

Departamento de Seguridad Internacional y Defensa

Organización del Tratado del Atlántico Norte

Alliance Maritime Strategy

I. Introduction

1. The evolving international situation of the 21st century heralds new levels of interdependence between states, international organisations and non-governmental organisations, the increasing complexity of global commerce, and potential threats from both state and non-state actors. Combined with the rapid spread of advanced weapons such as high performance aircraft, submarines, and precision-guided munitions, the Alliance may be challenged in mission areas it has traditionally dominated. This emerging strategic context requires a substantial re-appraisal of the contribution of maritime forces in supporting NATO's objectives over the coming decades. Whether in support of Alliance joint operations, or when leading in a predominately maritime mission, appropriately resourced and enabled maritime forces have critical roles to fulfil, defending and promoting the collective interests of the Alliance across a spectrum of defence and security challenges, as defined in the Strategic Concept. The maritime environment also lends itself well to strengthened engagement in cooperative security.

2. This strategy sets out, in full consistency with the Strategic Concept, the ways that maritime power could help resolve critical challenges facing the Alliance now and in the future, and the roles - enduring and new - that NATO forces may have to carry out in the maritime environment in order to contribute to the Alliance's defence and security and to promote its values. These roles, articulated in Section III, capitalise upon the ability of maritime forces to provide a spectrum of strategic options to the Alliance, and include appropriate contributions to:

Deterrence and collective defence;

Crisis management;

Cooperative security: Outreach through partnerships, dialogue and cooperation; and

Maritime security.

3. Further transformation of NATO's maritime forces' organisation and capabilities will be necessary to better align NATO's maritime capabilities with the requirements of the missions envisaged in this maritime strategy. This continued transformation will take place in the context of the defence planning process of the Alliance, including its role in balancing resources and requirements. This strategy does not seek an immediate change to Allies' maritime capabilities, but those capabilities will need to evolve in line with this process.

II. The maritime security environment

4. The oceans connect nations globally through an interdependent network of economic, financial, social and political relationships. The statistics are compelling: 70% of the Earth is covered in water; 80% of the world's population lives within 100 miles of the coast; 90% of the world's commerce is seaborne and 75% of that trade passes through a few, vulnerable, canals and international straits. The maritime environment includes trade routes, choke points, ports, and other infrastructure such as pipelines, oil and natural gas platforms and trans-oceanic telecommunications cables.

5. Global trade relies upon secure and low-cost international maritime transportation and distribution networks that are vulnerable to disruption, to the extent that even short interruptions would seriously impact international trade and Allies' economies. Additionally, there are fisheries and other highly valuable resources that lie in, on and beneath the ocean floor. Meanwhile, climatic changes pose new opportunities and challenges, which may, inter alia, allow new and economically attractive sea routes, as well as improved access to resources. The maintenance of the freedom of navigation, sea-based trade routes, critical infrastructure, energy flows, protection of marine resources and environmental safety are all in Allies' security interests.

6. At the same time, the world's oceans and seas are an increasingly accessible environment for transnational criminal and terrorist activities, including the transport and deployment of weapons of mass destruction and associated materials. Criminal activity in the maritime environment includes the growing range and rate of pirate attacks, which raise concerns about the safety of vessel crews and private citizens. Issues of jurisdiction of merchant vessels using Flags of Convenience but crewed by nationals of many different states further complicate the security tapestry. Globalisation has reduced barriers to other forms of criminal activity, including the illegal trafficking of humans, weapons and narcotics.

III. The maritime contribution to Alliance security

7. Within the strategic environment described above, Allied maritime operations and activities can make vital contributions to Alliance security. Such contributions may include:

Deterrence and collective defence;

Crisis management;

Cooperative security: Outreach through partnerships, dialogue and cooperation; and

Maritime security.

The relative weight given to the Alliance's engagement in each of these roles will depend on circumstances and the resources available.

8. These roles require further transformation of NATO's maritime organisation and capabilities to be more efficient and effective. NATO must be able to interact more flexibly across the breadth of the maritime community, including, in accordance with the Comprehensive Approach Action Plan, with international and regional organisations, non-governmental organisations and law enforcement agencies in the maritime field, as well as with Partner and non-Partner nations on a case-by-case basis, recognising that in today's world, no military organisation can achieve security and defence objectives in isolation. In support of these needs, NATO forces must be as agile, flexible and versatile as possible, well trained and equipped, rapidly deployable and sustainable at strategic distances, and fully interoperable with relevant military and non-military counterparts. All of NATO's activities will be conducted in accordance with international law, including any applicable treaties and customary law and any relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions.

Deterrence and Collective Defence

9. Collective defence and deterrence, including nuclear deterrence, remain the essential political-military cornerstone of NATO's solidarity and mutual commitment. Deterrence relies upon proven capability, demonstrations of readiness, and effective strategic communications. NATO's significant maritime capabilities, which offer speed, lethality, reach, interoperability and endurance, combined with the inherent flexibility of maritime forces are a key component in deterring aggression. The potential role of the Alliance's maritime forces in missile defence may also become an important part of NATO's response to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

10. In accordance with Alliance decisions, the contribution of Alliance maritime forces to deterrence and collective defence will entail:

Continuing to contribute to nuclear deterrence in accordance with the Strategic Concept.
Providing a wide range of conventional rapid response options including the ability to deliver decisive force rapidly against any opponent, based on superior naval, amphibious and strike forces.

Maintaining the ability to deploy, sustain and support effective expeditionary forces through the control of sea lines of communications, effective mine countermeasure capabilities, the ability to force entry if necessary as well as to project striking power ashore.

Ensuring that NATO forces have freedom of action through diverse means of reconnaissance and high precision assets.

Providing a sea-based ballistic missile defence capability, offering strategic flexibility as a contribution to the protection of forward-deployed NATO forces (theatre missile defence) and to the protection of NATO territory and populations against ballistic missile threats in accordance with the decisions taken at the Lisbon Summit.

Crisis Management

11. Alliance crisis management could include conflict prevention, demonstration of resolve, crisis response operations, peace-enforcement, embargo operations, counter-terrorism, mine clearance, and consequence management, often in austere operating conditions. Although the primary focus of crisis response operations is usually on land, maritime forces can play a critical enabling role in arms embargo and interdiction operations, maritime precision strike in support of ground operations, the flexible deployment of amphibious forces for ground operations, logistic and relief support, surveillance and reconnaissance as well as offering opportunities to minimise footprints ashore by exploiting possibilities to base operations and logistic support at sea. To this end, the maritime contribution to Alliance crisis management will entail:

Continuing to maintain modern, credible, rapid response joint forces able to operate in environments with degraded communications. The maritime component must be capable of securing sea control and denial, delivering interoperable maritime and amphibious strike, providing a base of operations at sea, and exercising coherent Alliance command and control while operating with non-NATO navies and organisations in order to deliver decisive effect on, under, above and from the sea.

Contributing to the provision of urgent humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in accordance with the political framework of NATO's participation in humanitarian operations.

Leveraging the inherent agility of its maritime forces to provide a flexible and graduated response in crisis or emerging crisis situations, ranging from simple presence, through demonstrations of force, to specific tasks applying tailored forces, including peace-enforcement, embargo and no-fly zone enforcement, counter-terrorism, non-combatant evacuation, and initial entry operations.

Providing essential logistical support for joint force operations in austere or hostile land environments and the deployment of joint command and logistical bases afloat.

Cooperative Security: Outreach through Partnerships, Dialogue and Cooperation

12. Alliance maritime activities make an important contribution to NATO's policy of outreach through partnerships, dialogue, and cooperation. They offer valuable opportunities to prevent conflicts and develop regional security and stability through dialogue, confidence-building, and increased transparency. They can also contribute to building partner capacity, exchanging information, cooperative security, and interoperability, including where activities involving a significant or enduring footprint ashore might be unacceptable. These activities are complementary to what nations conduct themselves and have the added value of demonstrating the Alliance's intention to support partners and of drawing on a wider set of assets and capabilities.

13. The Alliance's maritime operations and activities can strengthen the Alliance's partnerships, dialogue, and cooperation with others through:

Engaging in diplomatic activities, including through port visits as part of the routine activities of the Standing NATO Maritime Groups.

Contributing, where appropriate, to partner capacity building by improving the capabilities of our partners to address security threats in the maritime environment and to operate there effectively.

Conducting joint training, seminars, and exercises with partners.

Such efforts will promote Alliance values.

Maritime Security

14. As part of broader efforts to address security threats arising in the maritime environment, NATO maritime forces can contribute to the maintenance of a secure and

safe maritime environment given their unique capabilities and routine blue water activities. Existing national and international legislation is sufficient to allow Allies to undertake a range of maritime security operations; however, there may be scope for further enhancing mutual awareness and, where possible, operational harmonisation, among national legal authorities and practices. Maritime security is a suitable area for cooperation with partners.

15. In accordance with international law (including any applicable treaties and customary law), the contribution of Alliance maritime operations and activities to maritime security will entail:

Conducting surveillance and patrolling, and sharing information thus gathered, in support of law enforcement in the course of, and as part of, their scheduled NATO activities and deployments within the North Atlantic Treaty Area; and conducting maritime security tasks within the framework of a specific, NAC-approved operation either within or beyond the North Atlantic Treaty area. In the latter case, an authority could also be given to conduct additional maritime security tasks beyond surveillance and patrolling.

Maintaining the ability of NATO's maritime forces to undertake the full range of maritime interdiction missions, including in support of law enforcement and in preventing the transport and deployment of weapons of mass destruction. In this context, the possible role of maritime forces will be further considered in the overall exploration of ways that the Alliance's political means and military capabilities can contribute to international efforts to fight proliferation. NATO's maritime forces will also be ready and able to support the protection of freedom of navigation.

Ensuring, in the context of specific, NAC-approved operations, the Alliance's maritime forces are prepared, in accordance with decisions taken at the Lisbon Summit, to contribute to energy security including protection of critical energy infrastructure and sea lines of communication.

IV. The maritime dimension of a comprehensive approach

16. The nature of naval forces has always required interaction with other maritime actors - almost continually - as a normal part of maritime activity regardless of the role being executed. The maritime experience thus teaches the value and necessity of a Comprehensive Approach, and the Alliance has elaborated an Action Plan to support that approach. To that end:

The Alliance, in accordance with the Comprehensive Approach Action Plan, will foster enduring relationships with relevant national and international actors in the maritime environment, such as the UN and EU, to contribute to our common goals of preventing conflict, building partner capacity, ensuring the freedom of the seas, upholding international maritime law and promoting Alliance values.

NATO maritime operations affecting international and regional organisations, non-governmental organisations, law enforcement agencies, as well as partner and non-partner nations, must demonstrate a deep understanding of respective capabilities and cultures to be effective as well as respect the competencies of each organisation or agency. Achieving this demands a high degree of coordination, interaction and training as well as a quest for complementarity whenever appropriate. In this context, greater emphasis should be placed on standardising operating procedures, as well as on promoting joint exercises and training exchanges, as expressed in the Comprehensive Approach Action Plan.

V. Implementing the maritime strategy through continued alliance transformation

17. To meet the challenges set out above, further transformation of processes and capabilities is essential. This should continue to build on lessons learned, maximise the use of new technologies and innovations, including for improved maritime situational awareness, encourage greater multinational cooperation and pooling of resources, as well as refine organisational structures, operational concepts, doctrine, training and education.

18. The NATO Defence Planning Process will be key in guiding the ongoing transformation of maritime capabilities to ensure that the Alliance is prepared to confront both traditional and new – often asymmetric – threats. In this context, a premium will continue to be placed on developing capable, flexible, rapidly deployable, interoperable, and sustainable maritime forces. Further elaboration of such implications of this strategy for Alliance transformation will be developed in a separate and subsequent document.

VI. Conclusion

19. The Alliance Maritime Strategy identifies the four roles of NATO's maritime forces: deterrence and collective defence; crisis management; cooperative security – outreach through partnerships, dialogue and cooperation; and maritime security. NATO has already gained extensive experience performing these four roles, which is increasingly relevant in today's complex security environment. The activities that the Alliance will undertake as part of this strategy will be conducted in accordance with international law, including any

applicable treaties and customary law, and any relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions.

20. This strategy will help steer the transformation efforts of the Alliance and will need to be implemented in line with prevailing budgetary circumstances. Further work will therefore be needed, particularly through the NATO Defence Planning Process, to develop the Alliance's capabilities in light of this strategy as well as to identify other areas where transformation is required. This strategy does not seek an immediate change to Allies' maritime capabilities, but those capabilities will need to evolve in line with this process. It aims to ensure that the Alliance continues to have the effective and flexible maritime forces it needs to meet the diverse security challenges of the 21st century.