistic nor feasible due to its dependence on numerous factors (Hirsch, 2018, p. 149). The prospects of the EU-led missions in Somalia largely depend on developments on the ground, especially the effects of AMISOM/ATMIS' withdrawal. For instance, will the Somali National Army be strong enough to keep al-Shabaab suppressed or will Somalia become a second Afghanistan? The EU must continue monitoring the situation and assessing Somalia's needs.

References

- Arconada-Ledesma, P. (2021). European Union's Mission in Somalia. Ten Years of Successes and Failures (2008-2018). *Analele Universitatii Din Oradea - Relatii Internationale Si Studii Europene*, XIII, 23–36. <https://doi.org/10.58603/XTMC4724>.
- Council of the European Union. (2022, December 12). Operations ATALANTA, EUTM Somalia and EUCAP Somalia: mandates extended for two years [Press Release]. Consilium. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/12/12/operation-atalanta-eutm-somalia-and-eucap-somalia-mandates-extended-for-two-years/>.
- Council of the European Union. (2023, March 2). EU support to Somalia: Council approves further support under the European Peace Facility to the Somali National Army and to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS)[Press release]. Consilium. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/03/02/eu-support-to-somalia-council-approves-further-support-under-the-european-peace-facility-to-the-somali-national-army-and-to-the-african-union-transition-mission-in-somalia-atmis/>.
- Dessu, M.K. (2022, 29 March). Is the AU mission in Somalia changing in name only? ISS Today. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/is-the-au-mission-in-somalia-changing-in-name-only>.
- Düsterhöft, I.K. & Gerlach, A.I. (2013). The Successes and Failures of the Interventions of the European Union, the African Union and Neighbouring Powers in Somalia. *Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG*, 31(1), 18–23. <https://doi.org/10.5771/0175-274x-2013-1-18>.
- General Secretariat of the Council. (2023, June 26). Council Conclusions on Somalia. Consilium. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11057-2023-INIT/en/pdf>.
- Hauck, V. (2023, June 22). New hopes for Somalia: Reflections on the EU's continued support in a fragile context. European Centre for Development Policy Management. <https://ecdpm.org/work/new-hopes-somalia-reflections-eus-continued-support-fragile-context>.
- Hirsch, J.L. (2018). Peacemaking in Somalia: AU and UN peace operations. In Hirsch, J.L. *The Palgrave Handbook of Peacebuilding in Africa* (pp. 137–151). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-62202-6_8.
- Menkhaus, K. (2014). State Failure, State-Building, and Prospects for a “Functional Failed State” in Somalia. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 656(1), 154–172. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716214547002>.
- Oksamytna, K. (2011). The European Union Training Mission in Somalia and the Limits of Liberal Peacebuilding: Can EUTM Contribute to Sustainable and Inclusive Peace? *The International Spectator*, 46(4), 97–113. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2011.628100>.

References

Oksamytna, K. (2022). European Union Capacity Building Mission in Somalia (EUCAP Somalia): The European Union's civilian mission in Somalia celebrates its 10th anniversary. *Istituto Affari Internazionali*. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09718>.

Rodríguez, J.F. (2016). Security and development: the intervention of the European Union in Somalia. *Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, 770–782. https://www.ieee.es/en/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2016/DIEEEEO29-2016_UnionEuropea_SOMALIA_ENGLISH_JoaquinFerro.pdf.

Williams. (2020). Building the Somali National Army: Anatomy of a failure, 2008-2018. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 43(3), 366–391. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2019.1575210>.

Williams, P.D. & Ali, H.Y. (2020) The European Union Training Mission in Somalia: An Assessment. [Sipri Background Paper]. *Stock International Peace Research Institute*. https://sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/bp_2011_eutm_somalia_3.pdf.