

# Conclusion and Wrap-up

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## *Introduction*

The anthropogenic dependency on water and the human need to cooperate with each other are two constants of evolution and its concomitants of civilising development. While the latter represents a comparatively modern phenomenon, it stretches from individual and tribal relationships towards the creation of federations and alliances of contemporary nation states in the course of time. It must be pointed out that the world's most famous military alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), is a merger of a special kind due to its transatlantic link, the combination of continental and sea power, and the latter's embodiment in its name. The alliance's physical division by the sea, the North Atlantic, is therefore not necessarily a limitation but an opportunity, besides all of the vulnerabilities and exposures such maritime dependency includes.<sup>1</sup> With the United States as its most sophisticated and militarily potent member, a *sea power* above all, and with the aforementioned characteristics, NATO incarnates a maritime alliance on whose basis it succeeded in its as yet uttermost formative challenge, the Cold War.

NATO's maritime core and its 2011 Alliance Maritime Strategy in particular are a main reason for the creation of this volume. It was inspired by the considerations made for and at the *Kiel International Seapower Symposia* in 2018, 2019 and 2021, which provide an assessment of allied maritime strategy. Each symposium focused on one aspect of the "strategic trinity": ends, ways and means.<sup>2</sup> Originally recalling the need to revisit NATO's 2011 strategy due to recent geopolitical developments and the re-emergence of great power competition, the symposia's findings and mass of challenges ahead led to the publication of a book focused not solely on the

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1 Geoffrey Till, *Seapower. A Guide for the Twenty-First Century*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Routledge: New York 2013), 37.

2 The Kiel International Seapower Symposia were hosted by the Institute for Security Policy at Kiel University's (ISPK) Center for Maritime Strategy & Security. Their success is the result of the great teamwork of Sebastian Bruns, Jeremy Stöhs, Adrian Neumann, Randy Papadopoulos, and this volume's editors.

transatlantic alliance. Yet with NATO in the spotlight of most of its chapters, the authors of this volume present strategic examinations on further maritime scenarios and collaborations, as the title illustrates.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is frequently recalled as a maritime century. Yet, the multitude of looming challenges it will accommodate can barely be foreseen: be it the rapid advancement of unmanned and autonomous systems on, under and above the water surface area, leading naval forces to be able to send out unprecedented numbers of naval units onto the seas; the ongoing polarisation and division of societies, nations or even long-standing alliances based on populism and nationalism; or the immediate effects of the hitherto insufficiently tackled climate crisis, which is changing the world's oceans, expanding naval forces' areas of responsibility, and putting allied territory at risk without any use of military force. The authors brought together in this volume provide suggestions, inspirations, and recommendations on some of the most relevant topics allied maritime strategic thought will have to deal with in the coming decades. To this end, the chapters of this book follow a structure of four sections, aligned according to their respective content.

1. The first section serves as a principle basis for this volume and the consecutive articles. In this regard, first and foremost, Sebastian Bruns provides a fundamental introductory chapter on contemporary allied maritime strategy. "Together...From the Sea" underlines the extraordinary role of maritime strategies in contemporary allied contexts—explicitly, as mentioned above, not only in a NATO, but in a much broader context by analysing both, NATO's Allied Maritime Strategy and the EU Maritime Security Strategy, considering the United Nations, as well as examining how the alliances perform as maritime players. In providing the framework to train for and execute operations at the upper end of the intensity spectrum, NATO fulfils its responsibility of sharpening the allied spear, while low-end maritime security missions are well placed under the flag of the EU. Sebastian finally emphasises that strategies are always political documents and demands a research agenda on how strategies are actually operationalised.

What follows is a focus on the North Atlantic alliance. Keith Blount examines the question of whether the 2011 Alliance Maritime Strategy is actually in need of revision. He identifies its continuing relevance even for today, but reminds us that adaption and strategic adjustments are useful in light of changing strategic circumstances and should follow careful considerations, like, in this case, the NATO 2030 process, and should include the political willingness to do so.

As a third pillar, Sarandis Papadopoulos looks into the history of combined and joint operations at sea. With his granular tour d'horizon, he identifies and explains difficulties and opportunities allied navies had to face in the past. Using the carved-out reflections, he provides general implications for today's naval analysts and strategic thinkers.

2. Section two is organised in two parts in order to analyse specific threats and particular theatres of interest for strategic planners. On the one hand, the plethora of such threats in recent years encompasses the surpassingly considered challenges of hybrid and grey-zone activities, which are particularly described by Frank Hoffmann in relation to the maritime activities of China, Russia and Iran. His proposed holistic approach is also needed to tackle the further mentioned challenges. Either the growing undersea capabilities and technologies and the need for in-depth anti-submarine warfare, as described by Johannes Peters, or the "relentless hazard" of climate change, exemplified in a NATO context by Alix Valenti, represent threats that demand comprehensive approaches in a federated manner. As the relevance of naval forces is often related to a nation's dependency on maritime trade, Dirk Siebels offers a refreshing perspective on the threats to global shipping with a focus on the shipping industry. A closer look regarding maritime domain awareness and deeper cooperation between the commercial sector and navies should be of interest to the different actors. Continuing at the lower end of maritime operations, John Sherwood examines the European Union's actions in the Mediterranean and the independent operations of European navies outside NATO structures due to them being confronted with diverging actors in the EU's southern waters. On the other hand, particular theatres demand specific strategic and operational considerations. This includes Europe's 'Northern Flank', in whose regard Julian Pawlak makes the case for a holistic view on the North Atlantic, the Baltic, the Norwegian, and North Seas. With a bigger focus and from a Swedish point of view, Niklas Granholm focuses on the North Sea, Kattegat and Skagerak, which are often rather neglected maritime areas of operation. Adopting a different spotlight, Pauline Pic and Frédéric Lasserre look at NATO's possible role in the Arctic. The alliance, so they argue, should be present in the High North but in a way that avoids causing a security dilemma with regional actors, such as Russia. Turning towards NATO's Southern Flank, Deborah Sanders offers insights into strategic considerations for the Black Sea. Her chapter represents a predominant view on Chinese activities in the region, which are an increasing factor due to China's Belt

and Road initiative and, as she argues, pose austere challenges to NATO and only offer concrete opportunities for action to a lesser extent. Another perspective on China and its PLAN in particular is offered by Sidharth Kaushal. He proposes the idea of strategic hedging for NATO and, *inter alia*, it opening up flexibly to cooperate with different partners in the region in order to manage the rising PLAN. In a complementary fashion, James Goldrick provides an Australian perspective on allied maritime strategy and, in doing so, makes the case for a more robust European security policy on its continent and the adjunct waters, to relieve the United States of its duties and responsibilities in the Asia-Pacific region.

3. Section 3 offers insights into the complex opportunities and challenges maritime strategic planning and naval operations overall will have to face in this century. It points out the necessity of cooperation and integration, as explained by Sarah Tarry and Kaspar Pajos in the context of NATO's 360-degree approach. Subsequently, Jeremy Stöhs looks at "High-End threats" and "Low-End challenges" for allied navies, which include the increasing proliferation of and demand for high-end warfighting capabilities, not least due to current great power competition. New opportunities and challenges alike demand changes to established methods and procedures, and the ability to break new ground. Tom Guy provides such an overview of what can be expected as fundamental in shaping 21<sup>st</sup> century naval warfare. With any technological developments in the near future, he explains, the human commander will still want to be in, or on the loop, at least. To decide on how to prepare best for future developments, not only technological ones, well-founded prediction methods and elements of strategic foresight, combined with structured intelligence, are required. Jim Fanell analyses federated maritime intelligence operations and the need for Western alliances to adjust them, particularly in regard to Chinese activities in the Asia-Pacific region and the increasing presence of Western naval assets in the same place.
4. The volume's final section offers three different examinations on strategic planning. Firstly, from a practical point of view, Chris Parry examines experiences from the Falklands War. He accurately points out the difficulties allied navies have to deal with, particularly in regard to the implementation of strategic plans drafted and designed during peacetime. Jim Bergeron continues and looks at the function and effect of exercises with the goal of a maritime strategy of deterrence. He explains

the changing focus of NATO's naval exercises and shows the difficulties, assessments and psychological influences inwards and outwards which have to be considered. As a closing remark, Bruce Stubbs provides insights into "The Process of Crafting Naval Strategy". Presenting the reader with an overview of the "sausage-making" process, Bruce specifies 12 relevant lessons for the "art and [...] science"<sup>3</sup> of writing strategies and conceptualising strategic documents.

Alliances and strategists alike have to adjust frequently—to global and regional conditions, the will of their political leaders, and at best also to create a coherent course of action. The strategic process therefore doesn't end with the final draft and the publishing of a paper titled 'strategy'. Nor is it put to a halt. Strategic planning is an iterative end in itself. The ends, ways, and means of the alliance's strategic posture have to be constantly evaluated and adjusted against the backdrop of an ever-changing world. This process requires a holistic approach, incorporating all branches and allies on the military side, but, notably, also a scientific pillar to provide a sound assessment of political drivers and the intentions of potential partners and adversaries alike, as well as recommendations on how scarce resources can be utilised best to create a well-orchestrated fundament, amongst others with sufficient *bang for the buck*, to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

When one considers NATO and the West in the maritime realm, they must plan and prepare for an ever-increasing range of conceivable contingencies, running the gamut of the intensity spectrum. This ranges from high-end warfare to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts. A future AMS must address how navies can escape the high-low conundrum, create a balance between the home game and the away game, remain prepared and ready to face the amount of challenges and maintain the initiative in the maritime domain. This volume provides an overview of the plethora of demands and threats allied navies and their strategists are facing. It further grants an outside view by widening the scope away from NATO's and Europe's home waters towards areas of responsibility that seem far away geographically, but are connected by the world's oceans and the global sea lines of communication.

As the editors, we are particularly grateful to each and every author for their excellent contributions and for being part of this book—BRAVO

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<sup>3</sup> Bruns, Sebastian, "Conceptualizing and Writing German Naval Strategy." In *Conceptualizing Maritime & Naval Strategy. Festschrift for Captain Peter M. Swartz, United States Navy (ret.)*, edited by Sebastian Bruns and Randy Papadopoulos, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2020, 37.

ZULU to all of you! We are further indebted to Dr Sebastian Bruns for his constant support throughout the years. Without his encouraging friendship, this book would not have been possible. Finally, we want to thank the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung for facilitating this endeavour with a substantial grant.

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