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THE EUROPEAN UNION AND MARITIME SECURITY: ORIGINS, DEVELOPMENTS AND LATEST TRENDS

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INTRODUCTION[i]

It is clear that in the last decade, one has witnessed the 'maritime turn' of the European Union (EU). Maritime issues have gained increasing space on the EU's agenda pertaining to the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). This has led the EU to evolve as a maritime security power, an emerging status that has been perceived and recognised by other important states and organizations such as China, India, United Nations (PEJSOVA, 2019; RIDDERVOLD, 2018; KLASSEK; SET; LUKASZUK, 2020). At the same time, formally speaking, the Union has declared and described itself as a global maritime security provider in its speeches and strategic documents (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, 2014; EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION, 2016).

Regarding its evolution as a maritime power, the Union has assumed responsibility for the sustainable management of the oceans and the enforcement to the standards of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to promote stable regional maritime orders. But the growing presence of the EU in the maritime security area and projection of its maritime interests have evolved within a context in which access to global maritime goods is increasingly limited and threatened. Human activities have caused a virtually unsustainable management of marine resources and non-state actors have interrupted important trade flows. At the same time, the emergence and/or consolidation of other maritime powers like China, Russia, Brazil has created an environment of greater competition over the control of territorial seas, transforming the "geostrategic maritime balance" (BEHR; AALTOLA; BRATTBERG, 2013, p. 03).

Therefore, the EU has strengthened its course of action to address asymmetric maritime security challenges and competition for influence and resources. The EU has largely adopted a normative approach, with this being reflected on the use of diplomatic tools such as cooperation agreements and active participation in multilateral forums (GERMOND, 2015a). The maritime dimension of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) has been structured around a combination of civil and military resources. Here, the EU has been promoting its maritime actorness by means of consolidating a multilateral maritime architecture or, as referred by the Global Strategy

for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS) of 2016, "maritime multilateralism". To this end, it has explored the existing structures of international maritime governance, while contributing with its normative approach in order to "firm up the EU's position as a global leader in sound maritime governance" (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2014), as observed by Maria Damanaki, former Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries.

That being said, more recently, the European Commission led by Ursula van der Leyen has stressed the need for the EU to adopt a geopolitical outlook in dealing in the realm of its external action- by describing the newly formed Commission as a 'geopolitical Commission'. In the same vein, in his address to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, on February 11, 2020, the High Representative, Josep Borrell, stated that "we must relearn the language of power and conceive of Europe as a top-tier geostrategic actor" (BORRELL, 2020).

This study aims to analyse the development of the maritime dimension of the CFSP and how this has contributed to the emerging role of the EU as a maritime security provider. This analysis will cover the period between 2007 and 2020. In 2007, the European Commission launched the Communication on an Integrated Maritime Policy that has inaugurated the endorsement of a holistic and comprehensive approach to the maritime domain. This policy supports collective and interactive actions regarding the social-economic development of coastal regions and the implementation of maritime governance (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2007). On the other hand, the year of 2020 saw the launching of the International Ocean Governance Forum and the EU Blue Economy Report. Furthermore, it was historically marked by the withdrawal of the UK from the EU at the end of January 2020, which confronted the EU with additional security-related intricate issues – still pending at the time of the writing of this chapter. Considering this country's leverage as one of the principal maritime powers and naval actors within the EU (LARSEN, 2020) and leader of the 'Atlanticist' group since its accession in 1973, this unprecedented scenario will surely have an impact in the maritime dimension of the European security, in general, and the future development of the EU's maritime security strategy and role (FLYNN, 2016).

The present chapter starts by focusing on the maritime challenges and opportunities facing the EU at the 2020s. It then proceeds with an analysis of the EU's evolution in the domain of maritime security that gives attention to the military and civilian missions conducted under the aegis of CSDP. Here the purpose is to outline the EU's main developments in maritime security as mirrored in official documents like the Integrated Maritime Policy (2007); Blue Growth Strategy (2012) and Maritime Security Strategy (2014). Also, it identifies the maritime instance in which the EU has showed greater proactivity and space to engage and consolidate itself as an influential player in maritime security. The final section discusses the types of approaches that the EU has employed to consolidate its position as a provider of maritime security and the principal trends that

have unfolded against the background of the EUGS and the new geopolitical outlook of the European Commission. The chapter concludes that in the context of an increasingly competitive maritime environment, characterised by strategic rivalries and non-military threats, the EU has detected within the framework of maritime governance an opportunity to advance as a global maritime security provider.

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND MARITIME SECURITY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The multiplication of maritime challenges and mounting competition over energy resources and seapower has raised European concerns whilst revealing its somewhat vulnerable position in global maritime trade. This has moved the EU to look more seriously and strategically at the sea and build up a maritime foreign policy agenda designed to ensure the "security of access" to the oceans and thus, to be able to consolidate its power projection on the international stage (BEHR; AALTOLA; BRATTBERG, 2013, p.02). In order to understand the EU's choices in the domain of maritime security, it is important to outline not only the maritime challenges that confront the EU, but also those aspects which can be equated with opportunities for the organization to reinforce its distinctiveness in a rapidly changing world.

The sea is a geographical limit with significant weight in the historical composition of European borders. Currently, the EU coast is approximately 68,000 km long and borders the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans, the Black, Baltic, and Mediterranean seas. The overseas territories of the member states are also European maritime extensions[ii] (EUROCID, 2020). Despite the security risks adjacent to its maritime margins, the Union exercises relative control over them. The EU has developed an operational and institutional structure which involves the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), the Frontex, an information exchange system called Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE), a maritime surveillance project (MARSUR), and a voluntary mobilization of naval forces that supports its maritime territorial defence (GERMOND, 2015a).

The sea has proved to be a vital resource for various sectors of the European economy. The EU's exclusive economic zone is the largest in the world, covering about 20 million km² (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2017). This area comprises a diversified marine ecosystem that may host up to 48 000 species. The EU's oceanic wealth and extent allows for potential exploration. Regarding the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), its maritime regions produce about 40%. In the energy arena, most of the EU's oil and natural gas production takes place offshore in the Mediterranean, North, Adriatic, and Black seas (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2020b). However, this is not enough to supply its domestic demand, which makes the Union dependent on imported

energy that occurs mainly by sea transport. In addition, the EU stands out for being the world's fifth largest producer of fisheries and aquaculture and its maritime tourism may produce about 183 billion in gross value added (EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AGENCY, 2020). Thus, the EU embraces the challenge of ensuring a sustainable Blue Growth strategy to increase its competitiveness in the global market.

That being said, the sea is a fertile space for the emergence of threats to European interests. Given its geographical position and long coastline, the EU has been particularly exposed to external maritime threats. Near its maritime margins, the Union has been considerably exposed to irregular immigration and the practice of cross-border organized crime. The political instability in the Middle East and North Africa resulted in an increase in the flow of refugees and immigrants to Europe. And the Mediterranean Sea is one of the main transit routes (RIDDERVOLD, 2018). At the same time, maritime transport has been used for global cocaine trafficking to the European market. The drug has been shipped from Latin America departing from Brazil, Venezuela, and Ecuador across the Atlantic Ocean, with the main recipient countries being Spain, Portugal, Belgium, and the Netherlands (EMCDDA; EUROPOL, 2019). Thus, the EU has been facing the challenge not only of controlling the immigration and combatting the illicit maritime drug trafficking, but also acting at the root of cross-border issues.

Furthermore, European concerns further encompass areas outside its regional maritime order. The incidences of maritime terrorism and piracy in other regions of the world impact, direct or indirectly, on the EU's interests. To be sure, European ships are also vulnerable to acts of piracy, armed robbery and organized maritime crime, especially in the Western Indian Ocean, Gulf of Guinea, and Southeast Asia. These regions are considered strategic for the EU; they constitute important trade and communication routes that are regularly interrupted by these illegal activities (EUROPEAN UNION, 2018). Overall, this challenging picture has led the EU to mobilize efforts to project maritime security beyond its borders.

The sea is often seen as an inhospitable, lawless, and ungoverned space, circumstances that were at the origins of numerous environmental tragedies, of which no one was held accountable. The EU member states have been involved in various maritime incidents. One example of this was the sinking of the oil tanker Erika, in 1999, which caused the leakage of a significant amount of fuel off the French coast. Later, in 2002, there was a similar occurrence with the tanker Prestige near Spain, which resulted in an even worse economic and marine damage (THÉBAULT, 2004). Also, the EU has been adversely affected by reports of large-scale contamination in the regional seas by synthetic substances and heavy metals: 96% of the contaminated area is located in the Baltic Sea, followed by 91% in the Black Sea and 87% in the Mediterranean (EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AGENCY, 2019). These circumstances pollute the marine habitat, threatening the lives of species

and the livelihood of European fishermen. Several species in European seas are at risk of extinction (e.g., the Iberian sardine, Mediterranean hake, and Eastern Baltic cod). Moreover, 40% and 87% of fish stocks in the Atlantic and Mediterranean, respectively, have been exploited in an unsustainable way (MADINA, 2019). Against this background, the EU's major challenge is to align consistently the goals of the Blue Economy with the UNCLOS rules and increase the compliance and enforcement of this regulatory framework.

The sea is also a competitive arena within which the EU has striven to safeguard its diverse interests. In recent years, emerging powers like Brazil, China and Russia have improved their naval capabilities and maritime strategies to control access to resources and areas thereby fostering the phenomenon of "territorialization of the seas" (BEHR; AALTOLA; BRATTBERG, 2013, p.04). As a result, the trend is that of an increasing overlapping of interests in the maritime area. The EU is a paradigmatic example given the expansion of its influence in other maritime regions of the world. For instance, since 1990, the Union's presence in the Black Sea has grown considerably due to enlargement policies towards the East and the implementation of neighbourhood agreements, notably with the former Soviet republics. This development brought about a "clash of neighbourhoods" and ensuing tension with Russia. The Black Sea is crucial for European security in terms of alternative routes to energy transport (FLENLEY, 2008). And Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, which favoured the country's access to the Black Sea and the deployment of its fleets, has become source of deep concern for the EU.

Besides the Black Sea, the Straits of Malacca, the Gulfs of Guinea, and Aden have emerged as potential areas for the expansion of the EU's external influence. On the other hand, the Arctic has acquired a growing geopolitical value considering its still unexplored energy resources and the opening of new maritime routes, as its ice melts rapidly. Consequently, the glacial territory has become yet another arena of geopolitical competition among major powers, notably Russia, China, and United States. Being aware of this, the EU has been implementing an Arctic-oriented policy based on a moderate and participatory approach in the fora (ØSTHAGEN, 2019).

Lastly, the sea is an opportunity for the EU to project its 'model power' founded on fundamental values and principles as well time-tested institutions (FERREIRA-PEREIRA, 2012). The transnational nature of global maritime threats has increasingly demanded coordinated responses from international actors. Thus, as part of its evolution as a maritime power, the Union has made large investments in cooperation arrangements at all levels: bilateral, sub-regional and multilateral (RIDDERVOLD, 2018). Taken together, these dynamic challenges emerging at and from sea have fuelled the EU's growing visible role in international maritime governance.

THE EUROPEAN UNION´S EMERGENCE AS MARITIME SECURITY ACTOR: ORIGINS AND PROGRESS

The EU has built up a set of policies, approaches and initiatives that have gradually embodied its evolution as a maritime actor. Largely, such evolution has gained expression within CFSP/CSDP and a 'maritime turn' has occurred as a result. This section will focus on the conditions and drivers that have generated such a 'turn' while stressing the major milestones that substantiate the progress made since 2007 regarding the maritime dimension of the CSDP.

As mentioned earlier, the EU has been dealing with a variety of challenges in the domain of maritime security since the beginning of 2000s. Nonetheless, such challenges and ensuing concerns were largely overlooked in the European Security Strategy (ESS) approved in 2003, which was particularly taken up by the 9/11 security implications that converted transnational terrorism in the overriding threat (EUROPEAN COUNCIL, 2003). Although the first strategic document signalled the EU's willingness to take up growing responsibilities within the international security, it only addressed maritime security issues in the broadest sense and ascribed the sea little relevance to the European security (GERMOND, 2011). More concretely, the ESS made a brief mention of piracy as part of organized crime, signalling the Mediterranean and the Black Sea as strategic areas. It also acknowledged the EU's interests in the Mediterranean, which call for more European engagement with the partners in the region (EUROPEAN COUNCIL, 2003; GERMOND, 2011). When it comes to CSDP operations, these relied initially on military ground assets and were limited in scale which led to precarious EU's involvement in the maritime domain and little use of naval assets (GERMOND; SMITH, 2009).

The advent of environmental tragedies (e.g., Erika and Prestige) and other maritime crimes close to European waters like drug and human trafficking and contamination was a true eye-opener to the European Commission's that promoted an internal debate on the matter. Initially, the EU proposed the creation of the European Maritime Safety Agency, which became operational in 2003, and monitors the application of maritime rules. After, the awareness of the EU to the maritime domain was reflected in the publication, in June 2006, of the Green Paper entitled "Towards a Future Maritime Policy for the Union: A European vision for the oceans and seas". While conveying a future comprehensive EU's maritime policy, the document emphasized the vital role played by the sea in the provision of energy, food and economic prosperity for European countries and their citizens. It also identified the main threats in and from the sea that have affected fishermen's livelihoods, commercial transport, maritime tourism and the risks of environmental degradation and reduction of biodiversity (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2006).

Discussions over the Green Paper made it possible to proceed to the publication, in October 2007, of a Blue Book that launched an Integrated Maritime Policy for the EU. The latter adopted a holistic, integrated, global, cooperative and intersectoral approach to address maritime affairs and deal with challenges at and from sea in a globalized and more competitive context. The guidelines outlined for the Union are to exploit the potential of the seas in a sustainable way, as long as the actions and norms of the member states are coordinated with the European institutions. The document stressed the need for different areas and political actors to be integrated and to coexist with an inter-sectoral governance framework capable of promoting effective maritime surveillance (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2007).

Along these lines, the EU's maritime strategic thinking was initially inspired by "a global concept of the marine environment" (SUÁREZ-DE VIVERO; RODRÍGUEZ MATEOS, 2014, p.70) and conceived on the basis of an "economic-environmental-social triangle" (SILVEIRA, 2019, p. 271) as a corollary of the sustainable development paradigm. The idea was to boost the maritime industry and other economic sectors linked to the sea in order to obtain growth in coastal regions, provide employment and promote subsequently the populations' well-being (SILVEIRA, 2019). This triangular approach reflected the EU's growing role in sustainable resource management, in the protection of the marine environment and the compliance with blue growth. According to Germond (2015a, p.85), under the umbrella of the Integrated Maritime Policy, the EU seems to act in such a way as if it was "protecting the sea".

The Union's initial approach to maritime security was mainly driven by environmental and economic considerations derived from socio-economic vulnerabilities arising from the maritime domain. Thus, security-related concerns seemed to be treated as a second order nature. As of 2007, however, successive piracy incidents in the Gulf of Aden - a region that represented more than 80% of Europe's maritime trade (UNITED STATES, 2008) - moved the EU to incorporate progressively security efforts into its maritime approach and to adopt a more proactive stance on maritime security issues. Indeed, interference with European general maritime trade and the particular interests of European fishermen made the EU to recognize that the security of the maritime environment constituted a fundamental element to ensure the continuity of the flow of economic activities (SILVEIRA, 2019); and its Blue Growth policy needed to be aligned to the stability of the oceans. Eventually, the deterioration of security conditions related to increased piracy in the Gulf of Aden, especially along the coast of Somalia, in 2008, prompted the EU to launch its first naval operation under the aegis of the CSDP - the European Union Naval Force (EU NAVFOR), also known as Atalanta. As stated by Germond and Smith (2009), this was also the first operation aiming directly "at defending a core interest of its member states, namely, maritime trade and the freedom of the seas" (GERMOND; SMITH, 2009, p 107).

According to Germond and Smith (2009, p.573) until the launching of operation Atalanta, no significant naval operation had been carried out within the realm of security and defence. The EU had adopted a passive role while other actors like NATO took the lead in the field of maritime operations. That being said, it should be pointed out that in the sequence of the 1999 Helsinki European Council, political and military leaders engaged in discussions about the role of naval forces for the projection of the EU's seapower. In 2004, the adoption of EU Headline Goal 2010 revealed the importance of developing self-sustainable strategic capabilities, and the relevance of sealift and amphibious missions. Moreover, the military further defended the use of naval forces for deterrence and diplomacy (GERMOND; SMITH, 2009). This conception of naval diplomatic role was reinforced in the 'EU Maritime Dimension Study' of 2005, mandated by the Council that recommended a Maritime Rapid Response Mechanism.

Atalanta was one of the first international fleets deployed in the Gulf of Aden. Initially, its mission was designed to escort supply ships from the UN World Food Program (WFP) destined for Somalia. But, later, Atalanta was also recognized for its role in policing the seas against acts of piracy and illegal fishing and supporting law enforcement around the Horn of Africa (LARSEN, 2019). This EU's behaviour evinced what Germond (2015a, p.73) defines as "securing the sea" since it encompassed activities directed at combatting transnational and non-military maritime threats in order to ensure security on land. So, the EU not only engaged itself in the sustainable management of maritime assets, but also in concrete security efforts to promote safe oceans and seas.

Operation Atalanta has played a dynamic role in transforming the reality of CSDP missions, previously bounded by Petersberg traditional tasks[iii], and in enhancing the EU's international visibility as a security actor (LARSEN, 2019). While foreseeing the possibility "to deter, prevent, and repress acts of piracy" (GERMOND; SMITH, 2009, p. 573), its original mandate, has allowed to go beyond peacekeeping operations and make use of naval diplomacy by building ties with third parties, namely NATO and United States. In the civil sphere, Atalanta has supported the training of law enforcement agencies and sought to improve maritime security infrastructure so that local institutions can adequately deliberate on maritime crimes, in accordance with human rights.[iv]

Growing concerns with piracy and its negatives economic effects had a clear bearing on the drafting of the Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy approved by the European Council, in December 2008. This second strategic document, which became complementary of the EES, recognized formally piracy as a global threat whilst identifying possible disputes over maritime zones and the need to strengthen maritime surveillance. As such, it broadened the EU's outlook regarding the domain of maritime security so that its role could become "more effective and visible around the world" (EUROPEAN COUNCIL, 2008, p.02).

However, taking piracy as a security concern only tends to offer a provisional resolution and neglect broader social opportunity policies, job prospects and economic incentives to keep criminals out of these illicit activities. According to Winn and Lewis (2017, p.03), "while the EU strategy is based upon both land and maritime solutions, land-based measures aimed at stabilization have been the weaker side of the equation and require further thought and investment". A step in that direction was taken in 2009, with the launch of the Critical Maritime Routes (CMR) programme, which aimed at increasing its visibility and extend the Union's reach in terms of maritime presence. The CMR comprises a range of projects conceived to tackle maritime insecurities in the most critical regions of the world, where trade, fishing and transport had been particularly affected. Geographically speaking, it has featured the Indian Ocean, the Gulf of Guinea, and Southeast Asia as the main routes of communication where European interests have been hampered by cross-border threats. The EU has formalized cooperation agreements to support local operational capabilities, to build a common understanding of maritime security and develop a common framework for ocean governance (EUROPEAN UNION, 2018). This development signalled another important evolution of the CFSP/CSDP' maritime dimension since the EU no longer focused exclusively on its regional maritime security, but also endeavoured to project security beyond its regional order.

The gradual advances within the maritime dimension of CFSP called for a more coordinated positioning and vision. Not unnaturally, therefore, the year 2014 witnessed the publication of the EU's Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) which attempts to respond to a complex international maritime security context in which the Union struggles to assert as a credible and influential player. The EUMSS embraces a comprehensive definition of maritime security not limited to issues of naval strategy and military power (SIEBELS, 2017). The EU presents a "comprehensive, cross-sectoral, cross-border, coherent and cost-efficient" approach, one which is in line with its long-cherished values of the rule of law, democracy, peace, and human rights. This maritime interface allows the EU to combine internal and external security aspects, as well as civilian and military instruments within the framework of operations to respond to both traditional and non-traditional military threats (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, 2014).

Furthermore, the EUMSS recognizes that the challenges stemming from maritime security and the international maritime order are best addressed through multilateral instruments and processes. The Strategy encourages cooperation agreements with international partners inspired by "maritime multilateralism", which also contributes to the dissemination of the EU standards and vision. In addition, it expands the areas considered strategic for the EU to encompass the Black Sea, the Mediterranean, the Baltic Sea and the North Sea as well as the Arctic and Atlantic Ocean. Overall, the EUMSS outlines a set of coherent guidelines for engaging EU proactivity and presence in other functional and geographic areas (GERMOND; GERMOND-DURET, 2016).

The dramatic migrants and refugee's crisis of 2015 resulting from increasing instability in the Middle East and North Africa led the EU to integrate irregular migration-related issues in its maritime security portfolio. To be sure, the increased flow of refugees and immigrants to Europe prompted the EU to launch the EUNAVFOR Med naval operation (also known as Sophia) in the summer of that year. At first, the mandate involved the deployment of naval patrols to collect information and monitor human smuggling practices, as well as search and seizure operations on the high seas. Later, Operation Sophia was expanded to provide training to Libya's security forces. According to Larsen (2019), while these activities ensured the management of the EU's borders, they have blurred the line between the military and the civilian spheres.

As some have observed, the Atalanta and Sophia operations, as well as the EUMSS, have confirmed "the maritime turn in CFSP in the management of new types of security threats" (RIDDERVOLD, 2018, p.13). And the EUGS presented by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HRVP), Federica Mogherini, in June 2016 reinforced the Union's commitment to maritime security. For the first time, maritime security is featured explicitly among the security priorities in a European strategic document; thereby becoming incorporated into the EU foreign policy identity (LARSEN, 2019). The EUGS exhibits particular concerns in promoting EU's strategic autonomy and this also applies to maritime security domain. Within the latter, an inter-sectoral approach is expected, which covers interoperability among specialized maritime agencies, the CSDP and the Coast Guard. In addition, political dialogue and cooperation with strategic partners based on "maritime multilateralism" is considered of particular importance, while the Union's takes upon the role as "an agenda-shaper, a connector, coordinator and facilitator within a networked web of players" (EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION, 2016, p. 43).

In the same year that the EUGS is launched, the EU approved the International Ocean Governance Agenda. This document is an integral part of the European Commission's Green Agreement and attempts to respond positively to the 2030 Agenda of United Nations. The EU's International Ocean Governance Agenda involves a plan of fifty actions aimed at fostering the sustainability of the oceans by investing in research, relieving human pressures on the seas, and improving the structure of maritime governance (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2020a).

Eventually, the EUMSS Action Plan was adopted in December 2014 and revised in June 2018 by the European Council, which came to integrate the maritime guidelines of the 2016 Global Strategy and reviewed the EUMSS to ensure that actions in the field of maritime security reflected the changes that have taken place to date. The lines of action are summarized in work-strands, which imply the high political priority that the European Council has ascribed to maritime security. These include maritime awareness, protection of critical maritime infrastructure, research and innovation, and capability development (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, 2018).

In the sequence of its increasing responsibilities in the provision for global maritime security, the EU has taken action towards enforcing UNCLOS 'international legal framework. In March 2019, the European Commission published the report "Improving International Ocean Governance", which is based on the priorities put forward in the International Ocean Governance Agenda. The Union's interest in the maritime regulatory framework allows advancing "[...] ways the EU can step up and play a stronger role at global and regional level in shaping the way oceans are managed and used." (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2020a). Consequently, the EU has participated in international fora and formalized cooperation with partners from various regions, in order to oversee the application of the rules and safeguard the UNCLOS regulatory framework. The most recent initiative was the launch of the International Ocean Governance Forum, held in April 2020, within which the EU engaged an interactive dialogue between different stakeholders for effective solutions aimed at "healthy, productive, safe and resilient oceans and seas" (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2020a).

Along these lines, European Commission has indicated that it understood the inevitability of strengthening the Union's commitment to blue growth. Hence, in the follow up of the Blue Growth Strategy in 2012, the Commission published the Blue Economy Report in June 2020, in which it evaluates the results of recent years and highlights the sectors that still require further investment, such as renewable energy, and research and innovation. This reinforcement of the blue growth policy may be seen a reaction to the EU's disadvantaged position in relation to China, which has gained more leading role in the provision of renewable energy equipment and offshore infrastructures (MIREL P.; MIREL X., 2020).

THE EUROPEAN UNION´S ROLE AS A GLOBAL PROVIDER OF MARITIME SECURITY: LATEST TRENDS

Maritime security issues are recent in the CDSP remit. The EU's seapower, comprising both the material and ideational conditions of the actor (GERMOND, 2015a), is still being developed. Elements such as naval capabilities, shipping industries, technology, maritime facilities, maritime culture, and a normative agenda are relevant for the EU to carve for itself a role in international maritime governance. Thus, sea emerges as an additional space, in which the EU can project both its longstanding civilian/normative and its developing power military. And by strengthening its seapower, the Union may well advance as a more influential player in the international security.

The EU's trajectory in the domain of maritime security since 2007 has demonstrated that European institutions have been particularly engaged in the reinforcement of the organization's maritime security. This has largely responded to "a growing demand for an EU role as a maritime

security provider, not only in our region but also farther away", as acknowledged by the HRVP, Federica Mogherini in August 2019 (SPRENGER, 2019).

Yet, the withdrawal of the UK from the EU, materialized in January 2020, and its subsequent absence from the CFSP/CSDP as a full-fledged state will pose additional difficulties in meeting this demand for an EU role as global provider of military security. Considering that the UK stands out as one of Europe's largest defence spender, Brexit will amount to the loss of a "vocal proponent of increased spending", besides more limitations in the EU budget (BLACK et al., 2017, p. 40). Also, it will entail the loss of one of the major maritime powers which will undermine defence of the EU collective capacity to manage maritime risks and the removal of Northwood as one of the EU's command centres that previously served as the EU NAVFOR Operational Headquarters (OHQ) (FLYNN, 2016; BLACK et al., 2017, BRINKE et. al, 2018). As Flynn (2016, p.20) states, "[…] future EU missions will also lose the leadership and experience of senior British officers, who have heretofore played a very visible and positive role". Moreover, the EU will no longer have access to UK's overseas military installations that enable the EU's to promote interests internationally and constitute important lines of communication and bases for projecting global influence (BLACK et al., 2017).

At the same time, Brexit will also impact upon the future cooperation between post-Brexit EU and NATO in the maritime domain. In the sequence of the adoption of the Alliance Maritime Strategy in 2011, NATO has been reinforcing its maritime posture and seeking to improve the Alliance's overall maritime situational awareness. The involvement of its naval forces in relevant operations in the Mediterranean Sea (Operation Active Endeavour and, more recently, Operation Sea Guardian) and Horn of Africa (Operation Ocean Shield) can be seen as evidence of the strengthening of the so-called Alliance Maritime Posture.[v]

Since 2013, the EU has adopted a comprehensive security approach, which involves the articulation of civil and military mechanisms for conflict resolution. This approach enables the Union to have a significant maritime functional and global reach (LARSEN, 2019). After endorsing the concept of maritime multilateralism, in the framework of its 2016 Global Strategy, the EU moved towards an integrated approach to enable it being involved in different crisis phases, performing multisectoral functions at local, national, regional, and global levels, and dialoguing with different stakeholders (FALEG, 2018). Missions such as the European Union Maritime Capacity Building Mission to Somalia (originally EUCAP Nestor, then renamed EUCAP Somalia), and programmes such as the CMR have combined civilian and military instruments to empower local law enforcement agencies and provide humanitarian treatment for suspects of maritime crimes. These actions incorporate concerns with human rights and justice values in the regional orders while strengthening local maritime security institutions (LARSEN, 2019).

The EU's course of action has been focused on creating order at sea which has stimulated its role as a maritime security actor (LARSEN, 2019). There is a self-perception that the EU is responsible for managing the world's oceans. In this regard, the Union has intensified political dialogue and cooperation ties with third countries (e.g., Brazil, China, and India) and regional organizations (e.g., African Union and ASEAN) for the implementation of UNCLOS rules, but also its own maritime guidelines. Incidentally, as anticipated earlier, the EU seapower "has a normative component, since it contributes to the promotion of the EU's values and thus to a multilateral liberal world order" (GERMOND, 2015a, p. 97).

Naval forces play a relevant role in building order in the seas. According to Till (2004), postmodern navies contribute to the maintenance of globalized maritime order by directing their resources towards good order, power projection and maritime consensus. In fact, the EU has a limited naval arsenal, and its profile does not compare to a global maritime security power in the traditional sense (RIDDERVOLD, 2018). However, this is not an impediment for the EU to consolidate its role as a provider of maritime security. As pointed out by Pejsova (2019, p.07), "the maritime realm in today's globalized world is an inherently post-modern security environment, where the interests of nation-states intertwine, and which cannot be secured by the traditional roles of navies alone". Therefore, in the scope of maritime governance, equipment and skills used in high intensity operations are less essential than naval assets that promote international collaboration, cooperation, and coordination (TILL, 2004).

In such circumstances, the EU has invested in the degree of flexibility, versatility, and interoperability of its rapid response marine forces. This strategy has favoured the Union's involvement in a wide range of missions and allowed naval forces to be deployed in different forms (GERMOND, 2015a). As Kaunert and Zwolski (2014: 595) argue, the "EU has become an international policeman" by turning the "military forces into internal security missions and adopt certain policing and judicial functions". Operations Atalanta and Sophia are paradigmatic examples of the flexible and versatile nature of the EU's assets when conducting missions to combat piracy, irregular immigration, policing the seas and search and rescue mandates.

In July 2019, the Political and Security Committee endorsed the Coordinated Maritime Presence (CMP) concept, which figured as a complement to traditional EU operations and, according to Pejsova (2019), may contribute to the long-term visibility of the EU's role as a maritime security provider. The initiative rests on the voluntary contribution of member states' navies to exchange information in areas of common strategic interest. This dynamic of action enriches the interoperability among the European naval forces thereby increasing the Union's maritime capacity. The first pilot case will be launched in the Gulf of Guinea, a region where

Portuguese, French and Spanish assets have been deployed and a functional Europe programme - the Gulf of Guinea Inter-regional Network has been implemented.

At this point, it is interesting to note that, in response to maritime security crises, the EU has adopted an approach in line with the preventive action strategy that has been advocated since the ESS. Such strategy includes the delegation of diplomatic and dissuasive functions to its naval forces, as well as the promotion of maritime capacity-building operations with partners. The joint exercises with third parties reinforce trust, guarantee allies, and promote the European normative agenda. These efforts reflect improvements in regional interoperability and the creation of order at sea. By means of this preventive approach, the EU has sought to reduce the intensity of conflicts, to avoid the use of force and to encourage the peaceful settlement of disputes (GERMOND, 2015a). In addition, the pre-positioning of naval forces as part of preventive actions has deterred illegal practices by non-state actors, as it was undertaken in the framework of Atalanta's mandates (GERMOND; SMITH, 2009).

The CFSP and CSDP remain intergovernmental in nature since their inception (1992 and 1999, respectively). Not unnaturally, the EU does not have a structurally integrated navy, with the availability of naval resources being fundamentally conditioned by state-driven dynamics. Thus, the Union has participated in small-scale operations with a lower degree of conflict intensity and engage in what some observers call 'sponsorship strategies' as a way to overcome these limitations (TOJE, 2010). Here, the purpose is to expand its influence by supporting initiatives promoted by other actors, something that can be accomplished by the mobilization of material and/or moral resources and formal cooperation agreements. This has generated "multilateral cooperative security" (DUARTE, 2019, p.04), of which the Critical Maritime Routes in the Gulf of Guinea (CRIMGO) programme stands out as an illustrative example: the EU supports the implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct adopted in 2013 at the conference of Heads of State in Central and West Africa, which was organized to suppress illegal activities at sea (EUROPEAN UNION, 2018).

As Till observed (2004), the seapower can be considered an output in which the actor is able to influence the others' behaviour at and from the sea and shape the international system. This idea of seapower enables one to appraise the EU's participation in international maritime security and governance through the 'Model Power Europe' (FERREIRA-PEREIRA, 2012) prism that depicts the EU as a modelling agent that is capable of influencing the conduct of others for what it does based on its normative behaviour. By exposing actors to its maritime norm-based activities in the framework of various partnerships and arrangements, the EU exerts an attraction force while generating replication of its maritime behaviour in different regions of the world. Interaction with third parties makes it possible for the EU to share and show the advantages deriving from the structure of norms and principles it espouses. These partnerships and agreements are informed by

conditionality that allows the EU to be influential upon third actors' conducts. Countries that adjust to the EU's standard of behaviour and commit to European rules are involved in the Union's reward practices that eventually reinforce and validate the adoption of a more principled behaviour. As for those that do not comply, they eventually experience the adverse consequences of embargoes and sanctions. At the same time, the diplomatic nature of EU's naval forces further contributes to the Union's power of influence and attraction. In 2020, a Turkish naval company was sanctioned by the Union for having one of its cargo ships intercepted by the French navy in the Mediterranean Sea and was accused of violating the arms embargo on Libya (ROSSI, 2020); and this episode further aggravated the bad record of Turkey, candidate country to EU membership[vi].

As this section has showed, the EU's participation in international security and maritime governance has been directed at reinforcing multilateral maritime structures and the worldwide compliance with UNCLOS rules to foster the creation of order at sea. The importance attached by the 2016 Global Strategy to the 'maritime multilateralism' is symptomatic of the current and future Union's mind-set in this regard. Hence, the Union's approach exhibits a distinctive character when compared to other emerging maritime powers. For example, despite the Chinese maritime strategy has given some signals of engagement in the promotion of international maritime cooperation (GRAULT; FERREIRA-PEREIRA, 2020), overall, it seems to be less concerned with rules and more with the development of naval power to establish order in the seas (DUCHÂTEL, 2017). In its turn, Russia has chosen to follow a 'my-way' approach based on *ad hoc* use of the existing global structures (CHAUHAN, 2020, p.63). Indeed, the Russian concerns have been focused in protecting its own regional order from globalization threats and, particularly, from threats of Western interference in its own maritime backyard.

According to some observers, its privileged focus on creating order at sea has prevented the EU from granting attention to global geopolitical conflicts. And the Union's positioning vis-à-vis geopolitical shifts and rifts is critical for the consolidation of its role as an effective global security provider on (LARSEN, 2019, p.07). On the other hand, Germond (2015b, p.142) reveals when a regional organization "stress their need will or duty to 'secure the freedom of the seas', to 'police the global commons', to 'promote good governance at sea', or to 'assure the stewardship of the ocean', there are geopolitical forces and factors at play".

Incidentally, the Ursula von Leyden-led "Geopolitical Commission" seems to have emerged as a Union's response to power shifts in the international arena marked increasingly by geopolitical competition among key players, notably the United States, China and Russia, the crisis of multilateralism and the growing tensions in Union's neighbourhood (BLOCKMANS, 2020). On the agenda of the new Commission (2019-2024), external action has become a priority linked to the institution's interest in consolidating "a stronger Europe in the world" (LEYEN, 2019; SUBOTIĆ,

2019). As a result, the Commission's role in the field of external relations (including CFSP) has the potential to grow and bear fruits in the domain of maritime security. The increase of Chinese and Russian influence in the Western Balkans has featured as a specific concern on the Commission's agenda. The guideline is to ensure border control and monitor these external actors (SUBOTIĆ, 2019), which may imply a greater EU's presence in the Black Sea in the future. Moreover, the Commission's geopolitical outlook reinforced by the "principled pragmatism" enshrined in the 2016 Global Strategy (EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION, 2016, p.08) might pave the way for the EU to promote its strategic security interests across a wide geographical area from the Eastern Mediterranean to the South China Sea. Finally, geopolitical tensions in the Indo-Pacific region and rivalry between China and the US may affect the European maritime order and its interests. Against this backdrop, the new Commission may well provide a "third way" thereby reinforcing the EU's identity as a "guardian of multilateralism" (RAHMAN, 2020) and its capability of "mobilizing its soft power instruments for a harder power projection" (BLOCKMANS, 2020).

The COVID-19 outbreak in 2020 brought with it challenges in the realm of maritime security. Profound economic difficulties and widespread socioeconomic problems exacerbated by the pandemic lead to an increase in illicit maritime trade, especially in regions that have traditionally been critical points of insecurity. On the other hand, in countries most severely affected by the coronavirus pandemic, governments' agendas have been dominated by domestic public health issues, with other foreign policy-related concerns, such as advancing efforts in the maritime governance structure, receiving secondary attention. Consequently, the internal national crises caused by COVID-19 could drive a mass migration by sea (MARITIME JOURNAL, 2020).

CONCLUSIONS

Since the European Commission's Communication on an Integrated Maritime Policy in 2007, the EU has moved gradually, albeit slowly, towards the development of a more versatile, integrated, and coherent operational and institutional maritime framework. Operations Atalanta and Sophia have showed the maritime reach and broad scope of missions that the EU is willing and capable of leading and conducting. In view of the nature of the competitive environment prevailing among maritime powers, the Union's seapower remains vulnerable. However, its 'maritime turn' and evolution in the domain of maritime security signals the EU's ability to adjust to the asymmetry of threats by putting its comprehensive security approach into practice.
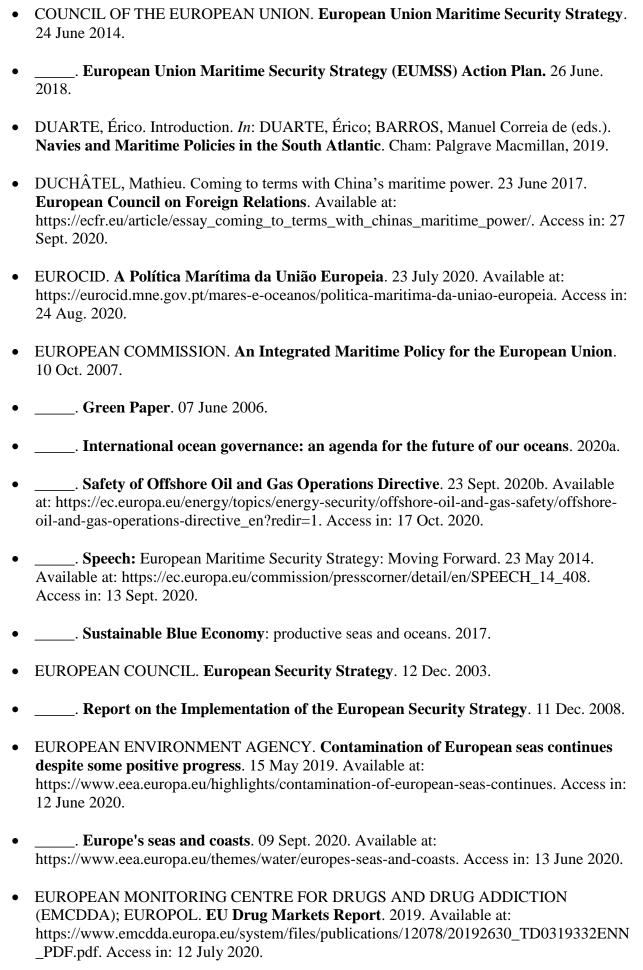
Despite the significant challenges inherent to its military projection, the EU has endeavoured to fill some lacunae in international maritime governance by combining strategically multilateral cooperation and sponsorship arrangements with the diplomatic role of its naval forces. This

comprehensive and integrated approach has helped the Union to increase its proactivity and subsequent visibility as a distinctive provider of maritime security vis-à-vis other maritime powers. The 2016 Global Strategy and the new European Commission's geopolitical outlook might well favour the consolidation the EU's position in the international maritime governance and its role as a global provider of maritime security.

This study has also attempted to shed light upon post-Brexit trends and COVID-19 implications that may have a bearing on the EU's role in maritime security. The loss of a major maritime power faces the EU with the necessity to expand its weight and influence in the global maritime governance while circumventing post-Brexit limitations at the strategic, military, and budgetary levels. On the other hand, the coronavirus pandemic of 2020 calls for the need to revisit the maritime security agenda. The COVID-19 outbreak has already caused an increase in transnational maritime crimes, such as piracy and illicit trade, as well as the destabilization of port and navigation structures. Nevertheless, the EU has an evolving maritime profile that shows a strong propensity to consolidate itself as an influential player in global maritime security.

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NOTES

[i] This study was conducted at the Research Centre in Political Science (UIDB/CPO/00758/2020), University of Minho/University of Évora and was supported by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) and the Portuguese Ministry of Education and Science through national funds.

[ii] Martinique, Mayotte, Guadeloupe, French Guiana and Reunion, Saint-Martin (French); Madeira, Azores (Portugal); the Canary Islands (Spain).

[iii] These were set out in June 1992 as part of the Western European Union's tasks and covered humanitarian and rescue tasks; conflict prevention and peacekeeping; tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making; joint disarmament operations; military advice and assistance; and post-conflict stabilisation.

[iv] Operation Atalanta's new mandate has entered into force on 1st January 2021. It includes new tasks aimed at reinforcing its responsibilities in the counter-piracy domain. See more details in https://eunavfor.eu/operation-atalantas-new-mandate-enters-into-force-on-1st-of-january-2021-new-tasks-will-reinforce-the-eu-navfors-counter-piracy-core-responsibilities/

[v] For more details on current NATO's maritime activities, see https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_70759.htm

[vi] Turkey is a candidate country since 1999 and it started accession negotiations in 2004, a process that remains open-ended