

— ÉTUDES MARINES —

*The opinions expressed in the articles are the sole responsibility of the authors.*

**Publication director**

Rear-admiral Marc Antoine Lefebvre de Saint Germain

**Editors-in chief**

CF Jérôme Baroë

LV Windy Marty

**Transaltor**

LV Windy Marty

Centre d'études stratégiques de la Marine (CESM)  
Case 08 - 1, place Joffre -75700 Paris SP 07  
01 44 42 82 13 - cesm.editions.fct@intradef.gouv.fr

- *to raise awareness of the common interests of European countries and to develop a European defence culture*
  - *to create opportunities for European meetings in the field of security and defence*
  - *to present to national decision-makers and to the European Union authorities the reflections of its members and of the EuroDéfense associations of other European countries;*
  - *to formulate concrete proposals for these decision-makers;*
  - *to deepen, within the network of EuroDéfense associations, the concept of “a Europe of security and defence”;*
  - *to contribute to the extension of this network to all EU countries and to encourage cooperation, as a priority, with those countries that have asked to join.*
- Translated with [www.DeepL.com/Translator](http://www.DeepL.com/Translator) (free version)*

— ÉTUDES MARINES —

EUROPE,  
COOPERATING FOR  
A NAVAL AMBITION

---

**N°21 – June 2022**

Centre d'études stratégiques de la Marine  
With the collaboration of EURODEFENSE - France

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>Foreword</b>	8
<b>Global Maritime Issues and European Maritime Policy</b> Rear-admiral Marc-Antoine LEFEBVRE DE SAINT-GERMAIN	14
<b>Europe and the sea</b> Jean-Dominique GIULIANI	22
<b>European navies : a pragmatic approach to solidarity</b> Admiral (Ret) Patrick HÉBRARD	30
<b>The European Union's maritime security strategy, a tool for an integrated approach to the protection of European sea-related interests</b> Joannecke BALFOORT	44
<b>Strategic Compass</b> EuroDefense - France Association & Nathalie de KANIV	48
<b>Gearing up for a Competitive Age: The EU as a Maritime Actor</b> Dr. Daniel FIOTT	52

---

<b>The European Union strategy for the Indo-Pacific</b> EuroDefense - France Association	66
<b>European Navies Solidarity, A personal perspective</b> <b>“Les Marines européennes: a pragmatic approach to cooperation”</b> Vice-Admiral (Ret) Lutz Feldt	70
<b>Naval solidarity in Europe the contribution of the Italian navy</b> Vice-Admiral (Ret) Ferdinando SANFELICE DI MONTE FORTE	74
<b>Spanish navy solidarity</b> Vice Admiral (Ret) Fernando DEL POZO	78
<b>European Naval Solidarity – a United Kingdom Perspective</b> Vice-Admiral (Ret) Sir Anthony Dymock	82



France takes command of EUROMARFOR, on board the amphibious helicopter carrier (PHA) Tonnerre.  
©Marine nationale



# FOREWORD



**P**aul Valéry used to describe Europe as a “small cape on the Asian continent” According to its definition, a cape is a very large piece of land sticking out into the ocean. This shows that Europe, especially in its western part, is intimately linked to the sea ; six maritime areas border it: the Mediterranean and the Black Sea in the south, the Baltic Sea and the Arctic Ocean in the north, and the Atlantic, the English Channel and the North Sea in the west. In total, Europe accounts for 80,000 kilometres of coastline, not to mention several ultra-marine territories spread over almost all the oceans.

If Europe is geographically linked to the sea, it is also the case on a historical aspect. From the ancient thalassocracies to the merchant cities of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, from the great discoveries to the economic and political expansion of Europe in the 19th century, the sea is omnipresent. Europe would not be what it is without the sea.

Today, the open economies of the European states are largely based on the usages of the sea, such as the freedom of maritime trade or the scientific and industrial capacity to exploit its resources. However, there are many tensions and risks : the current worldwide naval rearmament, the illegal appropriation of maritime areas, global warming and its consequences, the necessity to protect of ultra-marine areas, the illegal usages of the sea, illegal immigration, etc. Although the maritime areas bordering Europe are affected to various levels by such tensions, others, despite their remoteness, such as the Indo-Pacific, the Gulf of Guinea and the Horn of Africa, may have very direct consequences on European countries.

The process of European construction, which began in the 1950s, has been slow to integrate a maritime dimension. The founding treaties did not mention it directly and it was through the economic policy on fisheries that the sea became a Community domain on its own. The security and military dimension, on the other hand, was left almost entirely to the discretion of the States.

If awareness of maritime and naval stakes has been very gradual, it is now a reality, even if it varies from one EU Member-State to another, depending on their links with the sea (it should be remembered that only 22 States have a coastline). The process began in 2004 and was followed by a White Paper in 2007. The European Union's Maritime Security Strategy was adopted in 2014, as an action plan which for the first time mentioned military means. Finally, the “Strategic Compass”, a set of coordinated and comprehensive guidelines, was endorsed in 2021.

In the same time, regional strategies have been created, such as the Atalanta Operation against piracy in the Horn of Africa, the IRINI Operation, Agenor, etc., followed



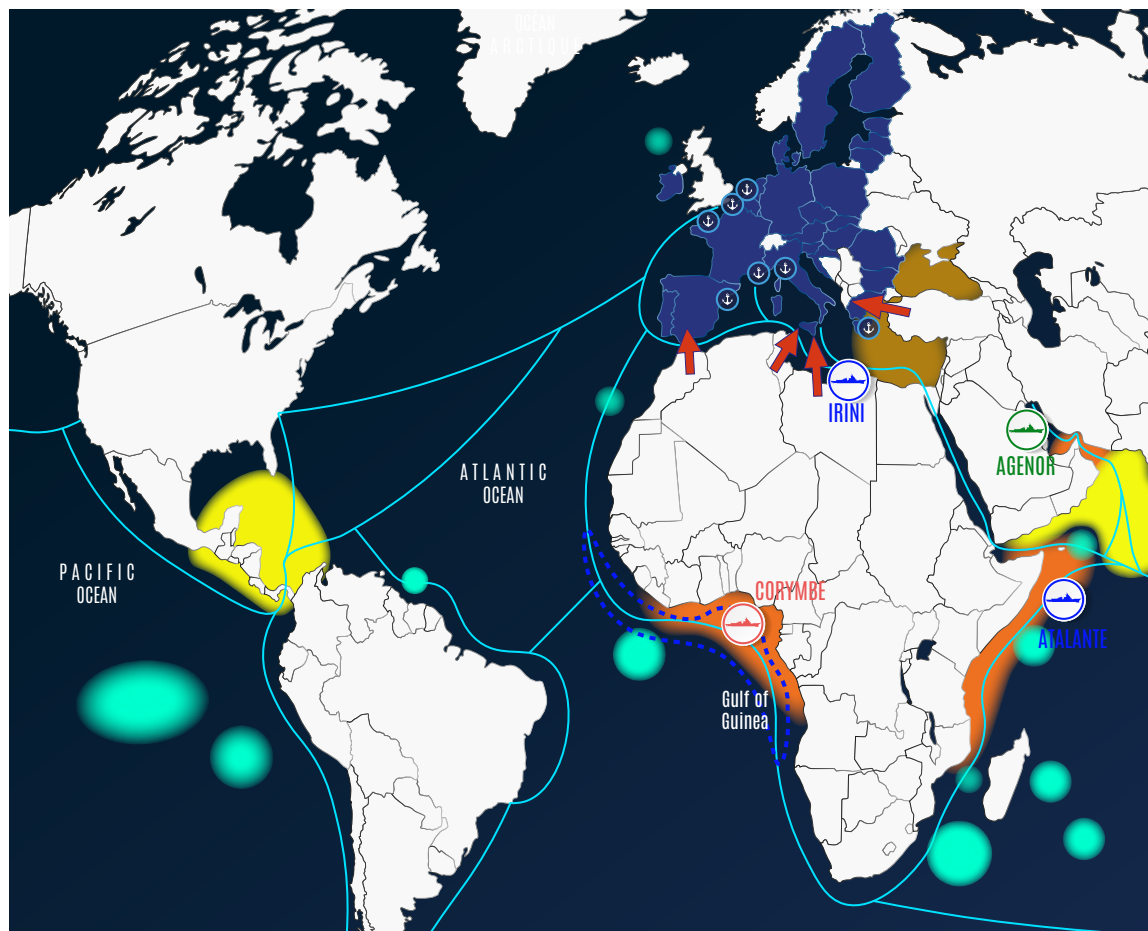
by coordinated strategies in the Asia-Pacific and very recently in the Arctic. These missions are based on the cooperation of European navies and are particularly well suited for “bottom of the spectrum missions”, where the intervention of strictly military organisations such as NATO would probably be unsuitable.

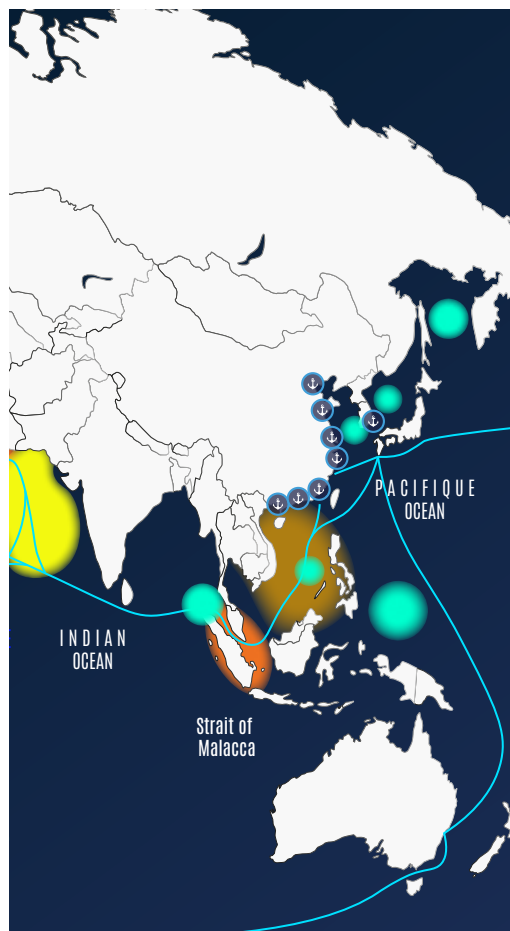
The European maritime security strategy is today a tool to protect the many European interests linked to the sea. It is based on the coordination and cooperation of the naval forces of the EU Member-States. Much has been achieved but it still needs to be deepened in many areas, by geographical zones where European interests are common, by exchanges of officers and crew training, by joint exercises, by the coordination of many sectoral areas such as intelligence or logistics and of course by the adoption of joint shipbuilding programmes.

As France currently holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, this issue of *Etudes Marines* aims to address the various aspects of the maritime and naval policy of European countries. Produced in collaboration with the EuroDefense - France Association, it presents not only the current situation, but also offers proposals for the future. The floor was also given to former heads of the main European navies as well as to a former head of the Royal Navy. Despite the Brexit and the differences over fisheries, the British Navy remains a major partner of the EU navies.

As this issue is intended for a wide audience, some of which is not French-speaking, most of the articles are published in a bilingual version.

## GLOBAL MARITIME CHALLENGES





## LEGENDE :



EU member-states



Main Navigation routes



High threat zones (piracy, geopolitical tensions)



Drug trafficking areas



Maritime migratory flows towards Europe



Areas affected by illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) Fishing activities



Areas where the law of the sea is contested



CSDP operations (EU common security & defense policy)



French operation (no CSDP)



main ports



CMP (coordinated maritime presence) areas of maritime interest & EU information sharing



Ad-hoc operations with european states (no CSDP)

# Global Maritime Issues and European Maritime Policy

Rear-admiral Marc-Antoine LEFEBVRE DE SAINT-GERMAIN

The recent media coverage of rising tensions in the Indo-Pacific, the focus on the oceans as a key factors in climate change, the constraints on maritime transport and the post-Brexit disputes over fisheries cannot mask the French and European chronic lack of interest in maritime issues. However, if such events sometimes take place far from the geographical framework of Europe, their effects have direct and significant economic and security consequences for Europeans. Although the European Union has gradually become aware of the need for a maritime policy, particularly through its growing involvement in the Gulf of Guinea and the Indo-Pacific, there is still room for the European maritime policy to be more effective.

## **The global maritime issues of the citizens of Europe**

First it should be noted that 22 EU Member States have access to the sea, with more than 90 000 km of coastline. The Union's maritime challenges are therefore numerous and can be seen at several levels. On the economic aspect, 1.8 billion tonnes of goods passed through the main ports of the European Union before the crisis<sup>1</sup>. Maritime regions account for 40% of European GDP. The world's largest (Greece) and fourth largest (Germany) merchant fleets are European. 77% of European foreign trade and 35% of trade within the EU is carried by sea. Rotterdam remains the busiest port with 11% of EU goods transported in 2018 and is Europe's largest oil port<sup>2</sup>. The port sector is expected to experience strong growth due to increased demand for containers and primary resources. The decision to create HAROPA as of June 1, 2021, linking sea and river from Le Havre to Paris, is a step in this direction: the increase in activity at the port of Le Havre since the post-confinement recovery in 2021 is a positive indicator of France's place in Europe. However, this potential remains dependent on a few maritime routes that are crucial for the smooth flow of world trade. These routes are vulnerable to acts of violence, piracy and organised crime, which can impact on European shipowners. The Indian Ocean, the Gulf of Guinea and Asia, because of their place in the world's economy, have thus become increasingly strategic areas for Europe. In addition to this, 400 million passengers pass through European ports every year.

Although it is not as widely known as the issues surrounding Community fisheries, which also trigger post-Brexit tensions, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is an important challenge for the European Union. It is a real threat to the blue economy and marine ecosystems. On a global scale, it represents more than 30% of total catches<sup>3</sup>. The main areas concerned are the Pacific Ocean, the West African coast and the Asian coast. It jeopardises the success of rational stock management policies

---

1. Key figures on Europe, édition 2020.

2. Ibid

3. Figures from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

and the protection of endangered species, and it is a destabilising factor for economies dependent on food fisheries, which balance is fragile. Amplified by the climate crisis and its consequences on the oceans and biodiversity<sup>4</sup>, the destabilisation of economies, in particular on the African coast, represents a major risk that would directly affect Europe.

Illegal immigration by sea is another challenge. In 2015, 885,000 migrants arrived on the shores of EU member states via the eastern Mediterranean Sea, a seventeen-fold increase on the previous year's flow<sup>5</sup>. The deterioration of the situation in Libya, the nodal point for flows from Africa, has increased the migratory pressure on the coasts of the Member-States. In this area, the French Navy is involved in missions to combat smugglers whose actions, often associated with organised crime, put human lives at risk.

Drug trafficking is another main source of income for European criminal organisations and has an estimated retail value of at least €30 billion per year. A large part of this traffic is transported by sea<sup>6</sup>. The combat against drug trafficking combines the action of Navy, Police and Gendarmerie forces and customs. The Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre Narcotics (MAOC-N), based in Lisbon, has seized 231 tonnes of cocaine and 643 tonnes of cannabis since its creation in 2007.

With regard to energy issues, refined products maritime trade will continue to grow. The fleet of tankers dedicated to crude and refined products has increased by 66%<sup>7</sup>. 40.5% of it is controlled by Europeans (Norway, UK, EU)<sup>8</sup>. In addition, the increasing volatility of energy prices and the pressure from Russia on gas supply and demand, keep pushing for a diversification of Europe's energy supplies.

The emergence of marine biotechs suggests a strong potential for innovation in Europe and could contribute to the development of marine exploration and the sophistication of maritime transport. Germany holds 49% of the patents for marine genetic resources used in the development of medicines and cosmetics. According to a 2015 study entitled "Marine biotechnologies in the Greater West"<sup>9</sup>, the global bioresources market is set to grow by more than 10% per year and is already worth €2.8 billion.

---

4. IPCC Special Report 2019 on "The Ocean and Cryosphere in the Context of Climate Change".

5. Assemblée Nationale Information Report n°4451) by the Committee on National Defence and the Armed Forces on the role of the French Navy in the Mediterranean. Cior, Marleix, 2017.

6. As of 1 December 2021, the French Navy has seized 44.3 tonnes of drugs, worth €1.89 billion, which will no longer finance terrorist and criminal flows around the world.

7. Summary Paper ISEMAR n°222, "Energies fossiles, enjeux économiques, dimension maritime » » July 2020.

8. "Review of Maritime Transport 2021", UNCTAD, p.38, Table 2.5

9. Catherine Boyen, Pascal Jaouen. Les Biotechnologies Marines dans le Grand Ouest. 2015, 61 p.



## Awareness is progressively developping

The European Union has progressively equipped itself with various tools to shape a maritime policy capable of responding to these different challenges. Efforts to achieve a European maritime policy began in 2004 and were confirmed by the publication of the Blue Book in 2007. A regulation, adopted in 2011 by the Council of the Union and the European Parliament, enabled the establishment of this maritime policy, which was logically devoted first to its Community aspects. In June 2014, the European Union Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) and an associated action plan were introduced. For the first time, this document mentions the use of military assets for civilian purposes and recognises the importance of EU navies. It was inspired by French concepts such as the *Action de l'Etat en Mer* (AEM)<sup>10</sup>, a comprehensive organisational model designed around a single representative, the Maritime Prefect. It is now part of the European Security Strategy and is consistent with the Integrated Maritime Policy and the Internal Security Strategy.

The stability of the southern bank of the Mediterranean Sea is also one of Europe's security priorities, particularly with regard to migration and illegal trafficking. The CSDP operation *EUNAVFOR MED Sophia*, which ran from 2015 to 2020, sought to prevent the departure of migrants attempting to cross the central Mediterranean Sea. Its successor is EUNAVFOR MED Irini: while it incorporates some of the same missions, its main purpose is to enforce the arms embargo on Libya.

The recent announcement of the AUKUS alliance overshadowed the release of the EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region<sup>11</sup>, on September 16th, 2021. Its objective is to contribute to the stability, security, prosperity and sustainable development of the region. The Security and Defence priority highlights the importance of strengthening naval presence and maritime security capabilities, broadening our partnership and addressing new security challenges. The paper calls for exploring ways to enhance the naval deployments of the Member-States, to help protecting maritime lines of communication and freedom of navigation in the region, while strengthening the capacity of partners in the area to provide maritime security. The development of an open, rules-based regional security architecture is also advocated, as well as the strengthening of partners' capacities to fight cybercrime.

Sharing European values is seen as a prerequisite for establishing a partnership with the countries in the area. Without explicitly mentioning it, this strategy competes with the Silk Roads initiative launched by China in 2013. It is inclusive.

---

10. Giuliani, Jean-Dominique. "L'Europe a-t-elle une stratégie maritime ? ", *Revue Défense Nationale*, vol. 789, no. 4, 2016, pp. 31-36.

11. Document JOIN (2021) 24 final

Finally, on October 13th, 2021, the European Commission adopted an Arctic strategy<sup>12</sup> and thus expressed its commitment to promoting a secure, stable, sustainable, peaceful and prosperous region. To this end, the European Union will soon establish a European Commission office in Greenland.

The European Union is working on a global approach, which is its specificity. For instance, the fight against piracy is organised at the European level around operation *EUNAVFOR Atalanta*. This CSDP operation, which began in December 2008, has achieved its objectives of deterring, preventing and repressing acts of piracy off the Somali coast. The aim is to ensure the protection of the World Food Programme (WFP) vessels providing aid to displaced people in Somalia, and that of the vulnerable vessels sailing in the Gulf of Aden and off Somalia. Together with EUTM Somalia (training, mentoring and advising the Somali army), EUCAP Somalia (maritime capacity support missions) and the European Commission's humanitarian aid (DG ECHO and DG EuropeAid), this global approach is a real success story for the Union.

The fight against piracy and banditry is also led in the Gulf of Guinea. Operation CORYMBE, which is supporting the action of African countries against all threats to maritime security (piracy, illegal fishing, illicit trafficking, pollution), is part of the European concept of "Coordinated Maritime Presences" (CMP), which was implemented in 2020. This concept is designed to strengthen exchanges between European navies and to optimise their support to the coastal states involved in the Yaoundé process<sup>13</sup>. Based on very positive feedback, this concept has been recently extended to the northwest of the Indian Ocean.

Cooperation projects also emerged under the Critical Maritime Routes programme, such as CRIMARIO and ESIWA. EU CRIMARIO aims to enhance maritime safety and security in the Indian Ocean by assisting coastal countries to improve maritime situational awareness (MSA). The May 2018 European Council conclusions on "Enhancing Security Cooperation in and with Asia" (ESIWA) underline the EU's commitment to step up its security outreach in Asia, in order to complement its economic reach. This project is based on three pillars: political dialogue, cooperation and capacity building, and public diplomacy.

Among all these projects and operations, maritime information sharing plays a fundamental role. Connecting maritime information networks and circulating data

---

12. Document JOIN (2021) 27 final

13. The Heads of State and Government bordering the Gulf of Guinea, from Senegal to Angola, as well as regional organisations (ECCAS for Central Africa and ECOWAS for West Africa), committed themselves in 2013 to increasing the security of maritime spaces. This process aims in particular to establish a security framework comprising 26 dedicated centres, ranging from the national to the inter-regional level, spread along the entire coast.

increases the effectiveness of the resources deployed and the structures that have been established. The MICA Center (Maritime Information Cooperation & Awareness Center) has been the French centre of expertise dedicated to maritime security since its creation in 2016. It is constantly on the lookout to identify and analyse situations and events affecting maritime navigation on all oceans. It is linked to various information fusion centres, such as the Information Fusion Center (IFC) in Singapore, and benefits from partnerships with the MDAT-GoG “Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade - Gulf of Guinea” and the MSCHoA “Maritime Security Centre Horn of Africa” which it hosts. It provides shipowners with targeted information on activities and risks in specific maritime areas, and issues alerts to ships and the relevant centres. Located in Brest, it enables the sharing of expertise for the benefit of all and encourages synergies with various actors in the maritime world. Thus, the MICA Centre is a major player in maritime security.

## Europe as a global security provider

Europe now wishes to strengthen its position as a global security provider, guaranteeing free and open access to maritime spaces and securing its strategic supplies. It attaches particular importance to the protection of the maritime environment as well as compliance with the Convention on the Law of the Sea.

To this end, it is now necessary to build on the revised 2018 EUMSS Action Plan (RAP), whose latest implementation report confirms Europe's ambition to become a global provider of maritime security. To achieve this objective, which is also part of the Union's Global Strategy published in 2016, an update of the EUMSS seems necessary so as to make the European response even more coherent and better adapted to current and future challenges in a rapidly changing security environment.

Indeed, while CSDP deployments such as *Operation Atalanta*, are real successes, it is necessary to gain in agility, rationalise and use all available means in an increasingly uncertain world. This would avoid duplication and strengthen the credibility of existing tools, some of which fall outside the strict CSDP framework. For example, since 1995 there has been a non-permanent European maritime force, EUROMARFOR, gathering France, Italy, Portugal and Spain together, and capable of conducting naval operations. Dedicated primarily to the European Union, it operates flexibly and can be deployed within the NATO framework or under the mandate of other international organisations. Similarly, *Operation AGENOR*, the military pillar of the EMASoH mission “European-led Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz”, was given the mission to protect European maritime interests by guaranteeing freedom of movement in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. Unlike CSDP operations, it is an *ad hoc*

operation which offers the advantage of a certain flexibility. These tools need to be put into perspective and made coherent within the future EU maritime policy to ensure better coordination with existing institutional processes. Such various initiatives must not be blind spots in the European Union's Strategic Compass.

The French Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the discussions on the *Strategic Compass* must be seized as opportunities to gain a better understanding of our partners' expectations and to reflect together on such strategic issues, in order to strengthen the European Union's position as a global provider of maritime security.



# Europe and the sea

Jean-Dominique GIULIANI

*President of the Robert Schuman Foundation*

Out of twenty-seven Member States, twenty-two have a seaboard. The European Union's coastline is over 70,000 km long, boarding two oceans and five seas. With the French overseas territories, exclusive economic zone (EEZ) reaches 19 million km<sup>2</sup>. The sea has been a major factor in Europe's greatest economic and political revolutions, ensuring its domination over the world for some time, by launching the most rapid globalization movement in the history of humanity.

Since the 17th century, the succession of European nations' Golden Ages was only possible thanks to the sea, which brought innovations and good news, while the land-based episodes of European history are more reminiscent of phases of decline and troubles. From Venice to the British Empire, Europe's prosperity was forged in its openness to trade and its influence on all seas.



Venice symbol of a European thalassocracy. Its power relies entirely on maritime trade ©Unknown author

The world maps are adorned with names of European navigators : Barents, Tasman, Hudson, Champlain, La Salle, Bering, Cook, Bougainville, La Pérouse, etc. The sea was conquered by the Europeans even before the land was totally explored!

For a long time, France hesitated between its "land-based" identity and its maritime vocation. For Fernand Braudel, "it is a kind of structural infirmity that affects the maritime power of France". In reality, the history of our country is torn between vigorous maritime impulses and frigid withdrawals. But the French economy really took off and began its industrial revolution when it opened up to maritime trade. By the end of the 18th century, France was ranking third in the world's maritime trade and its foreign trade tripled in less than a century.

Financial institutions appeared in Holland during the 17th century, and London soon became the commercial heart of the world. European agriculture was transformed by the introduction of new products (corn, potatoes, beans, tomatoes, coffee, cocoa, tea and, of course, spices) while it exported horses, sheep, cattle, cereals and its vineyards all over the world.

During the 19th century, the United States, thanks to their shipbuilding technologies and the support of France, managed to emancipate themselves from England and dethrone their maritime hegemony at the turn of the 20th century.

This was the era of nationalities and nationalism. On the European continent, wars followed one another, threatening to drag it down into the limbo of History. The Europeans invented land conflicts of an unprecedented scale. And there again, it is the domination of the seas, especially that of the United States and Great Britain, which saved them.

Pacified and rapidly rebuilt, thanks to the integration movement, the European Community opened up to trade, i.e. trade by sea, as early as the signature of Treaty of Rome (1957). Its return to the heart of the world economy, its desire to expand through the economy and its renunciation of war, made it a success, which was unlikely in 1945. As it opened its markets, adopted the rules of the liberal economy, and gradually abolished its internal economic borders, Europe experienced unprecedented prosperity in the second half of the 20th century. To this day, the cumulated GDP of the 27 Member-States remains among the highest in the world. 77% of Europe's external trade and 35% of its important internal trade are carried out by sea.

The oceans give the Europeans such vision and universal vocation. To look at the world through the sea is to become aware of its strengths, and therefore, of the need to think as a global power. Europe's maritime assets are very real.

The 27 Member-States own 1,080 commercial ports, more than 6,900 large ships and 4,100 shipping companies that control nearly 40% of the world fleet. 55% of the container ships, these giants of the seas, are chartered by European companies, representing approximately 40% of the value of maritime trade in the world.

European navies all taken together, Europe has 330 warships, a figure that is close to the 365 ships of the American fleet. However, the operational level of these fleets is contrasted, to say the least. With the exception of the French Navy, which is now the largest in Europe, the fleets of our partners do not shine in terms of their technological level.



The “protection of fishery resources” is one of the only five exclusive competences of the Union, i.e. delegated by the States at the federal level. The Common Fisheries Policy initially consisted of ensuring that Europeans had equal access to waters and fish resources. It is now entirely focused on the conservation of the resource.

The EU fishing fleet is the fourth largest in the world, with nearly 75,300 vessels, handling 6% of world catches. Europe wishes to limit one of the few remaining human activities that takes live organisms off the natural stocks. Nearly 40% of the world’s seafood comes from aquaculture.

The same applies to the environment, a field in which the European Union is very active. European texts oblige the Member-States to integrate strict rules for the preservation of marine areas, now protected beyond the territorial sea. In France, about 60 Natura 2000 sites are exclusively maritime and more than 150 include a maritime area.

The European Commission has opportunely invented the concept of “integrated maritime policy”, then proposed, in May 2021, the “blue economy strategy”.

Euromarfor is a European maritime force based on cooperation between the French, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese navies. It has been activated five times for operations, for example in 1992, when it enforced, on behalf of NATO, the arms embargo during the Balkan wars.

The European Atalanta mission to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia has been so successful that it has been copied by all the world’s navies. It involved 23 Member-States, more than 2,000 men and helped secure 1.4 million km<sup>2</sup> of the Indian Ocean. Other missions in the Mediterranean Sea have helped fight against illegal immigration or arms trafficking near conflict zones, such as in Libya.

The Frontex agency, now called the “Coast Guard and Border Guard Agency”, helps Member-States in the fight against illegal immigration. It is particularly active in the Mediterranean Sea and relies on its own resources, including personnel, which are now carrying weapons. Since 2002, the Union has had a maritime safety agency, based in Lisbon, which contributes to maritime safety and pollution prevention.

France is one of the driving forces of European policies’ maritimization. This process is accelerating, following the pace of the emergence of new strategic challenges, all of which have a maritime dimension. The world’s smallest continent in terms of size must project itself all over the planet to preserve its model, its economy and its security. By investing in all the oceans, Europe perpetuates history, but also meets its interests.

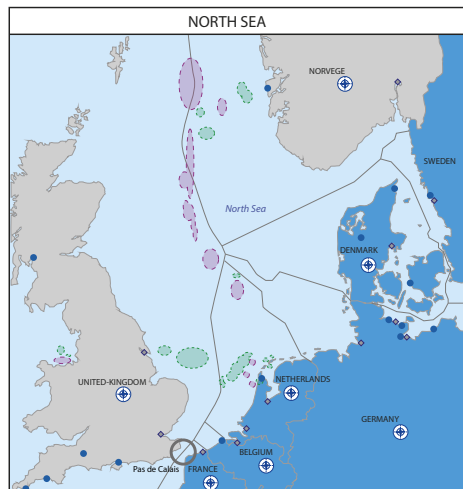
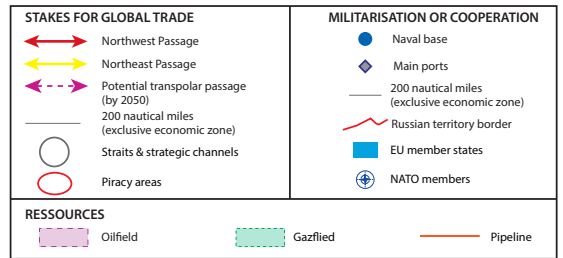
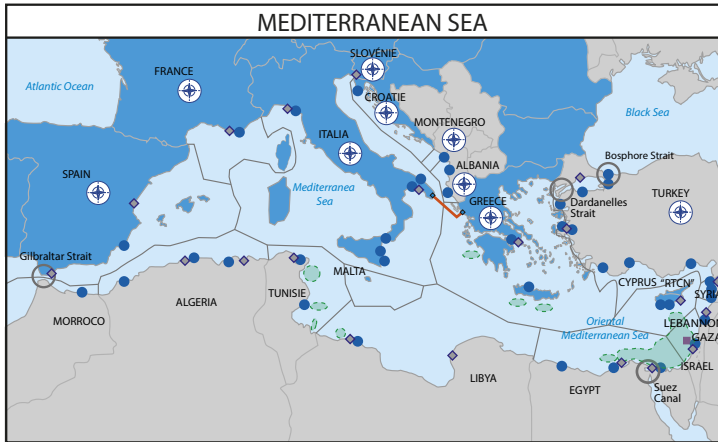
In June 2014, the Union adopted a maritime security strategy enshrining the French concept of State action at sea, one of the most efficient ways of ensuring the security and control of maritime activities. The Union's external action promotes the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and its content: the refusal of the “territorialization” of maritime spaces, the reaffirmation of the principle of freedom of navigation, the organization of rescue at sea, the status of exclusive economic zones and the rights attached to them. Maritime multilateralism still exists despite China's practices in Asia. France adopted it a long time ago and Europe supports it.

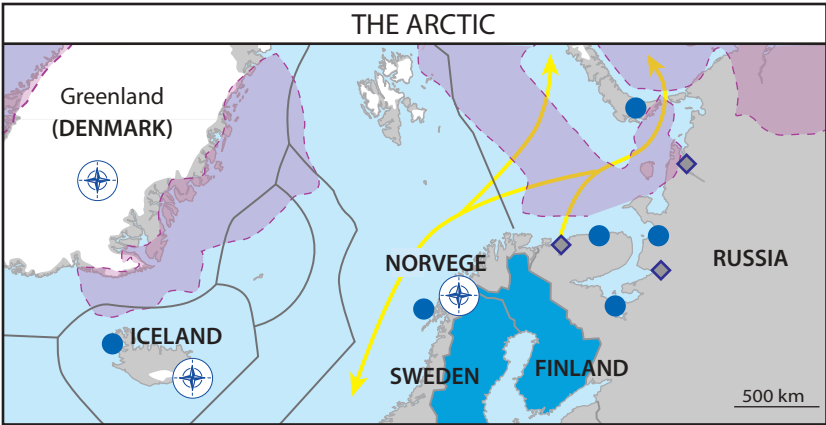
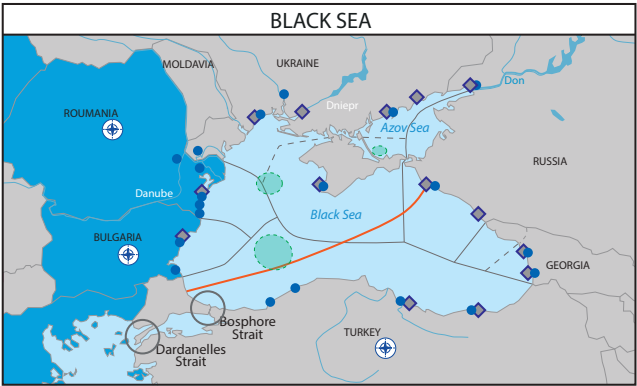


A container ship : 55% of these giants of the seas are chartered by European companies. *@flickr Kees Torn*

# THE 6 SEA BASINS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

©CESM





# European navies : a pragmatic approach to solidarity

Admiral (2S) Patrick HÉBRARD  
EuroDefense - France association

“Europe is, to a large extent, about ships, convoys and victories over the immensity of salt water”<sup>1</sup> wrote Fernand Braudel. Maritime geography also has its influence. The European Union has divided its surrounding seas into six maritime basins - the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the North Sea, the Atlantic Ocean and the Arctic Ocean - and defined regional strategies adapted to their characteristics and environment. The EU’s overseas territories provide it with an exclusive economic zone (EEZ), which, despite Brexit, amounts to 19 million km<sup>2</sup>.

Of the 27 EU countries, only 22 have maritime borders. Austria, Luxembourg, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary have no coastline and only riverine navies. Of these 22 states, 17 are also members of NATO.

## European navies in 2022

An analysis of the different navies and their missions allows them to be classified into two groups - regional and oceanic.

The regional navies are designed and equipped for missions in their basin. Thus, there are the Baltic navies, which include those of Sweden, Finland, Poland and the three Baltic states - Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania - consisting mainly of patrol boats, fighters and minelayers. Amphibious capabilities are small vessels, speedboats or LCPs (Landing Craft Personnel), designed to land on islands. Swedish submarines are adapted for navigation in shallow waters (the maximum depth in the Baltic is 459 m with an average of 55 m). The German and Danish navies also participate in activities and exercises in this enclosed sea, such as NATO’s BALTOP. Cooperation has been established. Sweden and Finland have set up the SFNTG (Sweden, Finland Naval Task Group), which is already conducting maritime surveillance and developing a joint amphibious capability.

In the Black Sea, the Romanian and Bulgarian navies patrol from the mouth of the Danube to the opening of the Bosphorus. They are equipped with old ships, often bought from other navies. They carry out the Poseidon exercise bilaterally, within the framework of NATO. Romania also organises an annual exercise, Sea Shield, in which some 20 ships participate, including the NATO SNMG<sup>2</sup>. Similarly, the Croatian navy confines itself to the Adriatic and those of Cyprus, Malta and Ireland to their territorial waters and EEZ.

---

1. Fernand Braudel, *Grammaire des civilisations*, Flammarion (1993), page 348.

2. Standard NATO Maritime Group.

Oceanic navies are deployed beyond the EEZs because they also have to protect overseas territories. This is the case for France, Spain and the United Kingdom, but also for the Netherlands, Denmark and Portugal. Germany and Italy, have real capabilities, used to focus on their priority areas of action - the Baltic and North Sea in the case of Germany, and the Mediterranean in the case of Italy. They are now deploying in the Indian Ocean and the near Pacific. As for Greece, the continuing tension with Turkey obliges it to keep its ships in its approaches to the eastern Mediterranean.

## Cooperation

In addition to their participation in NATO exercises and SNMGs, cooperation between navies has developed. In 1948, Belgium and the Netherlands signed the BeNeSam agreements, which were reinforced in 1995 by the so-called Admiral Benelux Agreement (ABNL) establishing a combined naval staff between the two navies. The Admiral, commanding this staff, is responsible for combined operations, for planning joint operational activities in peacetime and wartime and for the execution of training. He is also responsible for joint equipment and personnel and supervises joint training programmes.

Both countries are equipped with the same frigates, type Karel Doorman. In 2018, they decided to jointly build sixteen naval vessels, two frigates and six mine countermeasures vessels for each country, for a total amount of more than four billion euros. The Netherlands will oversee the construction of the frigates and Belgium the minehunters. In addition, Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands have agreed to create a joint command for their special forces units.

The Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, created NORDEFCO in 2009 to strengthen their defence cooperation. But the lack of a common structure has so far not allowed the development of a unified Baltic Sea architecture. Researcher Barbara Kunz noted in 2016 that this cooperation “remains minimal and concerns areas considered of little interest”<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, differences in foreign policy priorities and national interests persist.

Among the cooperation initiatives between European states in the naval field, the most emblematic is undoubtedly EUROMARFOR, created in 1995 by Spain, France, Italy and Portugal to participate in the missions defined in the Petersberg Declaration. Led in turn by one of the four nations, it was activated for the first time in 2002 and has

---

3. Kunz Barbara, *Fragmentation de l'architecture de sécurité dans la Baltique*, Le Champs de Mars, 2017, p. 92.



been active for a total of 70 months since its creation. It currently leads the maritime force off Lebanon as part of UNIFIL.<sup>4</sup>

The European Amphibious Initiative (EAI) and the European Carrier Group Interoperability Initiative (ECGII) are two initiatives aimed at developing the interoperability of European amphibious and naval aviation capabilities through greater cooperation, harmonisation of procedures and joint exercises.

The EAI was created in 2000 by five nations - France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom - with such capabilities. Three naval forces were involved in the initiative - the Anglo-Dutch Amphibious Force (UKNLAF), the Spanish-Italian Amphibious Force (SIAF) and the French Amphibious Force (FRAF) - creating a total of 12 ships and 9,000 personnel.

These units participate in all NATO exercises and conducted their first Emerald Move exercise in November 2010 on the coast of Senegal. Officials from each country meet annually to share feedback and agree on future activities. In 2019, this seminar gathered representatives from thirteen countries in Italy - besides the five permanent ones, Greece, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Portugal, Sweden but also Turkey, had sent representatives.

The ECGII is a project initiated by France and the UK in 2007. It led to a declaration of intent by the defence ministers of nine European countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom) in 2008 and came into force in 2009. Its aim is to create a multinational assault carrier group - a naval force around an aircraft carrier with its escort. This capability can then be offered to NATO, the European Union or an ad hoc coalition.

These initiatives are complemented by the UK Joint Expeditionary Force, created in 2012 by the UK with Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden, which is largely joint, and the Franco-British Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF), also joint.

The Franco-German Naval Force (FNFA), created in 2011, is activated through a joint exercise, which normally takes place every year. However, these exercises remain modest and have not been extended into joint operations. An exchange of helicopter pilots has existed for many years. Negotiations on the Future Combat Air System (SCAF), including a future fighter aircraft, could lead to the creation of embarked fleets in European countries.

---

4. United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

In addition, the Future Combat Aircraft Facility (SCAF), including a future fighter aircraft, could enable the creation of ship-based fleets in European countries.

Among the successes of this cooperation is the Maritime Intelligence Operational Centre for Drugs (MAOC-N), an international agency based in Lisbon. Proposed by France in 2005, the agency was set up in 2006 and includes representatives from the seven signatory states: Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom. It is open to other European countries. Five other countries and several international organisations have observer status: Canada, Cape Verde, Germany, Greece and Morocco, as well as the European Commission, Europol, JIATFS<sup>5</sup> based in Key West, Florida, UNODC<sup>6</sup> and the European Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA). Since its creation, this centre has made it possible to seize 190 tonnes of cocaine and 460 tonnes of cannabis.

## **A modest operational record**

The EU's most emblematic naval and maritime operation is still *Operation Atalanta*, off the coast of Somalia, which has made it possible to resupply Mogadishu and eradicate piracy in this maritime area. Events have dropped from 330 in 2011 to around 30 in 2021. The operation, which began in 2008, has been extended until 31 December 2022 and may continue beyond that date. A Naval Cooperation Centre (MICA Center) was created in Brest in 2016 to centralise data on events at sea - piracy and brigandage - in relation to the various centres around the world. It maintains a close relationship with the OHQ Atalanta, based in Rota, since the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the operation, linked to the Brexit.

In the Mediterranean, Operation Irini, off the coast of Libya, decided on 31 March 2020, replaced Operation Sophia, launched in June 2015 and suspended and then stopped due to tensions between Brussels and the Italian government on the issue of migrants. Irini, whose main mandate is to contribute to the implementation of the UN arms embargo on Libya, has been extended until 31 March 2023.

In the Gulf of Guinea, the French Navy has had a quasi-permanent presence since 1990, with Operation Corymbe. In conjunction with the UKMTO (United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations), the French MICA Center (Maritime Information Cooperation & Awareness Center) has been implementing a reporting and alert mechanism, MDAT-GoG, for merchant ships since 2016. Several European Union (EU) navies are implementing the "Coordinated Maritime Presences" process, which coordinates naval assets and cooperation actions in the Gulf of Guinea. Denmark has

---

5. Joint Inter Agency Task Force South.

6. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

been participating since 2020 as part of the European Response Initiative (ERI).

Since January 2020, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands and Portugal have been participating in a new maritime traffic protection mission in the Strait of Hormuz called EMASOH (European-Led Mission Awareness Strait of Hormuz) and named Agenor for France. This mission could be a first implementation of the coordinated maritime presence concept (PMC) presented on 29 August 2019 by Federica Mogherini.

For some years now, the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle has been accompanied by a European escort during its missions, as was the case during the Arromanches, Clemenceau and Foch missions with British, German, Belgian, Danish, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese frigates.

The fact that many European navies belong to NATO already constitutes an important common ground at the tactical and operational levels. They use the same procedures, data links and have become familiar with combat tactics in the different battle areas during NATO exercises. The STANAGs <sup>7</sup> developed within NATO provide the necessary interoperability between ships (replenishment at sea, aircraft deployment, ammunition, logistics, etc.). From there, it is relatively simple to set up a multinational naval force that is rapidly operational.

To conclude this European overview, it should be noted that cooperation between European navies is still handicapped by the disparity of ships, but also of armaments and munitions. The areas of responsibility of the navies within each country also differ. The French Navy devotes 20% of its sea time to state action at sea, a mission that few navies in Europe carry out despite the recognised efficiency of the French organisation.

## **Solidarity forged on pragmatic cooperation**

Enhanced naval cooperation must be based on operational need. The 2003 European Security Strategy ignored maritime aspects and its update in 2008 made only passing reference to the fight against piracy, due to the Atalanta mission. Europe has an integrated maritime policy which is a genuine strategy for the sustainable use of ocean resources and their protection. This strategy applies to all maritime areas, including overseas. Europe's commitment to the preservation of this common asset of humanity justifies its presence in the world.

---

7. Standardisation agreement

A maritime security strategy, requested at the April 2010 meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers in defence format in Luxembourg, was not published until June 2014. A comprehensive EU strategy was adopted in June 2016. For the first time, it gives the European strategy a global dimension, albeit with a cautious engagement in East Asia and the Indo-Pacific. It is based on three principles - credibility, responsiveness and coherence. The implementation of this strategy has remained embryonic. However, it should make it possible to launch a number of shared initiatives. Officer exchanges are part of this.

## **Military Erasmus and Maritime Erasmus**

Military Erasmus, inspired by the European Erasmus + programme, was created in November 2008 by the decision of the European Union's defence ministers meeting around the conclusions of the ESDP, which was enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty and came into force on 1 December 2009. At this 2903rd meeting of ministers, the European officer exchange programme was established under the name "EMILYO" (European Military Initiative for the Exchange of Young Officers) or simply "The Initiative". The objective of this network is to contribute to a better mutual knowledge and thus to improve the interoperability of the European armed forces. Exchanges are based on bilaterally signed agreements that open up possibilities for additional European funding.

In almost fifteen years and despite the many challenges it has faced (academic accreditation, financial restrictions, bringing together national training courses), Military Erasmus has played a part in and should make it possible to establish the interoperability sought by the European Union in the long term. It calls for stronger cohesion of the common security and defence policy by encouraging the emergence of a common training base among young officer cadets. Finally, it also stimulates an exchange between civilian and military training, without setting aside the link with the defence industry. Complementary to national training, the EMILYO creates opportunities for new forms of European integration and for the emergence of a common strategic culture in Europe.

Furthermore, the European Union Military Committee has also taken an interest in the results achieved by military Erasmus in terms of the definition of officers' competences relating to the implementation of CSDP.

### **Military Erasmus in France**

Initiated during the French Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2008, this initiative is still little known in France, with the exception of the participating schools which benefit from European exchanges thanks to the Initiative.

The participation of the Air and Space Academy illustrates the benefits of military Erasmus. Since 2014, in the framework of Erasmus +, the School has signed partnerships with Belgium (Royal Military School of Brussels) and the Czech Republic (University of Defence of Brno) and since 2018, it has joined the EMILYO programme with the ambition of creating a common module (Common Security and Defence Policy seminar) offered to all the academies of the network. An international semester was organised in 2019 including Greece, Poland, Italy and Romania.

In the maritime field, the term “maritime Erasmus” is increasingly being used. Its uniqueness stems from the specificity of maritime studies, which link the civil and military aspects and, therefore, go beyond the purely military framework. Thus, the maritime Erasmus is part of the Erasmus+ programme and opens up possibilities for multiple partnerships. Among the many exchange programmes in the maritime field, let us mention Erasmus University Rotterdam, one of the most active projects led by the Maritime University of Rotterdam. In France, the Ecole Nationale Supérieure Maritime (ENSM) joined the programme in 2018, running until 2027.

## Proposals for European naval cooperation

Since 2014, the European Union has had a maritime security strategy based on a cross-sectoral approach while respecting the internal organisation of each member state and compliance with international law. The permanent presence of naval forces “*shall contribute to freedom of navigation and good governance by deterring, preventing and combating illegal and illicit activities in the global maritime domain.*” The exchange of information should provide a common understanding of the maritime situation. “*The objective is to ensure that maritime surveillance information collected by one maritime authority, civil or military, and deemed necessary for the operational activities of other authorities, can be exchanged and used multiple times rather than being collected and produced several times. The ultimate goal is to achieve a common and validated maritime situational awareness and to contribute to a more coordinated use of available space-based systems and remote sensing technologies and their applications and derived services.*”

The Council conclusions on maritime security, approved on 22 June 2021<sup>1</sup>, confirm these guidelines, welcome the positive action of the ATALANTA mission, with its extended mandate, and IRINI, extended until 31 March 2023, as well as the concept of a coordinated maritime presence implemented in the Gulf of Guinea. They also agree on the importance of a significant naval presence in the Indo-Pacific region. The EU intends to play an increasingly active role in the protection of the maritime environment and its interests across the oceans. Thus, the Joint Communication

---

1. Council conclusions on maritime security 9946/21 of 22 June 2021

(JOIN (2021) 27) of 13 October 2021 confirms a strengthened European Union commitment to the Arctic “for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous region”. The Joint Communication (JOIN (2021) 24) of 16 September 2021 calls for enhanced cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

*“The European Union will seek to conduct more joint exercises and port calls with partners in the Indo-Pacific region, including multilateral exercises, in order to combat piracy and protect freedom of navigation while strengthening European Union naval diplomacy in the region... Given the importance of a significant European naval presence in the Indo-Pacific region, the European Union will explore ways to enhance naval deployments by its Member States in the region. Taking into account the lessons learned from the first evaluation of the concept of coordinated European Union maritime presences, the European Union will assess the opportunity to establish maritime areas of interest in the Indo-Pacific region and will cooperate accordingly with partners in the region, including by exploring the possibility of involving them in this initiative... The European Union will also encourage the consolidation of information exchange mechanisms through information clearing houses, including through the Indo-Pacific Regional Information Exchange System (IORIS).”*

These documents, which have been endorsed by European Union member states, call for the strengthening of operational links between European navies and the consideration of further cooperation.

## **Proposals :**

1 - Some European countries have interests in the same geographical areas where they face common risks and threats. It should be possible to strengthen their cooperation in these areas:

- In the Caribbean, between Spain, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom to fight against drug trafficking and to help the population during disasters, which are frequent in this region;
- In the Gulf of Guinea, between Denmark, Spain, France, Portugal and the United Kingdom, which could be joined by Italy and Germany, to combat piracy, banditry and illegal trafficking;
- In the Horn of Africa and the Persian Gulf against piracy, trafficking, terrorism and denial of access, with control of the straits;
- In the European Basins.

The Indo-Pacific Exclusive Economic Zones require an active presence to demonstrate our determination to protect the marine environment and ensure maritime safety and freedom of navigation in cooperation with neighbouring countries.

All these areas should be the subject of a permanent and coordinated maritime presence between European countries. This coordination would in no way call into question national sovereignty. It would show European solidarity by serving common interests and sharing costs. It would also allow the embarkation of liaison officers or foreign detachments, as was done during Operation Atalanta, with the embarkation of visiting teams from the Baltic States on French frigates.

2 - The European Defence Agency (EDA) has developed a surveillance network shared between the navies (MARSUR) and a common information sharing environment (CISE) for the maritime domain, managed by EMSA<sup>2</sup>. It is important that these two projects succeed so that all the navies and administrations of the European Union member states have a common maritime situation.

3 - Exchanges of officers are very important and could be increased to improve mutual knowledge and knowledge of maritime areas. Military Erasmus, launched in 2008, could be relaunched at the EUFP where the question of European higher education is one of the priorities for the Council of the European Union.

4 - Crew training could be progressively standardised throughout Europe. It could be entrusted to a few major European commands. Simulation has become an essential tool to meet the training needs of forces in a national and multinational context. Technical developments have made simulation more realistic than real training and exercises in many cases. Realistic simulation training should be stimulated on a European scale. A European technological advantage in this field could be achieved by making available the R&D window of the European Defence Fund<sup>3</sup>.

5 - The development of exercises conducted by Europeans in the different basins, in the framework of the European Union or NATO, makes it possible to strengthen cooperation and mutual knowledge while ensuring a presence in the exercise area. The concepts of operational control, entrusted to the commander of a joint operation, and operational command, retained by the chiefs of staff of each country's armed forces, concepts that have been practised in joint operations for many years, make it possible to reconcile solidarity and sovereignty, even during high-intensity engagements.

6 - The field of shipbuilding, which is still very dispersed in Europe, also has a lot to gain from increased cooperation: by enabling the construction of sufficiently large series of ships, it is possible to reduce construction costs and, also, operating costs by pooling training and logistics. Unfortunately, it seems that this cooperation is becoming more difficult than in the past. The industrialists already use NATO STANAGs which

---

2. European Maritime Security Agency

3. Report of EuroDéfense Working Group 23 and EDTA – European defence cooperation on Education, Training and Simulation – 27 September 2017

guarantee interoperability between units. In the absence of full harmonisation of requirements, the Dutch have proposed to focus on modularisation. In the absence of agreement on a common ship, it may be possible to agree on common equipment - radar, sonar, defence systems, etc. - but it is also up to the staffs to agree on a common operational need, avoiding the multiplication of specificities, often superfluous<sup>4</sup>. The PESCO European Corvette Project (EPC), which now brings together 7 countries<sup>5</sup>, is a step in this direction.

The Europeanisation of naval armaments programmes will be a determining factor in the necessary consolidation of the European naval industry, which is lagging behind those in place or in the making in the aeronautics, space, land or missile industries.

#### 7 - The development of a common logistics :

- Taking the example of the European Air Transport Command, a European Naval Logistics Command could be created, including supply ships and workshop ships.
- Joint ammunition stocks already exist between some countries. They could be developed while respecting the rights of participating countries to use their stocks according to their operational needs and missions.
- Some military ports could be Europeanised to be able to receive ships from other European navies in the long term and ensure a certain level of maintenance.

8 - Europe has financed satellite programmes such as Galileo and Copernicus and controls their operation with ESA and the member states. It could have vessels dedicated to responding to natural disasters - both a hospital ship and a ship with kits to assist a stricken country. A command ship capable of taking on board a military and civilian staff could also be envisaged for crisis intervention.

9 - The embarkation of foreign European sailors on the ships of the various navies should become "commonplace". Furthermore, five European countries - Austria, Hungary, Luxembourg, the Czech Republic and Slovakia - do not have a maritime front. Most of them have a riverine navy on the Danube or the Elbe. Obtaining their support for a naval strategy is proving complicated. Getting some of the specialists on board ships would raise their awareness. In 1965, the US Navy took on board the USS Claude V. Ricketts a multinational crew belonging to seven allied countries, half of the crew being American.

It is relationships of trust that must be established through training, education, and

---

4. Naval combat system development cooperation in the future – Captain Jan Wind and Cdr Paul S. Rouffaer – published in *Marineblad* (Netherlands) December 2004

5. Italy, Denmark, France, Greece, Norway, Portugal, Spain



joint missions if we are to progress towards a common defence. “Force them to build a tower together and you will turn them into brothers.” (Saint Exupéry)



Italian Navy frigate involved in *Operation Atalanta*  
©EUNAVFOR



# The European Union's maritime security strategy, a tool for an integrated approach to the protection of European sea-related interests

Joannecke BALFOORT  
*Director for Security and Defence Policy  
at the European Union*

The importance of maritime areas for the European Union is well established. Europe draws resources from the seas and oceans that border it, which are of prime importance for its prosperity and its people. As a global economic power, the EU largely depends on communication routes and maritime infrastructures, the latter allowing the transport of about 90% of goods and ensuring, thanks to the network of submarine cables, almost all communications in the world today.

Europe first approached maritime issues from a fisheries perspective with the establishment of a specific policy in the early 1980s, the Common Fisheries Policy. The EU then progressively extended its action to the safety of ships and navigation, to the prevention of pollution (“Erika packages”) and then to the preservation of the marine environment and the ecological control of its uses.

During the 2000s, the EU worked on the development of an integrated approach to maritime issues, in order to globally understand sea-related challenges and the associated policies. These efforts led to the publication, in October 2007, of the European Commission’s “Blue Book”, proposing an integrated maritime policy for the European Union. This framework document triggered a series of initiatives in various areas such as maritime transport, employment, scientific research, fisheries and protection of the marine environment.

During these same years, the EU was faced with a worrying increase in security threats in maritime areas of prime importance to its interests. After launching its first naval operation in 2008, *EUNAVFOR Atalanta*, designed to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia, the EU initiated a more general strategic reflection on maritime security in 2012. This work led to a specific strategy, the European Union Maritime Security Strategy (hereafter EUMSS) adopted by the Council on June 24, 2014, in the development of which the Member-States, including France, played a leading role.

The EUMSS defines the EU’s strategic interests in the maritime domain, identifies threats, and sets the framework for a cross-sectoral approach to maritime security issues, considered both in their internal and external aspects, as well as the responses they require. The strategy defines maritime security as “*a situation in the global maritime domain in which international law and national legislation are applied, freedom of navigation is guaranteed, and citizens, infrastructure, transport, the environment and marine resources are protected*”. In this strategy, the EU affirms its willingness to support a stable and safe global maritime domain, according to several principles: a cross-sectoral approach, in particular between civilian and military actors; respect for the rules and principles of law; multilateralism; and complementarity between European and national actors. Several priority areas have been identified: international

cooperation; maritime situational awareness; capacity building; risk management; research, innovation and training.

The EUMSS is complemented by an action plan that was revised in 2018 and addresses all threats (terrorism, cyber threats, hybrid threats, critical infrastructure). This document proposes a series of actions designed to strengthen collaboration between maritime security actors, both civilian and military, in each of the identified areas. The action plan also addresses the global problem of maritime insecurity from a regional perspective. Both the Commission and the High Representative are entrusted with the monitoring of the plan.

The EU is now a fully-fledged player in maritime security, whose action has led to many advances in the area, and particularly :

- The development of a European system for sharing maritime information within the framework of the CISE (Common Information Sharing Environment) project, coordinated by the European Commission with the support of the European Maritime Safety Agency and in close collaboration with the Member-States;
- The development of the coastguard function at the European level, by strengthening cooperation between the appropriate European agencies (European Maritime Safety Agency, European Fisheries Control Agency and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency/FRONTEX) as well as between the Member-States;
- Operational deployments under the EU banner, such as the naval operations *Atalanta* in the Indian Ocean and *Irini* in the Mediterranean, which have greatly contributed to reducing the threat-level in their areas of action;
- Support to partner countries, in order to strengthen their maritime capabilities, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea and the Indian Ocean, through aid programs and several civilian missions under the Common Security and Defense Policy.

The EU is able to provide a wide range of expertise, technical capabilities and instruments, and combine them in the service of maritime security. For example, the naval operation *Atalanta* is part of the EU's broader integrated approach to the Horn of Africa and Somalia, and provides support to assistance programs and civilian missions deployed in the region, in order to strengthen the coastal states' capacities and build the regional maritime security architecture. This coordinated approach, and the synergies it creates between different types of actions and initiatives, is the foundation of the EUMSS. It is the very strength of the EU in an area such as maritime security, with so many challenges.

The EU continues to improve and develop its tools dedicated to maritime security. In 2021, a new dimension was added, known as the concept of "Coordinated Maritime

Presences” (CMP), which relies on the naval and air assets deployed by the Member-States to increase the EU's visibility and capacity to act in maritime areas that are strategic to its interests. The concept was first implemented in the Gulf of Guinea, with a participation of France, amongst others. Then, in February 2022, the Council decided to deploy another CMP in the northwestern Indian Ocean. This initiative, which complements the action of Operation *Atalanta*, will enable the EU to expand its presence and action in the Indian Ocean. The implementation of the CMPs in the Indian Ocean is part of the EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, which was adopted in September 2021 and states that maritime security is a privileged area to strengthen links with our partners in the Indo-Pacific area.

The work on the *Strategic Compass* has fuelled reflections on the role that the EU intends to play in the maritime domain in particular. It is in the light of this work that an update of the EUMSS will be undertaken, in order to enhance this integrated approach to maritime security, whose cardinal principles remain respect for international law (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) and the promotion of cooperation at all levels.

# Strategic Compass

EuroDefense - France Association  
et Nathalie de KANIV



After the decision of the Council of the European Union on March 21<sup>st</sup>, followed by the European Council's endorsement on March 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>, the European Union is moving the adoption of the Strategic Compass, setting out the strategic guidelines for Europe's security and defence by 2030. But the scope of the Compass is broader than the CSDP: it includes industrial aspects falling to the responsibility of the Commission. Based on the 27 Member-States inclusive dialogue, which has been on-going during four EU presidencies (Germany, Portugal, Slovenia and France), the Compass comes with an action plan, a timetable and precise measures, offering a step forward in the field of security and defence. It shows ambition and a will to take action in four areas: crisis management, resilience, capability development and partnerships.

The consensual objective of European resilience addresses, among other things, strategic spaces that are contested and exposed to new and increased competition: seas, outer space, cyberspace and even airspace. The specificity of such spaces, which are free, open and, above all, common, is now being challenged, through international law considerations, through remilitarization, and with the appearance of hybrid threats combined with the simultaneous use of conventional and non-conventional means, as well as the definition of interdiction zones.

## Maritime space

The stakes are constantly increasing in a rapidly changing geostrategic context. Consequently, common spaces are included in the Compass. The maritime domain is naturally featured: the aim is to ensure its safe, secure and sustainable use, in order to increase Europe's strategic autonomy. It encompasses various fields: maritime transport, offshore operations, fishing and aquaculture, tourism, port services, shipbuilding, defence and maritime security, scientific research, various services, etc.

To this end, the European Union has a cross-sectoral Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) which aims to reconcile a sustainable exploitation of the seas and oceans while allowing the development of a maritime economy and protecting the marine environment.

During the French presidency of the EU, the interest in maritime issues has been displayed through various events, first of all the *Forum on Maritime Security* held in Brest (January 2022), but also the defence segment of the *Indo-Pacific Forum* or the *One Ocean Summit* (February 2022).

Notwithstanding the regional interests of the Member-States, a common vision on maritime security and defence makes it possible to anticipate crises and threats and to act together in a coordinated manner.

Among the objectives of the *Compass* is the reinforcement of joint actions in the maritime domain, and of the *Coordinated Maritime Presence*, starting with the Indo-Pacific, which is a vital area for European supplies, and home to 60% of the world's population with the most dynamic GDP, not to mention the growing investment in the field of defence.

The *Strategic Compass* tackles various challenges, such as the lack of respect for international maritime law, the competition for mineral resources (high seas included), the desire of certain countries to create exclusion zones at sea and to hinder the free movement of ships, the plundering of fishery resources...

The interoperability of the Member-States' naval forces makes it possible to ensure a *Coordinated Maritime Presence* in areas of strategic interest for Europe. Already tested in the Gulf of Guinea, this concept should be soon applied in the northern Indian Ocean, as part of Operation AGENOR in support of the EMASoH (*European-led Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz*) mission, as well as in sensitive Indo-Pacific areas. As with *Atalanta*, it involves a close collaboration between navies, but also between civilian and military actors.

Such presence allows for keeping a watchful eye on an area, protecting the interests of Europe and its Member-States, and strengthening interoperability and cooperation between the navies and administrations working at sea. To prepare for these operations, the Compass plans to develop joint exercises between the various actors.

To this end, the MARSUR maritime surveillance tool, launched by the European Defence Agency in September 2006, which is interoperable with CISE (*EU Common Information Sharing Environment*), and whose version 3 is currently being used in operations in the Gulf of Guinea, should be fully operational by 2025.

## Conclusion

The rapidly changing strategic environment requires a regular reassessment of the world's challenges and threats, as well as decisions to take concrete and coordinated action. Thus, a revision of the *Strategic Compass* is planned every 3 years, based on a Member-States driven dialogue. Nevertheless, the *Compass* is, above all, an instrument that is solely relevant when it is adapted and implemented according to the evolution of risks and threats.



# Gearing up for a Competitive Age: The EU as a Maritime Actor

Dr Daniel FIOTT

*Security and Defence Editor, EU Institute for Security Studies*

**W**ith the Strategic Compass, the European Union has set itself a high level of ambition for its maritime security. The Compass calls for a higher level of investment in high-end naval capabilities and it underlines the importance of ongoing capability projects such as the European Patrol Corvette. The Strategic Compass also calls for the Union to be better prepared for maritime operations. Accordingly, the European Union must strive to enhance the presence of its existing naval operations in the Mediterranean and the Horn of Africa, and it must find ways to support non-European Union engagements such as Operation Agénor. Additionally, it is time for the Union to undertake more live exercises at sea, increase its number of port calls and expand its areas of maritime interest.

Of course, maritime security is not a new area of focus for the European Union. Back in 2014 the Union developed its Maritime Security Strategy and since this time it has delivered on an action plan to enhance the European Union's maritime surveillance capacities. Yet, today maritime threats are intensifying, and Europe is particularly vulnerable to threats and risks at sea given its geography. Russia's war on Ukraine means more attention will be given to the Baltic and Black Seas, as well as the Arctic. However, Europe's naval presence in the Mediterranean, Gulf of Guinea, Gulf Region and Indo-Pacific are an integral part of Europe's ambition to become a geopolitical player.

This contribution looks at how the European Union approaches its maritime strategy and it reflects on the emerging maritime threats and challenges facing the Union. In this regard, we will look at the reasons why the European Union needs to invest in naval capabilities, ensure its autonomous presence in the Indo-Pacific and secure Europe's littoral environments.

## **The evolution of maritime threats and challenges**

We know that the European Union is heavily dependent on maritime trade routes for power projection and its economic prosperity — 75 % of goods entering Europe do so by sea today and Europe's navies and shipping firms rely on free navigation. However, China's naval expansion in the Indo-Pacific, Russia's naval presence in the High North and the Baltic, Black and Mediterranean Seas and Turkey's hostile maritime acts in the Eastern Mediterranean call into question the relative freedoms Europeans have enjoyed at sea for decades. This poses a challenge for several European Union member states, not least those that have large Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). Consider that Denmark, France and Portugal have some of the largest EEZs in the world when calculated in km<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Europe is home to the world's largest shipping

firms and it is the location for 329 key seaports<sup>1</sup>, which are spread over 68,000 km of coastline and 2,000 islands<sup>2</sup>.

Europe's economic prosperity and security clearly depend on the maritime domain. For example, consider that the Sea-Me-We-5 submarine telecommunication cable routes through six separate maritime zones such as the Mediterranean Sea and the Malacca Strait and has 18 different landing points including France, Italy, Myanmar, Oman and Singapore<sup>3</sup>. Subsea energy pipelines and offshore installations are also vulnerable maritime infrastructures — the European Union imports gas and oil through the Mediterranean, Baltic and North Seas. Furthermore, critical raw materials that are essential for the European economy are located far beyond European Union shores and this includes magnesium from China, palladium from Russia, ruthenium from South Africa and niobium from Brazil<sup>4</sup>. Criminal networks also operate across multiple seas and oceans. Safeguarding sea lines of communication (SLOC) is therefore another - if not the - crucial task for the European Union in the maritime domain.

The world's seas and oceans are yet again becoming a vector for geopolitics and strategic competition. The importance of naval power is yet again on the political agenda. Russia's war in Ukraine and its wider confrontation with Europe and the United States implications the maritime domain in many ways. Not only has Russia spent years attempting to modernise its submarine fleet and long-range precision strike capabilities, but the Russian navy is used to carry long-range Kalibr and short-range Iskander missiles to extenuate their strategic reach and deny free and secure access to key maritime zones like the Baltic and Black Seas. During the course of the Ukraine war, we can observe that Russia has been able to effectively deploy mines and undertake short to medium-range strikes on Ukrainian cities such as Odessa and Mariupol. Finally, we have also seen Russia undertake out of area naval presences in places such as the South-West coast of Ireland, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Japan Strait. Regardless of how the war in Ukraine will end, Russia sees the maritime domain as a key vector through which to challenge Europe and its security.

Furthermore, China is a growing geopolitical maritime rival that cannot be

---

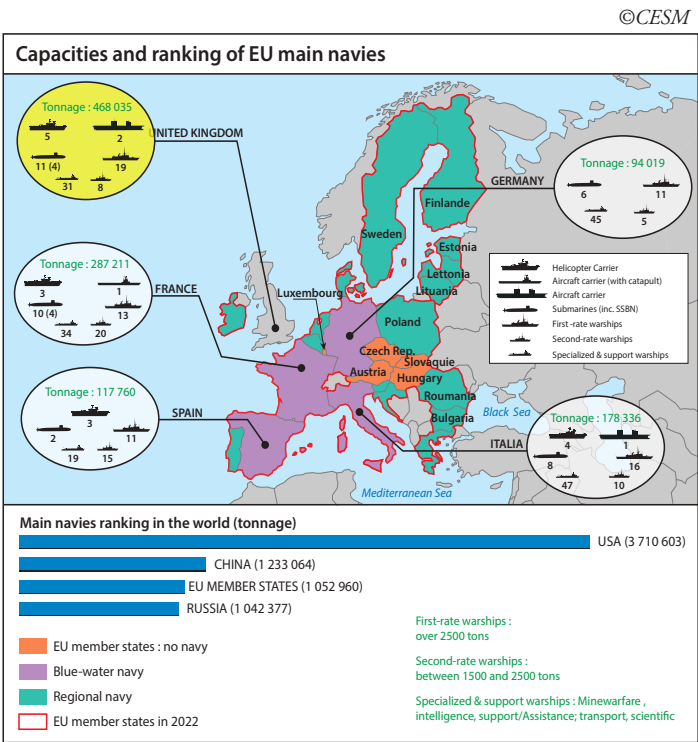
1. European Commission, 'Maritime Year: EU priorities and actions', 5 June 2021: [https://ec.europa.eu/transport/modes/maritime/maritime-transport\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/transport/modes/maritime/maritime-transport_en).

2. Haase, D. and Maier, A., 'Islands of the European Union: State of Play and Future Challenges', Study for the REGI Committee, March 2021: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/652239/IPOL\\_STU\(2021\)652239\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/652239/IPOL_STU(2021)652239_EN.pdf).

3. See: [www.submarinecablemap.com](http://www.submarinecablemap.com).

4. Fiott, D. and Theodosopoulos, T., 'Sovereignty over Supply? The EU's ability to Manage Critical Dependences while Engaging with the World', Brief, No 21, EUISS, December 2020: <https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief%2021%20Supply.pdf>.

ignored. China now has the world’s largest navy to accompany its global network of infrastructure projects, raw material interests and marine investments<sup>5</sup>. Although one should not overestimate the importance of the size of China’s navy, or the fact that it has already conducted live exercises in the Mediterranean and is expanding its naval base at Djibouti, China’s overall maritime power is on the rise. Beijing may not be a traditional sea power but its rapidly growing commercial shipping industry, its shipbuilding market and its ownership of ports infrastructure make it a maritime power. While China may not yet seek naval conflict beyond its immediate maritime vicinity, it does use its navy to protect Chinese fishing fleets that operate in places like Ghana or the Galapagos<sup>6</sup>.



5. Duchâtel, M. and Duplaix, A.S., ‘Blue China: Navigating the Maritime Silk Road to Europe’, Policy Brief, European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), 23 April 2018: [https://ecfr.eu/publication/blue\\_china\\_navigating\\_the\\_maritime\\_silk\\_road\\_to\\_europe/](https://ecfr.eu/publication/blue_china_navigating_the_maritime_silk_road_to_europe/).

6. Yap, C-W, ‘China’s Fishing Fleet, the World’s Largest, Drives Beijing’s Global Ambitions’, The Wall Street Journal, 21 April 2021: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-fishing-fleet-the-worlds-largest-drives-beijings-global-ambitions-11619015507>.

In addition to naval power considerations, the European Union has to take stock of non-conventional concerns in the maritime domain. For example, climate change will increasingly transform maritime spaces and if climate adaptation and coastal protection efforts fail by 2100 approximately 48% of the world's land area, 52% of the global population and 46% of global socio-economic infrastructures and activities will be at risk of flooding<sup>7</sup>. Coastal areas in the European Union and beyond are the most at risk from climate change and this means the Union should ensure the protection of critical infrastructure such as ports, harbours and naval bases. What is more, climate change could lead to the collapse of fishing stocks due to water warming and less oxygen, which in turn may lead to conflict between states and fishing companies, and new shipping lanes are likely to open up in the summer season in the Arctic.

Hybrid threats in the maritime domain pose an additional problem and they can easily intersect with other risks such as climate change, especially where undersea resources such as oil and gas overlap with contested EEZs. We have seen how Russia has deployed hybrid tactics at sea through the construction of the Kerch Bridge or how it has harassed workers legitimately laying undersea cables in the Baltic Sea. The maritime geography of the Baltic Sea, for example, allows Russia to concentrate its efforts below the threshold of conflict. The numerous island chains found near Finland and Sweden - non NATO members - are a prime target for hybrid tactics and intimidation. It is also worth recalling that the Baltic Sea is home to several undersea communications cables and energy pipelines, which can be exploited through hybrid means too. In the Mediterranean, Turkey has also employed hybrid tactics through the way it has used survey vessels to illegally drill in Cyprus' territorial sea and EEZ.

In addition to the more proximate maritime challenge from Russia, China's growing confidence and presence at sea has allowed Beijing to advance its strategic interests. China's approach has seemingly been benign to date, as it uses its navy and maritime presence to support the global activities of state-owned enterprises. However, Beijing is starting to test the cohesiveness of international law at sea. Consider that the UN Convention for the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the UN Charter and customary international law sit ambiguously alongside each other and none of these legal instruments cover the use of force at sea and non-military maritime conflict at the same time. Thus, the construction of artificial islands, illegal sand dredging and sea mining are not easily covered by existing law and norms. On top of this, China has engaged in activities where fishing vessels or coastguards can be used as proxy 'maritime militias' to challenge the free navigation of European naval and commercial vessels<sup>8</sup>.

7. Kirezci, E. et al. 'Projections of global-scale extreme sea levels and resulting episodic coastal flooding over the 21st Century', Scientific Reports, Vol. 10, No 11629, July 2020: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-020-67736-6>.

8. Moore, C. Freedom of Navigation and the Law of the Sea: Warships, States and the Use of Force, Routledge, London/



Legal ambiguity and the congestion inherent in the maritime domain give rise to legal and regulatory loopholes that can become security vulnerabilities<sup>9</sup>.

Yet even accidents at sea may require timely and robust action. For example, the blockage of the Suez Canal by the *Ever Green* container vessel in early 2021 shows that a maritime chokepoint may not only affect global commerce but the freedom of movement of naval vessels. Keep in mind that seventeen days prior to the blockage a French aircraft carrier strike group had passed through the canal on its way to the Indian Ocean<sup>10</sup>. We should think what could have transpired had these naval forces become trapped in the Suez Canal for a prolonged period of time. Furthermore, oil spillages and environmental damage at sea can considerably alter the access to maritime spaces and potentially give way to conflict between nations. For example, there is evidence to suggest that China's maritime activities in and close to the South China Sea are having a major impact on marine ecology and food stocks.<sup>11</sup>

### **A strategic response to the maritime domain**

The Union has been steadily building its experience in deploying naval operations, undertaking border and coastguard functions, performing maritime safety tasks, countering piracy and conducting maritime surveillance assignments. More recently, the EU has even established new maritime initiatives such as the Coordinated Maritime Presence (CMP) concept, which is designed to enhance maritime security in fragile areas such as the Gulf of Guinea and the North-Western Indian Ocean. European Union member states such as France, Germany and the Netherlands have also invested in national strategies and guidelines for maritime engagement in the Indo-Pacific, and the EU followed suit in 2021 with its own strategy. The Strategy for Cooperation with the Indo-Pacific makes clear that, given the close trading relations between Europe and the Indo-Pacific, there is a need for the European Union to enhance its naval presence in the region to help boost regional security, contribute to international laws and norms and to secure sea lines of communication.<sup>12</sup>

---

New York, 2021, p. 5.

9. Lohela, T. and Schatz, V. (eds.), 'Handbook on Maritime Hybrid Threats - 10 Scenarios and Legal Scans', Hybrid CoE Working Paper, No. 5, 22 November 2019: <https://www.hybridcoe.fi/publications/hybrid-coe-working-paper-5-handbook-on-maritime-hybrid-threats-10-scenarios-and-legal-scans/>.

10. Vavasseur, X., 'French Carrier Strike Group Begins "Clemenceau 21" Deployment', Naval News, 23 February 2021: <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2021/02/french-carrier-strike-group-begins-clemenceau-21-deployment/>.

11. Basu, P. and Chaturvedi, A. (2021) "In Deep Water: Current Threats to the Marine Ecology of the South China Sea", Issue Brief, no. 449, March 2021 (New Delhi: Observer Research Foundation): <https://www.orfonline.org/research/in-deep-water-current-threats-to-the-marine-ecology-of-the-south-china-sea/>.

12. "Joint Communication on the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific", JOIN(2021) 24 final, Brussels, 16 September 2021:

Europe's navies are increasingly being called upon to perform maritime security tasks. Violent piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has been met with enhanced naval vigilance in the area, insecurity in the Strait of Hormuz has resulted in a European maritime awareness initiative (EMASOH) and longstanding crises in Libya and the Horn of Africa have required the deployment of European Union naval forces in the form of Operations Irini and Atalanta. On top of this, countries such as France have deployed naval forces to the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. For example, the French navy initiated 'Mission Marianne' in the Pacific at the start of 2021, and this consisted of a support vessel and nuclear attack submarine to ensure France's maritime presence in the region.<sup>13</sup> These European-level and national naval operations and missions play a fundamental role in nurturing the European Union's maritime security.

In addition to a greater maritime presence, the EU has also undertaken efforts to give its maritime security greater direction over the years. In 2018, the Union revised its Maritime Security Strategy and it published an action plan to ensure that the EU is ready to meet the security challenges at sea. The action plan made clear that the EU should have five key priorities focused on international cooperation, maritime surveillance, capability development and research and innovation, risk management and education and training. These priorities emerging out of a recognition that overall security and peace are at danger at sea, that rule of law and freedom of navigation are being challenged, that maritime infrastructure such as ports and undersea cables are at risk, that the seas and oceans are locations for conflicts over resources and the environment and that climate change will alter the shape and nature of the maritime domain.<sup>14</sup>

More recently, however, the Union has taken its vision for maritime security to the next level with the publication of the "Strategic Compass" - this is, in essence, the European Union's first-ever Livre Blanc for security and defence. Completed under the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Compass was endorsed by the European Council on 25 March 2022. The Strategic Compass provides strategic guidance to the European Union until 2030 and the document outlines a range of important areas with relevance to the maritime domain. First, in its reference to deployable European Union forces the Compass makes clear that a modular approach where maritime force packages can be deployed in addition to the European Union's usual land-centric deployments. This is an important development because it recognises that the European Union may have to be called to act militarily at

---

13. French Ministry of the Armed Forces, 'Mission MARIANNE - Un exemple de coopération entre forces de surface et forces sous-marines', 18 May 2021: <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/marine/actu-marine/mission-marianne-un-exemple-de-cooperation-entre-forces-de-surface-et-forces-sous-marines>.

14. Council of the EU, "Council Conclusions on the Revision of the EU Maritime Security Strategy Action Plan (26 June 2018)", 10494/18, Brussels, 26 June 2018: [https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/ocean/blue-economy/other-sectors/maritime-security-strategy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/ocean/blue-economy/other-sectors/maritime-security-strategy_en).

sea and not just land. This implies that future European Union live exercises will need to ensure that the Union is able to conduct rapid deployment in amphibious and/or littoral environments.

Another important aspect of the Compass that relates to the maritime domain is anticipation and surveillance at sea. In fact, the Strategic Compass promises that by 2025 the EU will have developed a coherent and effective maritime surveillance system. Europe's navies have a crucial role to play in maritime surveillance and intelligence, even if such a role is today hampered by the fragmentation of data collection, imaging and sensing efforts. To address this challenge, the European Union needs to ensure that the 'MARSUR' project, which is spearheaded by the European Defence Agency (EDA) and enables dialogue across European naval information systems, further communicate with the European Union's Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE). Indeed, CISE links together approximately 300 maritime surveillance authorities to monitor illegal fishing, pollution and border control.<sup>15</sup>

Taking this a step further, MARSUR and CISE should be utilised in cooperation with other maritime surveillance tools at the EU level. For example, the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) uses remotely piloted aircraft systems to detect maritime pollution and emissions, ensure border monitoring and counter illegal fishing and it oversees the SafeSeaNet monitoring service for vessel traffic in European Union waters. Frontex is also responsible for a range of maritime surveillance activities and along with member states it manages the European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR) framework to develop situational awareness for cross-border crime and irregular migration. Since 2018, Frontex has developed a Maritime Intelligence Community & Risk Analysis Network (MIC-RAN) to collect data and disseminate risk analysis products on maritime threats, risks and challenges. MIC-RAN relies on a range of civil authorities, but military actors are part of the network too.

Yet, for all of these capacities, there is no single maritime surveillance hub at the European Union level that can respond to the needs of civil and military actors operating in the maritime domain. If the European Union is to be able to collect, manage and act on maritime data in a coherent way there is a need to better link CISE, EUROSUR, MIC-RAN and SafeSeaNet with defence-specific capacities such as MARSUR, the European Union Satellite Centre and the Union's intelligence capacities. Maritime surveillance can never be overlooked and the European Union already has a range of surveillance tools that can be brought together in a more coherent fashion.

---

15. Huotari, A. and Tikanmäki, I., 'An Online Training for the EU Common Information Sharing Environment', 2015 Second International Conference on Computer Science, Computer Engineering, and Social Media (CSCESM), 2015, p. 156.

Finally, the Strategic Compass confirms the European Union's ambition to extend its maritime presence to the Indo-Pacific. While the Union's newest maritime tool - the Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMP) concept - has been piloted in the Gulf of Guinea since January 2021, there is a need to extend the concept to the North-West Indian Ocean. In February 2022, the Council of the European Union decided to extend the CMP to the Indian Ocean. The CMP effectively provides the Union with a flexible tool that brings together regional maritime surveillance architectures and naval assets in a single hub. It allows for a "plug and play" approach that sits outside the formal structures of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), which means that partner navies can be invited to contribute to the EU's naval efforts in Africa and the Indo-Pacific. The CMP also provides for a single point of contact in Brussels through the Maritime Area of Interest Coordination Cell (MAICC) located in the European Union Military Staff.

## **The political challenges of potential sea power**

Despite the advances made by the European Union in the maritime domain, there remain major challenges that conspire to limit the European Union as a maritime actor. One of the obvious challenges relates to the lack of available naval capacity. The reality is that European states have under-invested in naval vessels and capabilities, and this needs to be reversed if the European Union is to meet the challenges presented above. Recall how Operation Irini has under-performed because of political disagreement between European Union member states and because of a lack of deployable naval assets. The reality for Europe is that no amount of maritime frameworks and operations (Irini, Agénor, CMP, etc.) can substitute the development and deployment of naval vessels. One study shows that from 1999 to 2018 European navies lost more than 30% of their overall frigates and destroyers and more than 20% of their submarines.<sup>16</sup> Such drastic cuts should be seen in a security context where greater demands have been placed on navies. For example, countries such as France have historically witnessed a decline in available platforms but an increase in operations in the Gulf region and the Indo-Pacific.

A lack of naval mass, and the strategic enablers that make naval platforms effective military capabilities (e.g. advanced radars and sensors, missiles, space-based assets and subsea vehicles), is likely to hurt European navies in the future.<sup>17</sup> While

---

16. Major, C. and Mölling, C. "The EU's Military Legacy: Over-Institutionalised, Under-equipped and Strategically Divided", in Fiott, D. (ed.) *The CSDP in 2020: The EU's Legacy and Ambition in Security and Defence* (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, 2020), p. 43:

17. Stöhs, J. *The Decline of European Naval Forces: Challenges to Sea Power in an Age of Fiscal Austerity and Political Uncertainty* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2018).

certain European navies are investing in new platforms such as submarines and nuclear-capable/powered naval platforms, the demands on Europe's navies will only increase in an era of high-intensity conflict.<sup>18</sup> Without investments in appropriate numbers of naval platforms, and given that Europeans will need to increasingly focus on maritime deterrence in and around Europe because of Russia's belligerence, means that the bandwidth European governments may have to dedicate to maritime security in farther afield could be lower than even today's levels.

Of course, the European Union recognises such naval capability shortfalls. The Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) process has already revealed that 12 out of 55 capability development opportunities identified in 2020 relate to the maritime domain. Through Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), a European Patrol Corvette will be developed by 2030 for maritime security efforts in waters close to European territory<sup>19</sup>. PESCO is also home to six specific maritime projects that target mine countermeasures, maritime surveillance, underwater intervention, unmanned anti-submarine systems and patrol vessels — many more PESCO projects are relevant to the maritime domain (e.g. space, logistics and cyber).

The European Defence Fund (EDF) can also be expected to invest in the maritime domain, and its preparatory stages have already made investments in precision strike and maritime surveillance. We also know that the first call under the EDF will dedicate €103.5 million to naval combat capabilities in 2021. The recently published Action Plan on Synergies between the civil, defence and space industries also aims to unlock maritime sector innovation by blending existing EU financial tools. Beyond such efforts, however, there continues to be a lack of aircraft carriers, submarines, surface combat ships, mine countermeasures vessels, amphibious shipping, support vessels, offshore patrol vessels and personnel<sup>20</sup>.

Beyond capabilities, however, there remains a lack of commonality between European states on maritime security. For example, in disbanding European Union Operation Sophia in favour of Operation Irini, European Union member states displayed disagreement on the fundamental rationale for the operation — some believed an European Union naval operation should be scrapped entirely as it was viewed as a pull factor for human trafficking. Europeans can, therefore, be fairly accused of not providing a coherent or robust political mandate for the naval operations it chooses

---

18. Morcos, P. and Wall, C. "Are European Navies Ready for High-Intensity Warfare?", War on the Rocks, 31 January 2022: <https://warontherocks.com/2022/01/are-european-navies-ready-for-high-intensity-warfare/>.

19. European Defence Agency, '2020 CARD Report - Executive Summary', 2020 (<https://eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/reports/card-2020-executive-summary-report.pdf>).

20. These capability assumptions are based on the IISS 'Operation Nemo' scenario of six simultaneous SLOC operations during a short of war scenario. See: Barrie, D. et al, 'Defending Europe: Scenario-based Capability Requirements for NATO's European Members', International Institute for Strategic Studies, April 2019, p. 14.

to deploy, which is not the best sign of credibility at sea. Expectedly, the question of Turkey and its disruptive activities in the Eastern Mediterranean has also raised tensions between European Union and NATO members. Countries such as Greece have formed a stronger defence relationship with France<sup>21</sup> and Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Egypt and certain Gulf states have increased their maritime security cooperation outside the scope of NATO and the European Union<sup>22</sup>.

Another area where there is some disagreement between European Union member states relates to the correct balance to be struck between the defence of the European mainland and Europe's wider interests in areas like the Indo-Pacific. Two events in particular may give rise to doubts about whether the European Union should invest its time and energy in the Indo-Pacific: first, the war in Ukraine has provided reason to re-focus efforts on the Eurasian landmass; and second, the so-called "AUKUS affair" has provided a rationale for those who believe the Indo-Pacific to be a predominantly Sino-American theatre. Added to these two events is a recognition that Europe would have to substantially increase its naval capabilities at a time when other capabilities (e.g. tanks, missiles, aircraft) may be given priority. To be blunt, a majority of land-locked European countries and those without territories in the Indo-Pacific struggle to see the urgency of deploying to the Indo-Pacific<sup>23</sup>.

These logics may indeed intensify over the coming months and years due to the war in Ukraine, however, it would be short-sighted not to engage in the Indo-Pacific. First, the growing economic and strategic centre of the world is in Asia rather than Europe. While the defence of Europe is of paramount importance, Europeans cannot afford to decompartmentalise the world into neatly packed geopolitical units. Every region is linked geopolitically. This means, very practically, that if war breaks out in the Indo-Pacific (e.g. between China and Taiwan) this will lead to threats to maritime transits and put at stake European interests. Keep in mind that Taiwan is the main location of the world's production of semiconductors, and a loss of this capacity through conflict would have drastic knock-on effects for the European economy and technology. This is not even to mention that conflict could occur close to European Union territories located in the Asia region, and the European Union would have a responsibility to protect its territorial interests and citizens living abroad. So, while attention is turning to territorial defence in the wake of the Ukraine war, European Union member states should not take their eyes off the Indo-Pacific region.

---

21. Decis, H. "France, Greece and Mediterranean Currents", IISS Military Balance Blog, 22 December 2021: <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/military-balance/2021/12/analysis-france-greece-and-mediterranean-currents>.

22. Guzansky, Y. and Lindenstrauss, G. "The Growing Alignment between the Gulf and the Eastern Mediterranean", Middle East Institute, 25 May 2021: <https://www.mei.edu/publications/growing-alignment-between-gulf-and-eastern-mediterranean>.

23. Grare, F. and Reuter, M. "Moving Closer: European Views of the Indo-Pacific", ECFR Special Commentary, 13 September 2021: <https://ecfr.eu/special/moving-closer-european-views-of-the-indo-pacific/>.

## Conclusions

It is due to Europe's maritime interdependencies that the European Union cannot become a credible global player without naval capabilities. To call for a global role for the Union without naval capabilities is unrealistic and a dent to the European Union's credibility. Europe has not yet reached the stage where it considers naval power to be an integral part of its overall geopolitical vision. However, the clock is ticking and the Union must secure its global maritime presence, sooner rather than later. The reality today, however, is that only a select handful of European states can actually punch their weight at sea. This is a basis that must be built on in the years and decades ahead or the Union will lose its historical free and secure access to the maritime domain. Without this maritime presence, Europe's overall economic prosperity and security will be degraded.

However, greater European maritime power cannot be calculated solely in terms of the number of naval vessels European Union member states own. Naval power and maritime power are related, but distinct. There can be no coherent maritime strategy for the European Union without clarity on why the maritime domain is intrinsic to European security, freedom and prosperity or how and where Europe should act to safeguard its interests and values. Accordingly, the Strategic Compass provides greater direction for how the Union can link together its responses to the sea, air, land, cyber and space domains. The Compass also thankfully underlines that the European Union is uniquely placed to generate maritime power, especially if it successfully fuses its trade and investment, partnership, connectivity and security and defence policies. This fusion will require joint management of maritime security by European Union member states and institutions.





European Patrol Corvette

Artist's impression of the European warship project developed under the European Union's permanent structured cooperation

©Wikipédia





# The European Union strategy for the Indo-Pacific

EuroDefense - France association

On September 16<sup>th</sup>, the European Commission and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP) adopted the EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. This document is a response to a demand the European Council expressed on the 19th April 2021. Whether by chance or by design, the publication of this joint communication came one day after the announcement of the agreement between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, known as AUKUS.

Noting the importance of this region in demographic (3/5 of the world's population) and economic (60% of the world's GDP) terms, but also the rise of tensions and risks – increasing military capabilities, environmental challenges, threats to human rights – the EU considers it essential to strengthen cooperation with its partners in the Indo-Pacific region and to promote the rules that underpin the international order, as well as fair competition and the fight against global warming and environmental degradation. The EU also insists on the defence of human rights and democracy, and will use restrictive measures against those responsible for violations of these rights.

## **Partnership and cooperation**

Existing links will be strengthened, in particular with ASEAN, as well as with countries with which the EU has bilateral partnership and cooperation agreements (PCAs) it wishes to expand. The EU also wants to deepen its relations with other countries which have developed a strategy in the Indo-Pacific, as well as with QUAD on issues of common interest (environment, technologies, vaccines).

The EU intends to maintain its bilateral dialogue with China on common challenges, and cooperate on issues of common interest, so as to "encourage China to play its role in a peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific region". However the EU will also continue to protect its values and distance itself in case of fundamental disagreements with China.

In the Indian Ocean, the EU wants to build partnerships with regional economic communities and help its partners fight the effects of climate change, pollution at sea and illegal fishing.

The EU maintains its partnership with ASEAN. It supports the establishment of an ASEAN-led Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, that is legally binding and does not damage the interests of third parties. This cooperation also includes security issues within the framework of the ASEAN Regional Forum.

The partnership with countries of the Pacific (ACP<sup>1</sup>) should be strengthened with a new post-Cotonou agreement, including political and strategic relations. Cooperation will continue with the Pacific Islands and regional organizations.

The EU strategy defines seven priority areas for this collaboration: sustainable prosperity, ecological transition, ocean governance, digital governance and partnerships, connectivity, security and defence, and human security.

The EU seeks to stimulate the economic recovery in an ecological way by strengthening value chains, protecting trade from unfair practices and ensuring resilient transport systems. Trade must be opened up in accordance with signed trade agreements.

Fighting climate change is a priority by establishing green alliances, sharing best practices, promoting the abandonment of coal, protecting biodiversity, fighting plastic pollution, and promoting the decarbonization of transportation.

The governance of the oceans in the Indo-Pacific region must be done in compliance with international law (UNCLOS) and sustainable management of resources. The EU intends to become a member of the North Pacific Fisheries Commission.

Digital partnerships in the region will be strengthened with jointly agreed standards for emerging technologies, starting with Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore. Such negotiations with like-minded partners will take place within the framework of Horizon Europe. The new Erasmus program will provide opportunities for academic exchanges. The partnership will seek to improve connectivity between the EU and partners in the region, in a regulatory and strategic environment. India, Japan and ASEAN, which are already partners, are expected to be joined by Australia and the Republic of Korea, as well as Canada and the US.

In addition to existing missions in the area, the EU aims to strengthen its Member-States naval deployments in the region, to combat piracy and illicit trafficking, and wishes to increase exchanges between information centres. The EU will ask to participate in the extended ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM+), the East Asia Summit and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium. The EU will intensify its cooperation in counter-terrorism, cyber security, maritime security and crisis management, as well as counter-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, control of arms exports and information manipulation.

---

1. Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States

The COVID-19 pandemic unveiled the fragility of health systems and the need to work together to respond effectively to future health crises. Such security concerns also include the anticipation and protection of populations from natural disasters. The European satellite systems Galileo and Copernicus will continue to provide warning and monitoring information on disasters in the area.

Ten key measures are proposed in the action plan covering the priority areas: economic recovery, strengthening PCAs, fighting climate change and protecting the oceans, digital technology and connectivity, research, security with a strengthened naval presence and health support.

Sharing EU's values, human rights and democracy, appears to be an essential condition for establishing a partnership with the countries in the area. China is the subject of a specific paragraph. Without explicitly mentioning it, this strategy competes with the Silk Roads initiative launched by China in 2013.

# European Navies Solidarity, A personal perspective “European Navies : a pragmatic approach to cooperation”

Vice-Admiral (Ret) Lutz FELDT  
*Former CNO German Navy*

The end of World War II marked a turning point for the German Navy. From the outset, the reconstruction of the Navy in 1956 was in the light of NATO and solidarity within the Alliance. It was thus created as part of the German contribution to NATO after the failure of the European Defense Community. This maritime contribution was controversial at the time, so it was mainly due to British and American support. In this respect, the German Navy was and is conceptually a NATO Navy. Their orientation, their organization, their capabilities, their training and their operational goals were always geared to the respective requirements of NATO. Nothing has fundamentally changed in this respect to this day. In retrospect, the development has taken on its own development due to the paradigm shift in Europe and globally in 1990, but without neglecting the orientation towards NATO. A second turning point was German reunification, which gradually turned Germany into a sovereign foreign policy actor. This did not change the alliance integration, but led to stronger European integration. The dissolution of the National People's Navy and the judgment of the Constitutional Court on possible areas of operation outside the restrictions of the NATO treaty area that existed until 1994 have given the German Navy an option to participate in international crisis management outside of the European seas. These operations are in principle subject to the approval of Parliament. The ability to do so was there, but certain restrictions and restraints were politically desired.

Along these years of changes, the German Navy has always fulfilled its obligations towards NATO. The operational zone extended from the Baltic Sea and North Atlantic to the Mediterranean, and the Indian Ocean.

A tendency of European controlled action started in the Mediterranean during the war against Yugoslavia. In the Adriatic, the German Navy, first under the command of Western EU and then NATO, participated to RECCE missions. It also took part in operation "Southern Flank", under the command of WEU. Eventually, these operations fell under the command of NATO. Under the supervision of the United States, the German Navy participated in operation Enduring Freedom in the Indian Ocean. It permanently deployed warships and/or aircrafts as part of two major European operations, Atalanta and Sophia, which were enacted on a short delay, and was also involved in operation Irini, even with submarines. In the same time, the German Navy operated in the Mediterranean Sea under the supervision of NATO, in the frame of operation Sea Guardian. Its continued participation to the maritime intervention force of UNIFIL in the Mediterranean Sea is also part of this chapter.

The German Navy has always based its training of destroyers, frigates and corvettes strongly on the British and American Navy. In the field of mine forces, there is close

training cooperation with the Netherlands and Belgium. The training of coastal naval warfare was and is closely coordinated with the countries bordering the Baltic Sea (except Russia). Here, the German Navy has also assumed leadership responsibility with the Baltic Maritime Component Command and as part of the Baltic Commander's Conference. All of this has worked.

The Bundeswehr has participated in initiatives that come from the EU, i.e. from the common security and defense policy, but the Navy could play a greater role here. Measures such as PESCO or CMP, which are strongly geared towards engagement in Africa and adjacent waters, were often land-centric in Germany and have triggered little maritime interest in the north.

The bottom line is that the German Navy is involved in EU maritime operations, all of which are in the lower intensity spectrum. In view of the increasing importance of national and alliance defense, however, the focus of NATO – and with it the capabilities for deterrence and defense – is currently moving to the fore. Finally, it must be remembered that the German Navy, like its European partners, can only use its capabilities once, either for a NATO or for an EU operation. Closer coordination between NATO and the EU in times of peace in order to be prepared for crisis and war is therefore an important task for the future. This also applies to bilateral agreements in training. The aspect of staff exchange and training needs to be discussed briefly. There is close and intensive cooperation between the navies of the European nations, particularly within the framework of extensive mutual training relationships. This can be illustrated using the example of the exchange with the French Navy. There is a regular exchange in officer training, mutual embarkation on units of the respective fleet and also in the area of naval aviation. This is supported by working groups at ministerial level, among others. An exchange with the Royal Dutch Navy has a long tradition and today this is also carried out by the two naval battalions. There is a close and long lasting successful exchange with the Royal Navy in the context of sea and operational training.

All this is wanted and creates even better mutual knowledge and understanding. However, whether a joint European Navy, which makes sense from an operational and strategic point of view, can be realized in the foreseeable future appears, if at all, to be realizable at a long term perspective.

Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, 22.Februar 2022.

With kind support from the German Naval Command in Rostock





The German frigate Augsburg is escorting a ship of the World Olive Programme in the framework of  
*Operation Atalanta* © EUNAVFOR

# Naval solidarity in Europe : the contribution of the Italian navy

Vice Admiral (Ret) Ferdinando SANFELICE DI MONTE FORTE  
Associate member of the Académie de Marine

**W**hen Italy was accepted as a member of NATO in 1949, the Navy suffered the consequences of the post-war geostrategic situation, the priority being the establishment of an air-land force sufficiently credible to discourage an attack on our north-eastern border from the Balkans.

The Italian Navy, therefore, during the initial period of the Cold War, was able to renew itself only in the roles of escorting American convoys and battle groups, as well as clearing strategic sea passages. However, it took on the classic configuration of auxiliary forces, with collaboration with the NATO allies, and especially with the US fleets, as its priority task.

It was only in November 1973 that the Navy's White Paper took into account the problem of the European need for naval solidarity, and declared that it had a responsibility to act "in the event of local Mediterranean crises, in which there was no risk that would imply a direct confrontation between the two blocs" of the Cold War, given that "European solidarity in the field of defence, even if desired in general, was still far off".

The importance of building European defence solidarity was one of the priorities of the Italian Navy during the reconstruction process that followed.

In fact, apart from acquiring a minimum capacity for independent action, the Italian Navy made an effort to increase cooperation both with other European navies and with the navies of other Mediterranean countries. The result was a set of networks in which collaboration developed to the benefit of all participants.

## **Command level**

At the command level, the most important initiative has been the establishment of the Virtual Regional Maritime Traffic Center (V-RMTC), in which each member country inserts the data of merchant ships operating in their vicinity. Over time, several countries outside the Mediterranean decided to participate, and as a result, the so-called "Greater Mediterranean Community" was established.

The other initiative undertaken by the Italian Navy was the organisation of the Regional Seapower Symposium, a biennial high-level meeting of navies operating in the Mediterranean, which takes place in Venice.

The meetings in which the Italian Navy participates at the highest level are the meetings

of the European Chiefs of Naval Staff (CHENS), the “5 + 5 Network”, and the Adriatic initiative (with Albania, Bosnia/Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia)

## Projects and Research

In terms of research and development projects, the Italian Navy is involved in several projects with its European partners. Among others:

- The European Carrier Group Interoperability Initiative;
- The “High North 20” oceanographic research (with the ITS Alliance ship);
- Survey Antarctica hydrographic research (with SCAR and COMNAP);
- Projects for the construction and support of an anti-aircraft ship “Horizon” and a frigate (FREMM) with France;
- U-212 submarines with Germany;
- The ASTER family of anti-aircraft missiles.



The Italian multi-mission frigate (FREMM) Carlo Bergamini of the Italian Navy ©Wikipédia

## **PESCO projects**

The Italian Navy participates in the following projects, within the framework of the PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation) initiatives of the European Union

- Maritime Surveillance and Protection of Ports (Italian lead);
- Essential Elements of EU Escorts;
- Improvement of Maritime Surveillance;
- EU Patrol Corvette (Italian lead).

## **Cooperation between forces and commands**

- EUROMARFOR;
- Spanish-Italian Amphibious Battle Group (with the participation of Greece and Portugal);
- EURONAVFOR operations (Sophia, Irini, Atalanta);
- Participation in counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Guinea (Op. Gabinia);
- Participation in NATO Standing Groups SNMG and MCM;
- Exchange of embarked personnel;
- Military Erasmus;
- EU Amphibious Initiative;
- MFO Sinai (3 patrol boats);
- ReCAAP, participation as observer;
- Availability of the Italian Naval Training Centre for the ships of other navies;
- Sending Italian ships to British and Belgian Navy Training Centres (BOST, FOST).

## **Conclusion**

The construction of a real European solidarity in the field of defence, according to the Italian Navy, must be favoured by multiplying concrete initiatives, either in research and development, or in cooperative command, or finally in personnel. We cannot expect the decision to come only from the top, but if we do not have a strong cooperation at the lower levels, the European Defence will be a construction with a sand based foundation.

# Spanish navy solidarity

Vice Admiral (Ret) Fernando DEL POZO

The Spanish Navy (SN) has been in recent years quite eager to cooperate and share, and in general to get closer, operationally and technically, with other navies in the neighbourhood, especially with neighbours which are at the same time Allies and fellow Member States of the EU, as is the case with France, Italy and Portugal. Much however still can, and needs to, be enlarged and improved.

### **Shared command and force structures :**

- EUROMARFOR, with France, Italy and Portugal, from 1995. It includes a rotating command and integrated staff, and a pool of ships.
- Spanish-Italian Amphibious Battlegroup (or Force, SIAF), which also includes Greek and Portuguese contributions, since 1998. This includes rotating command and integrated staff, amphibious ships, and a combined landing force.
- PMARFOR, a Maritime Component Command within the NATO Response Force, with personnel participation from 10 Allied Nations. The command and integrated staff are permanently established onboard *SPS Castilla*.

### **Participation in collective Standing Forces or operations :**

- The SN regularly takes turns at the seagoing command and contributes units to EU's Naval Forces (EURONAVFOR) in operations such as *Atalanta* (executed by *EURONAVFOR Somalia*) being the only continuous contributor since its inception in 2008.
- It also contributes on a permanent (lately semi-permanent) basis to NATO's Standing Naval Maritime Groups and Standing Naval Mine Countermeasures Groups and takes turns at their command.

### **Other participations in naval forces :**

- On occasion, frigates and/or replenishment ships are sent to take part in deployments of the *Charles de Gaulle* Battle Strike Group for periods of about two months, as was the case with a frigate each in 2019 and 2020, and will be again in the upcoming months (early 2022) with yet another frigate (and an additional frigate in the *USS Gerald Ford* Battle Strike Group towards the end of the year).

### **Personnel exchanges :**

- There are several permanent exchange arrangements of officers with the navies of Italy and United Kingdom (as well as with the US Navy). They are part of ships' crews, helicopter and Harrier pilots, and Naval Academies teachers. In each case it is only one individual being exchanged.

### **Other collective undertakings or initiatives :**

- The *European Amphibious Initiative* (EAI), with France, Italy, The Netherlands and United Kingdom (Italy, Spain, UK and The Netherlands participate by means of their respective combined amphibious forces, SIAF and UKNLAF). It was launched on 2008, and aims to enhance the interoperability of the existing European Amphibious Forces.
- The *European Carrier Group Interoperability Initiative* (ECGII), participated by Belgium, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, The Netherlands, Portugal and United Kingdom.
- Participating to JMC training in UK (Scotland)

### **Shipbuilding projects :**

- The design of the *Álvaro de Bazán* class frigates was made in cooperation with Germany and The Netherlands (*Sachsen* class and *De Zeven Provinciën* class, respectively), although the three ship classes diverged considerably before completion.
- The amphibious ships *Galicia* class share design with The Netherlands' *Rotterdam* class.
- The logistic support ships SPS *Patiño* and SPS *Cantabria* also share design with the HNLMS *Amsterdam* (the latter eventually sold to Peru).
- Spain currently participates in the French-Greek-Italian-Spanish project of a European Patrol Corvette, which should start delivering ships by the end of this decade.

### **“Low hanging fruit” possibilities (exclusively from the SN's point of view) :**

- Radically increase the number of personnel exchanges. Advantage should be taken of the proximity of the Spanish language with Portuguese and Italian to programme common courses for enlisted personnel in the specialities less dependant on equipment



(which might be different), with potentially considerable savings, as some particular specialities schools could be disestablished in up to two navies. Staff courses for officers could also benefit from increased cross-participation.

- Arrangements similar to the German-Dutch one over financing and use of the HNML *Karel Doorman* could be brokered with Portugal to facilitate their obtention or use of a badly-needed amphibious ship for their highly capable *Corpo de Fuzileiros Navais*, which would greatly enhance the Portuguese participation in SIAF. The same could be explored for always scarce logistic ships with France and Italy.

- The regular patrol (about 8 months/year) of a Spanish warship in Africa's West coast, and the very similar activity of a French warship should be coordinated (along with any other navy willing to participate) in order to make the European presence as continuous as possible, or alternatively to coincide when circumstances warrant it.

- Advantage should be taken from CISE and MARSUR, beyond the mere exchange of information, to coordinate and share maritime security and surveillance operations in the four neighbours' areas of responsibility, so as to increase presence while reducing costs



Frigate *Blas de Lezo* and the aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle*. ©Marine nationale

# European Naval Solidarity – a United Kingdom Perspective

Vice-Admiral (Ret) Sir Anthony DYMCK

Navies are not autonomous organisations, they have always been a tool of state power and the range of tools and domains in which they can be applied has multiplied. For the last century navies have operated below and above as well as on the water. With embarked aircraft and a long range missiles they can operate over land, in space and in cyberspace at every level of warfare whether declared or “in the grey zone”, from the constabulary to the strategically decisive. Their *modus operandi* has moved from essentially independent single service campaigns to joint (with land and air forces) and combined (international or allied), and from working in coordination with the other tools of state power towards being integrated with them. This has complicated both the concept and the demonstration of solidarity. Navies have traditionally bonded easily as sailors face an unforgiving common enemy in the sea. The imperatives of conventions like Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) and humanitarian law require a degree of practical solidarity. Even in a theatre of operations, amicable working relationships can be established informally at sea despite political hostility.

Navies are not autonomous organisations, they have always been a tool of state power and the range of tools and domains in which they can be applied has multiplied. For the last century navies have operated below and above as well as on the water. With embarked aircraft and a long range missiles they can operate over land, in space and in cyberspace at every level of warfare whether declared or “in the grey zone”, from the constabulary to the strategically decisive. Their *modus operandi* has moved from essentially independent single service campaigns to joint (with land and air forces) and combined (international or allied), and from working in coordination with the other tools of state power towards being integrated with them. This has complicated both the concept and the demonstration of solidarity. Navies have traditionally bonded easily as sailors face an unforgiving common enemy in the sea. The imperatives of conventions like Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) and humanitarian law require a degree of practical solidarity. Even in a theatre of operations, amicable working relationships can be established informally at sea despite political hostility.

Binding treaties with explicit articles like NATO’s article 5 provide a strong strategic framework to simplify the complexity of a case by case approach to each emerging crisis. Solidarity is not just about an agreement on an occasion – like a “coalition of the willing” situation, but the repetitive building of trust and the justified expectation of a sympathetic response in a similar even less favourable situation. The EU has achieved global economic strength and exhibited similar strength in establishing humanitarian and environmental values, but has struggled to convert the policies and associated rhetoric into tangible solidarity, due in no small part to the UK’s reluctance to see NATO undermined. Even after the St Malo agreement in 2003 when the UK withdrew

its objections and the EU was able to develop a European Security Strategy, genuine strategic cohesion in foreign policy remained elusive. The UK demonstrated its renewed solidarity and intent under the St Malo and Lancaster House agreements by providing the operational headquarters and leadership of the EU's first naval mission of counterpiracy off the Horn of Africa (ATALANTA) developing the model for subsequent EU naval missions. Arguably though, the greatest impetus given to solidarity under the Common Security and Defence Policy (2009) came not so much from such low level but successful naval, and other military and civilian missions nor from any spontaneous sense of solidarity between Member States but as a result of external forces - Russia's annexation of Crimea, BREXIT and the arrival of a NATO sceptic US President Trump.

Despite political turmoil, pandemic-induced economic shocks or perhaps even because of them solidarity has prospered in some specific areas when the EU Commission's financial strictures have been eased. Naval R&T, development and procurement is so extremely long, expensive and can only be amortised over a very few hulls with no prototypes, that it cries out for European cooperation in all stages of the acquisition process. Navies are therefore particularly well placed to benefit from the PESCIO and Defence Fund initiatives. It seems unfortunate that the UK with Europe's largest defence R,T &D budget is being excluded. When politics allows defence industry to consolidate there has been real success as all those European navies using MBDA's missiles can testify. When consolidation is resisted to protect national defence industry, costs rise and naval inventories suffer.

The political and economic effects on the UK of leaving the EU (BREXIT), and the EU's loss of its largest defence contributor were profound and are still being worked through. But much remains unchanged. The UK has always sought to give security substance to its declarations of policy as a member of the UN Security Council, in NATO, OSCE, the Council of Europe and other multi-national institutions. It is a nuclear power whose submarines have maintained continuous at sea deterrence on behalf of NATO for fifty years.

Since not all EU Member States have navies and some navies are optimised for coastal defence in a particular sea basin with limited deployability, many naval "solidarity" initiatives are in groups rather than Europe-wide. Common threats, challenges and interests drive common purpose, and some relationships are close to the point of integration like the Belgium-Netherlands naval relationship, others are partially integrated like the U K-Netherlands Amphibious Force. Naval operational staffs ashore and afloat more often multi-national than not. Foreign naval exchange officers frequently replace national officers in complement billets, in some cases compensating

for national shortages. Liaison officers are an essential element of working together, improving communications flow and contributing to planning and policy processes. As the drive towards more deeply integrated operations develops such exchanges and the deepening of local and regional knowledge becomes more essential. The forward deployment of naval ships with regular port visits, exercises and mutual training can give early substance to political declarations, but this can be tainted by association with arms sales. As in in humanitarian and disaster relief situations, multinational and especially UN or EU sponsored missions can remove the possible stigma of “post-colonial” or mercantilist motives.



A Hawkeye and Rafale-Marine aircrafts from the French Navy and British F-35Bs flying in formation over the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle (left) and the aircraft carrier British HMS Queen Elizabeth (right) during the bilateral naval exercise Gallic Strike in 2021. ©*Marine nationale*

Like other European navies, the UK Royal Navy's commitment to European solidarity is shaped by history, geography, politics and resources. Much has changed in the century since the Royal Navy was the world's largest, sustaining a global empire and the Pax Britannica.; it has continued to change throughout the more recent Pax Americana sustained by the US Navy, but the influence of both remains profound. The Royal Navy retains a persistent global presence; it is renewing its nuclear capability, it has restored a world class Carrier Strike capability with 5th generation aircraft and is modernising its amphibious Commando Force – a rare commodity in Europe. However, because it does not expect to operate autonomously, it promotes solidarity widely with the US Navy, its closest relationship, with NATO, the centre of its defence policy, and with individual and groups of European navies, not least by sharing its unrivalled sea training and exercise facilities

Within the constraints already discussed, European navies have been giving substance to the elusive concept of solidarity at for many years. Thanks to their experience and interoperability, mutual support in common purpose comes easily. However finding that common purpose against the domestic vested interests in politics, industry and commerce in the interest of wider solidarity in collective foreign, security and defence policy in Europe is the core challenge.



## THE JOURNAL “ÉTUDES MARINES”

---

Former publications :

N°1 - *L'action de l'État en mer et la sécurité des espaces maritimes.*  
*La place de l'autorité judiciaire.* October 2011

N°2 - *Planète Mer. Les richesses des océans.* July 2012

N°3 - *Mer agitée. La maritimisation des tensions régionales.* January 2013

N°4 - *L'histoire d'une révolution. La Marine depuis 1870.* March 2013

N°5 - *La Terre est bleue.* November 2013

N°6 - *Les larmes de nos souverains. La pensée stratégique navale française.* May 2014

N°7 - *Union européenne : le défi maritime.* December 2014

N°8 - *Abysses.* June 2015

N°9 - *Outre-mer.* December 2015

N°10 - *Marines d'ailleurs.* June 2016

Hors série - *Ambition navale au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle.* October 2016

N°11 - *Littoral.* December 2016

Special Issue - *The Sea in History.* March 2017

N°12 - *Ruptures.* June 2017

N°13 - *Marins.* December 2017

N°14 - *Liberté.* June 2018

Special Issue - *La Marine dans la Grande Guerre.* November 2018

N°15 - *Nourrir.* January 2019

N°16 - *Énergies.* June 2019

N°17 - *Stratégie.* January 2020

N°18 - *Enjeux climatique.* June 2020

N° 20- *Air et Mer.* November 2021

Special Issue - *La Marine nationale au service des français.*



## FIND OUT MORE ABOUT CESM THROUGH :

---

As a strategic think tank, CESM issues several regular publications on naval strategy and key maritime issues.

### ***Études marines***

Each semester, a cross-section of views on a maritime, geopolitical, economic or historical topic.

### ***Brèves marines***

Distributed by e-mail, this publication offers each month a concise and argued point of view on a current maritime issue.

### ***Les amers du CESM***

This bi-weekly watch magazine, also distributed by e-mail, compiles the latest naval and maritime news.

### ***La passerelle***

Through this webinar, discover the missions and operations of the French Navy by interacting with its men and women.

### ***Echo***

Twice a month, CESM welcomes in this podcast a guest who shares his knowledge and expertise on a maritime strategy topic.

### ***Périscopes***

Each month, this podcast allows us to cross the views of different experts on a naval and maritime issues.



These publications are available online :  
[cesm.marine.defense.gouv.fr](http://cesm.marine.defense.gouv.fr)

You can also subscribe on request to : [cesm.editions.fct@intradef.gouv.fr](mailto:cesm.editions.fct@intradef.gouv.fr)

ISSN 2119-775X

June 2022

First published 2<sup>nd</sup> term 2022

Printed Sipap-Oudin, Poitiers

Production CESM - Layout Aspirant Dubuc Julia