



NATO AND THE SPANISH NAVY

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Abstract:

Almost everything that the Navy does in its professional field has been influenced by NATO. This influence can be seen in three areas: in empowering joint efforts; in coordination and joint action with the armed forces of our allies, which allows us to operate with them; and in the awareness of contributing to the security and defence not only of Spaniards but also of all of the world's citizens who share our values. In order to get to where we are, decades of cooperation have been necessary. At first approaches were timid but later attempts were made to update procedures to facilitate the taking on of responsibilities and duties together with the allies. The influence of NATO on the Spanish Navy can be appreciated on three classic levels: tactical, operational and strategic. On the tactical level we share all on board procedures. On the operational level all activity is developed via Alliance procedures. With respect to the strategic level, the countries tend to have similar Command Structures. The organisation of the Navy, with a specific structure dedicated to force preparation, and another group dedicated to using those forces, also has its antecedents in the Alliance. The Alliance is preparing a new Strategic Concept, which will determine the way to interpret and carry out security and defence matters in Spain.

Keywords: NATO, Spanish Navy, Strategic Concept.

Resumen:

Prácticamente todo lo que la Armada hace en el ámbito profesional se ha visto influido por la OTAN. Esta influencia se materializa en tres campos: en la potenciación del esfuerzo conjunto, en la coordinación y comunidad de actuación con las Fuerzas Armadas de nuestros aliados que nos permite operar junto a ellos y en la conciencia de contribuir a la seguridad y defensa no sólo de los españoles sino de todos los ciudadanos del mundo que comparten nuestros valores. Para llegar a donde hemos llegado, han sido necesarias décadas de cooperación. Al principio con timidez y posteriormente tratando de actualizar todos los procedimientos para llegar a asumir responsabilidades y cargas junto a los aliados. La influencia de la OTAN en la Armada se aprecia en los tres niveles clásicos: táctico, operacional y estratégico. En el nivel táctico compartimos todos los procedimientos a bordo. En el nivel operacional toda la actividad se desarrolla mediante procedimientos de la Alianza. En lo que respecta al nivel estratégico, los países tienden a tener estructuras de mando similares. La organización de la Armada con una estructura específica dedicada a preparar fuerzas y otra conjunta dedicada a emplearlas tiene también sus antecedentes en la Alianza. La Alianza está preparando un nuevo Concepto Estratégico, que determinará la forma de interpretar y acometer los asuntos de la Seguridad y Defensa en España.

Palabras clave: OTAN, armada española, Concepto Estratégico.

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1. Introduction

In everyday life we do not really appreciate what the main financial, political, security and defence organisations offer us. However, if we did not belong to those “Clubs”, we would certainly appreciate the importance of those establishments more.

If we want to assess what NATO represents for the Spanish Navy, we have to imagine what the Spanish Navy would be without NATO. If we analyse what NATO has meant for Spain, and more specifically for the Spanish Navy, we can conclude that everything we are and do within the professional sphere of the Navy, is thanks to the important influence of NATO.

2. NATO and the Spanish Armed Forces

When we read the newspapers or listen to the news, we may have the impression that NATO is not our business. It is like an organisation to which we belong and express our opinions and place demands, but without really being responsible for its actions. Certain historical stereotypes associate NATO with a different defence concept from that of our country; some expressions such as “we have asked the Alliance to...” or “we have agreed with the Alliance on such or such issue” contribute to the thought that NATO is an organisation to which we belong but which is governed by foreign leaders or nations.

But this is far from the truth; NATO is the only relevant international organisation where decisions are taken unanimously and the vote of the 28 members has, at least in theory, equal value. There are no formal agreements or voting reached by majority. When governments have diverging positions, negotiations are established to reach unanimous agreements. If an agreement is rejected by, say, Lithuania, to take a case in point of a small nation incorporated very recently, its vote is just as valid as that of the United States. In this sense, Spain participates in the decisions of the Alliance as any other nation. Therefore, when we talk about NATO, if we want to talk properly, we should say “we have decided that...,” “we have agreed with our partners that the best stand is...,” etc.

This shared responsibility in the most important security organisation in the world has a great impact on national policy, especially in the performance and structure of our Armed Forces; and also in the way we interpret the concept of security and defence.

NATO’s impact or influence on our Armed Forces could be summarised in three aspects:

- 1.-The strengthening of the joint effort of the three Services (Army, Air Force, Navy).
- 2.-Coordination and common operations of our Armed Forces with those of our Allies.
- 3.-The awareness of contributing to the security and defence not only of our Spanish society, but that of the world that shares our values.

The Alliance is governed at the political level by a Council made up by the Presidents of the member states, and at the military level by a Committee where the Armed Forces are



represented by the Chiefs of the Defence Staffs. Consequently, our organisation had to change, not only to be able to provide assets to the Alliance, but also to contribute to the management of the organisation supporting the decisions of those who represent us.

This feature of NATO as a relevant factor affecting our military organisation has seldom been presented, but the fact that just one serviceman is the spokesman for the whole Armed Forces implies a joint posture through the Joint Staff, a command support organisation of the Chief of the Defence Staff, our spokesman in NATO's Military Committee. In the past, the three Services of our Armed Forces historically followed independent and sometimes opposed paths, but as members of the Alliance, endeavours have been made to join efforts.

The need for joint action has important working effects; namely, high military studies are taught in a Common College. Likewise, and in order to favour joint advising, Service structures have evolved towards common standards with members from the three Services sharing the same departments, no matter their Corps of origin. The advantage of one service also takes into account the needs and common interests of the rest. This common interest is defended by our Chief of the Defence Staff (JEMAD) at the Military Committee of the Alliance. This implies an important effort as regards adaptation, change of mind-set and, above all, flexibility. If the JEMAD had not represented the three Services in the Military Committee, the need for a joint endeavour would not have been so important.

The second aspect of the impact of the Alliance on our Armed Forces refers to the standardisation of working procedures to operate in common with our Allies. The need to act in common requires analysing their interests and concerns while defending our own interests.

This evolution is filtered through the organisation and reaches all levels of the Armed Forces. It is now common practice that when working on a study, concept or proposal, the positions of our Allies are pondered accordingly, with the final product influenced by the likes and dislikes of other nations. In the same way, our Allies take into account our concerns when drafting their initiatives.

The need for fluent communication with our Allies in the official languages (French and English) has implied a great effort for our servicemen. NATO has no doubt contributed to turning our Armed Forces into one of the most international organisations of the State, which contributes to fostering our intellectual heritage.

The third effect is the appreciation that we participate in an important effort of collective defence and security. Before joining the Alliance, the concept of defence was primarily national. Both the territorial structure of the Armed Forces and the definition of assets were oriented towards the defence of the homeland. Joining the Alliance and co-responsibility in its management has radically changed our view of security. Now our defence is shared. Our Allies commit themselves to guarantee our security in exchange for our contribution to theirs. As a consequence, the traditional territorial organisation disappeared and our Armed Forces became more deployable, ready for action in far away scenarios. The Spanish Navy is fully aware of this change and is permanently adapting its organisation.

Furthermore, the deterrence capability of the joint effort contributes to reducing the risks in our territory, thus changing our concept of security. Indeed, integration in the Alliance and the evolution of the world situation has implied that our vision of security is more oriented towards the risks posed by situations where the security of people is at stake, or even our social and economic development.



In this new security context, NATO membership makes us consider the security of other people as being as important as our own. When we carry out our daily work, endeavouring to have efficient Armed Forces, we are also contributing to guaranteeing the security of nations such as Albania or Croatia, the most recent members of NATO, that need security to grow socially and economically.

To sum up, the impact of NATO on our Armed Forces has been remarkable. They have become a joint structure, sharing our security efforts with our Allies.

Spain is today an actor and has co-responsibility in collective defence since joining NATO. Our perception of security would be different without NATO. Our Armed Forces have undergone great development since joining the Alliance, and with pride we can conclude that the Armed Forces of our Allies have also benefited from our presence. We cannot consider NATO as something distant and foreign. Spain is NATO and our Armed Forces would be different without NATO.

3. NATO and the Spanish Navy

3. 1. The Path Towards NATO. Relations with the United States

Navies, by their very nature, are expeditionary and global in their employment. Mobility is indeed a specific characteristic of Naval Forces which, along with the lack of frontiers at sea, turn Navies into real elements of State Diplomacy and Foreign Policy. This also paves the way for relations with other Navies in international waters.

However, some events in our recent history, such as the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War, left Spain isolated from the rest of the world. This fact affected both civilian society and the military world.

As regards the Spanish Navy, naval shipbuilding in the 20th century was primarily indigenous, with some influence from countries with which we had bilateral relations. Ships were built that became obsolete as soon as they were launched², with limited technology. From the operational point of view, the procedures used were also strictly national³.

In the second half of the 20th century, Spain and the United States began to enjoy intense relations with benefits for both nations. U.S. President Eisenhower's visit to Spain was a turning point, and not entirely for military reasons. This interest was connected with his concept of a European Defence. In the political sphere, Spain was initially favoured while the United States benefited from the defence area of interest: for example, apart from the use of many small facilities, the U.S. was allowed to jointly use the bases of Zaragoza, Torrejón, Morón and Rota.

During this long period, Spain updated its Armed Forces and benefited from the transfer of technology which has greatly enhanced our industry and consequently our naval forces⁴.

² Cerezo, Ricardo (1983): *La Armada española en el siglo XX*, Tomo I, Madrid, Ediciones Poniente, p. 107.

³ De Bordejé Morencos, Fernando (1982): *España, poder marítimo y estrategia naval*, Barcelona, Empresa Nacional Bazán, pp. 119-120.

⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 159-161.



From the 60's on, the Spanish Navy began to have a close relationship with the U.S. Navy. The United States transferred a series of destroyers (known as the "5 *latinos*") with their accompanying technology: radars, sonars, weapon systems, etc., along with personnel training programmes, courses in the U.S. for officers, exchanges, etc. In the course of our recent history, many warships and projects have been transferred or developed with support from the U.S. Navy (FRAM destroyers, *Baleares* and *Santa María* class frigates, the aircraft carrier *Príncipe de Asturias*, etc.)

Combined exercises between both Navies were also scheduled⁵. A fundamental requirement was the interoperability between participating warships as well as common procedures, such as similar radios for communications at the same frequencies and modulation, or responses for situations of man overboard while sailing in close formation, or arranging torpedo attack formations when a submarine was spotted. That is to say, the employment of warships at a tactical level⁶.

All these things, so obvious and natural nowadays, were not so at the beginning. NATO was also taking its first steps and published several manuals called Allied Tactical Procedures (ATP) many of which, in their first editions, gathered procedures which were drafted, developed and practised during the Second World War.

3.2. First Contacts with NATO

Although Spain did not become a full member of NATO until 1982, our relations with the United States allowed us to have access to these ATPs, perhaps without sensitive information, and were very useful. Apart from the ATPs, we also had access to other technical documents, such as equipment standardization, specifications, etc.

All this permitted us, in the case of the Spanish Navy, to get acquainted with NATO tactical procedures from the very beginning, and kept us updated with new tactics and procedures. This situation allowed the Spanish Navy to participate in some exercises with units from NATO countries within a bilateral framework, contributing to somehow mitigate our isolation from the rest of the world. Thus, when Spain joined the military structure of NATO the Spanish Navy was fully prepared.

One of the most outstanding initiatives of NATO back in the years 1965-67 was the establishment of Standing Naval Forces. Although they were, at first, on call forces activated for specific periods of time, they soon became permanent. Four forces were set up: two for the Atlantic and two for the Mediterranean; each one of them made up of a task group of frigates and a logistic ship and the other with mine countermeasures ships.

These Standing Forces played an important role in the image of cohesion within the Alliance, as well as deterrence since they were considered Immediate Reaction Forces (IRF). They also had a twofold task: the first one was the establishment of common equipment standards (material interoperability), and the second was the issuing of common tactical procedures (tactical interoperability). The fact of having ships at sea during nearly 365 days

⁵ Linares Seiru-lo, Luis (2007): *La política de seguridad en la transición española, 1976-1982*, Tesis Doctoral, Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Ministerio de Defensa, p. 256.

⁶ A good essay about this period in the Navy is the one published by Álvarez-Maldonado Muela, Ricardo (1997): *Crónica de la Armada española (1939-1997)*, Barcelona, Empresa nacional Bazán de Construcciones Militares S.A., pp.57-65 and 117-127. These latest pages deal in depth with the renewal of the Spain-US Agreements in the seventies.



per year required the development of standardization agreements (STANAGS). Among them we can highlight the following: Replenishment at Sea to supply oil to any NATO ship; Communication Systems and Automatic Data Exchange to keep a common tactical situation in all ships from a task group.

Tactical interoperability has also been a fundamental cornerstone of NATO. Once interoperability has been achieved, it is necessary to attain a series of common procedures to be efficient. These tactical procedures have been drafted little by little, sharing specialized know-how of each NATO member with the rest; experimenting with tactics before turning them into doctrine, etc. Spain has drawn great advantages for its military operations from this experience.

Besides these two aspects, and given the fact that the Spanish Navy started to participate in the Standing Forces at the end of the 80's, we can assert that the Navy was the first Service to have an active role within NATO, transmitting experiences to the other Services of the Armed Forces.

Not much has been written in Spain about this, but it is one of the features of the naval world: activities at sea leave no "footsteps". In those years the Spanish Navy took part in important exercises with significant assets but with hardly any repercussion in public opinion. All this, now and then, has both a positive side and a not so positive side: Among the former is that the Spanish Navy has made progress and among the latter that those important advances in the naval or maritime sphere go unnoticed in society.

To sum up we can conclude that, at a tactical level, the Spanish Navy is based on NATO doctrine, as are the rest of the Navies in our environment, some of which are the most modern in the world. Without NATO's tactical doctrine, the Spanish Navy would not have achieved the level it enjoys at present.

3.3. From the Tactical to the Operational Level

At the tactical level, apart from doctrinal publications and standing forces, participation in educational centres and working groups has allowed for great developments in the employment of the Force at that level. Likewise we also contributed by sharing our experience and know-how with the other members.

Our participation in Standing Forces permitted a first contact with NATO, but it was after entry into the military structure, back in 1997, when we underwent important developments at operational level.

Integration into the military structure entailed new assignments for many officers and petty officers in operational and strategic Headquarters. This demanded important organisational efforts on the part of the Spanish Navy in order to provide qualified personnel to coordinate relations with the Alliance. NATO is also responsible for providing adequate training to the personnel assigned to their Headquarters. For example, at the NATO School in Oberammergau (Germany), Operational Planning courses are organised for officers assigned to the Headquarters, which are intended to qualify them for the operational planning of missions. NATO not only provides academic training but also know-how and experience through real operations and exercises.



The truth is that national procedures, both at joint or on a specific level, are based on the ones used in NATO Headquarters.

I would also like to mention in this chapter the NATO Rapid Response Force (NRF) and the establishment of the Spanish High Readiness Maritime Headquarters (SPMARFOR). The NRF is a joint high readiness NATO force that can operate anywhere. The command of the Naval Component of this Force is exercised by the High Readiness Maritime Headquarters (HRF-M) of NATO; the Spanish Navy has one of them: SPMARFOR.

We can say that the HRF-M works both at tactical and operational levels. Its Staff is made up of national (70%) and foreign (30%) personnel. The employment of the NRF, the exercises carried out by such a demanding Force as the NRF, as well as its relation and integration with NATO's operational Commands, involve great experience in all stages of planning, preparation and execution at the operational level of the Force⁷. The main know-how in the Spanish Navy of this type of operation comes from the analysis and lessons learnt through experience of the NRF. There is nowadays, as always, a debate on the future of these forces. This will evolve and the member states will have doubts as to when and how to use these forces and who will finance them. Decision making processes are necessarily complex, as also happens with standing forces, but the advantages of the SPMARFOR for the Spanish Navy are evident.

Other aspects at the operational level, although not directly connected with the management of operations, but rather with the design and capabilities of our ships and training methods, are the standard requirements of naval units as well as the certification of standards and procedures. What is intended is to standardize the capabilities of specific naval units, a frigate, for example, regardless of its nationality and the type of training of its crew. It is intended that all members understand what it is and what NATO expects from each naval unit. Spanish Navy training organisations will have to apply their standard working procedures. In this sense, the maturity of the Spanish Navy is such that we can now contribute with our own experience as one of the most important members of the Alliance.

3.4. Attaining the Strategic Level

We can say that it is at the tactical level where the Force is employed in order to attain the military goals identified at higher levels. At the operational level is where operations are conducted which are aimed at attaining the goals defined at the strategic level.

Although at tactical and operational levels NATO has certainly influenced our doctrinal procedures, at the strategic level we have made some contributions. We should not forget that the NATO Strategic Concept has a big influence on national strategic thought. I feel sure, nevertheless, that this is an area that still needs further development. The NATO Strategic Concept has a direct, although not obvious, influence on the national strategic concept. We in Spain, I refer to our society as a whole, should pay more attention to this concept. The risks and threats included in the NATO Strategic Concept have been incorporated, with all necessary nuances, into the different national strategic concepts. Equally, guidelines about

⁷ Chacón Piqueras, Carme: "Solicitud de comparecencia, a petición propia, de la Ministra de Defensa, ante la Comisión de Defensa, para informar sobre el desarrollo de las operaciones de las Fuerzas Armadas Españolas en el exterior, conforme a lo dispuesto en el artículo 18 de la Ley Orgánica 5/2005, de la Defensa Nacional", *Congreso de los Diputados, Boletín Oficial*, Madrid, Spain (10 December 2008), pp. 4 y 5.



what NATO Forces should be and what capabilities they should have need to be assumed by each member country, since they measure and mould our Armed Forces.

As regards Naval Force employment, NATO has not developed an allied maritime strategy so far, although it did develop doctrine and concepts that, given their conceptual scope and long-term duration, could be said to be included in the strategic level. This maritime strategy, which is still in a process of development, although geared towards NATO objectives (in sum, the objectives of its member countries), is based on the naval thought of all NATO maritime powers, including Spain. Certainly, this will have a strong impact on national maritime strategy.

On the other hand, there are certain NATO activities that, although they can be included in the strategic level, are not related to the attainment of military objectives but to logistics and organisation, and that have an extensive influence on Spain and, specifically, on the Spanish Navy. Thus, for instance, the dock infrastructure at Rota Naval Base is supported by NATO Infrastructure programmes. On the one side, NATO supports the enlargement of the docks in this Base and, on the other, Spain agrees to offer support to any NATO ship that needs it.

In terms of organisation, organic changes need to be introduced in order to maintain effective communication with NATO and our involvement in working groups and decision-making agencies by providing qualified personnel to the different Headquarters. It was even necessary to take command of Forces such as the maritime HRF and some Standing Naval Forces.

3.5. Coherent Acquisition of Equipment and Systems

The role that NATO has had in bringing together our Armed Forces has already been stressed, both in the domestic or joint aspect (among the different Services and the Navy), and in the external or combined aspect (with the rest of our allies). NATO contributed to our planning system for material assets with some proven methods to define and procure equipment, guaranteeing the coherence of national defence and our contribution to common defence.

The Phased Armaments Programming System (PAPS) constitutes, within the NATO environment, the framework to promote cooperation programmes based on an agreement on common military requirements, while being the instrument to assist in decision-making in all management echelons. Since the year 2000, these procedures and this methodology have also been a framework for developing programmes geared to satisfying national needs.

This phased system analyses in a systematic, gradual and detailed way the different processes used from the time when a need is identified to the moment when the equipment is definitively deactivated. Generally speaking, we can mention three basic periods: conceptual, procurement and operational service. The first, purely theoretical, identifies the need and accordingly defines requirements for new equipment. In the second, the equipment that fulfils those defined requirements is planned, designed and produced. Finally, the third period covers the support needed throughout the whole operational life span and the steps that should be taken to guarantee decommissioning in an efficient way.

In addition, the process establishes the responsibilities and functional relations among the agencies involved in each phase. Thus, we verify that:



- The selected action fulfils the need that generated it.
- The results expected from the action make up for the effort invested in its implementation.
- It is viable given the material and human assets available.
- It is financially feasible.

In this sense, the peculiarity of working in a medium such as boundless sea, with very few legal limitations for the deployment of military units, led the Spanish Navy to a close collaboration with the rest of the navies long before our treaty membership.

At a first phase, by acquiring mostly US-material, and at a second phase by building units in national shipyards that systematically conformed to all common requirements and standards defined by the Alliance, the Spanish Navy has been working in an effective and integrated way with the rest of the allies for more than 40 years⁸.

This involvement not only guarantees coherence among all allied assets, but also allows the application of more rigorous operational requirements, taken from the global experience from all members, to the new equipment. Some examples of the effectiveness of this approach are in the wide range of orders coming from outside of our national industry, and our high technological degree in fields such as shipbuilding and electronics. Without the level of standardisation demanded by NATO, our ships would be different, and our contacts with the international world much reduced.

4. The Future of the Spanish Navy and NATO

NATO is a dynamic organisation that performs an ongoing evaluation of its strategic environment in order to adapt its organisation and political and military stand; the aim is to be always in the best position to efficiently face the needs of the collective defence and common security of all its members. This evolution has internal consequences in the Alliance, which reorganises its structures and its decision processes and actions so as to adjust our reaction to any changes in the international sphere. It has also external consequences, for it promotes the adoption of certain force structures, as well as the procurement of specific military capabilities among its member countries.

For forty years, NATO had prepared to face the threat of the Warsaw Pact, a well-defined and well-known threat against which it was relatively simple to plan and rehearse military responses. On the other hand, the design of new ships and weapon systems was strongly influenced by the need to counter, or surpass, the progresses in military technology attained by the Soviets, whose technical and tactical employment were known by the allies through their intelligence distribution channels.

⁸ Linares Seiru-lo, *op. cit.*, p. 397 y Álvarez-Maldonado Muela, Ricardo (1997): *Crónica de la Armada española (1939-1997)*, Barcelona, Empresa nacional Bazán de Construcciones Militares S.A., pp. 263-268.



The Spanish Navy, without neglecting its immediate environs and national responsibilities, assumed with its main units the role that had been assigned to the allied navies during those years: to exert control over the sea in oceanic waters in order to reinforce Europe through maritime sea lines of communication in case of a conflict with the Soviet Bloc⁹; to neutralise the nuclear submarine threat¹⁰; and to be prepared to project naval power over the European territory so as to contribute to the defeat of the Warsaw Pact's land forces¹¹. We assumed the allied doctrine and, as I have already pointed out, the same operative procedures and the same way of organising and directing the forces at sea as our allies. Thus, the main effort to modernise the Spanish Navy in the 70s and 80s was materialised in the Combat Group (made up of the aircraft carrier, Harrier aircraft and oceanic frigates)¹².

When the Soviet Bloc disintegrated in the early 90s, NATO had to reconsider its role on the international security scene. Without forgetting the essential role that military defence plays in the Alliance's *raison d'être*, cooperation and a more ample vision of security came to prevail on the new scene, resulting from dialogue. During this decade, NATO made a great adaptation effort which, starting from the 1991 Strategic Concept, culminated in that of 1999. This, although still in force, is now under a review process.

The 1999 Strategic Concept has maintained as its essential objective the safeguarding of security and freedom of NATO-member countries by political and military means. It does not dismiss the possibility that in the long-term future it could be materialised in a great-scale conventional threat against the Alliance or one of its members, thus shifting its focus from defence towards maintenance of security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. In addition, it still has the ambition that NATO become a useful tool for international peace and security.

This means, on the one hand, recognising that new risks like international terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or the impact of armed conflicts in far away regions are concerns that demand attention from the Alliance. On the other hand, we need to use political instruments, such as NATO enlargement and dialogue and cooperation with third countries, in order to promote international stability. Finally, it also means that the allied military forces should transform themselves to attain the rapid and flexible reaction demanded in cases of crisis management in far away geographical areas.

Therefore, we can conclude that NATO, maintaining collective defence as the organisational cornerstone, is also taking on a new role in common security.

In the maritime environment, and along these lines, today's navies have to operate in waters that are more distant from their bases but nearer the coast, and against irregular adversaries, the so-called asymmetric threats. Moreover, given the general reduction of military forces in the allied nations, multinationality and joint action are now a requirement to plan and carry out NATO operations. In addition, some kinds of actions that seemed outdated are being practised again, such as maritime embargo, prompted by the operations in the Persian Gulf and the Adriatic Sea after the invasion of Kuwait and the disintegration of

⁹ Álvarez-Maldonado Muela, *op. cit.*, pp.256-257.

¹⁰ Polanco Martínez, Enrique (1967): *Discurso de clausura del Curso de Guerra Naval 1965/1967*. Chocano Higuera, Guadalupe (2000): *Curso de Guerra naval. Últimas lecciones (1925-1999)*. Madrid, Escuela de Guerra Naval, Ministerio de Defensa, p. 192.

¹¹ De Bordejé Morencos, Fernando (1982): *España, poder marítimo y estrategia naval*, Barcelona, Empresa Nacional Bazán, pp. 94-101.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 158-173.



Yugoslavia, respectively.

The Spanish Navy appreciated this new approach, and soon aligned itself with it. Multinationality in naval forces was already an issue left behind, after years of cooperation inside NATO. However, as regards to joint operations we needed to progress. To that effect, the best way was to fully enter the NATO Response Force (NRF) by contributing one of the four High Readiness Maritime Headquarters that yearly rotate in order to cover the allied needs of planning and conducting rapid reaction maritime operations. Our NRF membership also forced us to adopt a new system for ship, Marine Corps units and Staffs certification, which I have already commented in above paragraphs.

However, the most important change derived from bringing operations to the coast was that attention was now focused on all things related to maritime security and the use of the sea for illicit activities, a field of action that had been the traditional role of many navies in past centuries, and that now is again being practised to fight the new risks, such as international terrorism, drug smuggling, illegal immigration and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. This new approach to maritime operations brought about a very important organisational change inside the Spanish Navy: the creation of the Maritime Action Force and the Protection Force in the year 2002. The first includes different types of units, mostly patrol boats, embodying the Spanish Navy's contribution to the State's action at sea, especially maritime surveillance and naval collaboration to prevent and monitor the aforementioned risks. The second agglutinates the Marine Corps units specialised in protection and security tasks, but geared, among other things, to providing the Spanish Navy's ships with inspection and search equipment for surveillance and maritime security tasks.

Once this shift towards coastal waters in naval operations was adopted, NATO soon realised that the essential tool for effective action was lacking: suitable knowledge of the maritime environment. NATO was aware that it was not possible to act efficiently in the new coastal scenarios without a complete picture of what is happening at sea and the reasons why things happen in a certain manner. In order to solve this problem, NATO launched an initiative, Maritime Situational Awareness (MSA), which embraced the study of the conceptual, technological and organisational aspects needed to obtain, merge and analyse all relevant information for maritime security operations. The Spanish Navy was involved in these tasks from the beginning and, with the support of its national industry, applied the solutions developed at the Maritime Action Surveillance and Operations Centre (COVAM: Centro de Operaciones y Vigilancia de Acción Marítima), whose facilities were set up so as to support the new Maritime Action Force in its surveillance and security tasks¹³, and that is now supporting with remarkable success the EU's Atalanta Operation against piracy in the Indian Ocean.

Also as a consequence of the 1999 Strategic Concept, more attention was paid to the Alliance approach to third countries so as to promote strategic dialogue and mutual confidence; again, navies played a significant role here, applying both traditional actions, such as naval diplomacy, and more novel actions, like military cooperation, in order to extend the Euro-Atlantic stability and security area. The Spanish Navy has been very active in this field,

¹³ For a detailed study about these aspects and their tendencies, see: Ruesta Botella, José Antonio (2008): "Seguridad marítima: tendencias y retos" pp. 102-108 and Martínez-Núñez (2008): "Capacidades clave en la seguridad marítima" pp. 161-164 in *Grupo de Trabajo* nº 05/08 (2008): "Impacto de los riesgos emergentes en la seguridad marítima", Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, Ministerio de Defensa, *Cuaderno de estrategia*, no. 140, at http://www.ieee.es/archivos/subidos/CE/CE_140_Seguridad_Maritima.pdf.



too, promoting the involvement of observers and units from third countries in national exercises, and contributing to the integration of ships from non-NATO nations, including Russia, in real operations like Active Endeavour – the maritime security operation that NATO has maintained in the Mediterranean Sea since 9/11.

Therefore, we can sum up the result of the development in NATO naval strategic thought since 1990 as geared towards two specific areas of action: first, conventional operations as a contribution to deterrence and collective defence; and last, but not least, maritime security as a specific contribution to the fight against the new risks that have emerged in the field of common security.

Such development in allied naval thought and practices is currently under a process of shaping and updating, as the Allied Maritime Strategy (AMS) is being prepared to organise the military activities that NATO should be ready to conduct at sea in order to contribute to the defence and security of the Alliance in the future. While the final document will not be approved until 2010, there are indeed clear trends in its drafts that will have, and are having already, an influence on the way that the Spanish Navy carries out its missions.

The first trend is the consolidation of the future role of war navies in three principal fields of action:

- 1.-Contribute to deterrence and joint conventional operations related to collective defence and crisis response operations. This area will bring about operations ranging from force projection to humanitarian aid.
- 2.-Maritime security operations to fight risks like international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, piracy, etc., and protect freedom of navigation.
- 3.-Military cooperation as a vehicle to promote mutual confidence on the periphery of the Euro-Atlantic area, to strengthen our bonds of collaboration with nations that are close to the Alliance but geographically far apart, and, most importantly, to create capabilities in countries lacking them for the benefit of global maritime security.

In organisational terms, the Spanish Navy is well aligned to play this role, for the new structure of the Spanish Naval Force (the Fleet), under a single command, is organised in three blocks:

- The Naval Action Force, which materialises the contribution of the Spanish Navy to deterrence and defence in the joint environment, and which includes the Spanish Navy's most powerful assets: aircraft carriers, amphibious force, frigates, submarines and aircraft.
- The Maritime Action Force, focused on maritime surveillance and maritime security operations conducted both as the Spanish Navy's own and permanent mission, and in support of other national and international agencies with responsibilities in the maritime realm.
- The Marine Corps Force, which affords both landing force for conventional operations, and security, inspection and search equipment for maritime security tasks.



The AMS will also identify a series of principles in all actions of the allied naval forces, some of which are today common practice and have been incorporated into the approach of the Spanish Navy to naval operations and to the future characteristics of the naval force. Perhaps the most relevant are a global approach to maritime security and the expeditionary nature of naval forces.

NATO, along with the European Union, recognises that maritime affairs, and especially the maritime security issue, should be tackled with an integrated approach, both in geographical terms and regarding the relations among the different agencies and institutions, both military and civilian, with responsibilities at sea. The seas as a whole are a global geographical element in which the limits between coasts and oceans are irrelevant, and in which none of the institutions or agencies, whether national or international, military or civilian, with responsibilities for handling and protecting maritime activity, have the information or adequate means to successfully act by themselves to prevent and control such diverse risks as are piracy, illegal immigration, weapons proliferation, etc., or to guarantee the global protection of maritime shipping and the freedom of navigation. This is why NATO recommends, firstly, tackling the issue of maritime environment knowledge by integrating and merging information coming from civilian and military systems, and then, to be in a position to support international governments and agencies when it comes to preventing maritime risks, protecting vital infrastructures also related to maritime shipping, etc.

On the other hand, the expeditionary nature of naval forces has been a recurrent question in the latest Ministry Guidelines issued by the North-Atlantic Council, as has, particularly in that of 2006, the need for highly deployable and flexible forces that can take advantage of the sea to restrain crisis situations in far away theatres. The novelty in the AMS is that such expeditionary capability will have an enhanced importance in the field of military cooperation and post-conflict reconstruction.

The Spanish Navy is already applying these principles to its daily tasks connected to maritime surveillance and security; the COVAM merges information coming from very diverse sources, so that each agency can have what it needs to fulfil its specific responsibilities. At sea, apart from fulfilling its specific missions, including surveillance and security of maritime spaces, the Spanish Navy has the additional aim of becoming the best collaborator for all national and international agencies with responsibilities in the maritime realm, coordinating their actions according to the legal duties and assets of each of them.

As regards the expeditionary nature of our naval force, it is important to highlight the effort made in recent years to reinforce this capability with the imminent entry into service of the amphibious ship “Juan Carlos I” and the combat replenishment ship “Cantabria”¹⁴.

¹⁴ With respect to the vision and operative application of the Spanish naval power projection, see: Rebollo García, Manuel (2008): “The Deep Strategic Significance of the Spanish Navy”, *NATO Review*, no. 3 (2008), Brussels, NATO, pp. 98-104, at [258](http://www.armada.mde.es/ArmadaPortal/page/Portal/ArmadaEspañola/conocenos_ajema/06_Articulos_V.A; Ruesta Botella, José Antonio: “Nuevas capacidades, nuevos medios. El buque de proyección estratégica”, Escuela de Guerra Naval, <i>Cuadernos de Pensamiento Naval</i>, no. 3 (2003). For an introductory essay about the projection capability, see: “Revisión Estratégica de la Defensa”, <i>Ministerio de Defensa</i>, Madrid, España (2003) pp. 206, 221-223. For a deeper study, see: Gray Colin S. (2001): <i>La Pujanza del Poder Naval</i>, Madrid, Ministerio de Defensa. A recent study is the one published by Fernández Fadón, Fernando (2009): <i>España y el Reino Unido. Dos potencias navales ante un escenario de incertidumbre</i>, Madrid, Escuela de Guerra Naval, Ministerio de Defensa, Madrid, pp. 123-135.</p></div><div data-bbox=)



However, the expeditionary nature of our naval force is not only based on having the specific assets of the Naval Action Force and the Marine Corps Force I have already mentioned before, but also on a shift in the mind-set regarding the response opportunities that such expeditionary capability offers and about the ways in which its assets can be used. The naval response to the Lebanon crisis in 2006 was excellent proof of it: in less than two weeks, a Marine Corps battalion was deployed on the spot that used the Tiro beach for its shore-based deployment and support, as well as other Spanish Navy ships and amphibious resources.

Finally, I have to mention the NATO New Strategic Concept, currently being prepared, and that will supersede the one that has been in force since 1999. This document foresees that NATO will establish the kinds of operations that it should be ready for in the future, the capabilities that it should procure to that effect, and the new cooperation bonds that it will establish to these ends. Most likely, the Allied Maritime Strategy will have a significant influence on the new Concept; the Spanish Navy will closely follow its development to maintain itself in a good position to re-orientate and align its structures and plans with the least effort possible and in all necessary areas¹⁵.

5. The Spanish Navy, NATO and the European Union

Before finishing this speech, and after having said that the NATO influence on the Spanish Navy has been, and is, essential, we should comment on the European Union and the role of Europe in the Spanish Navy. Both institutions, NATO and the EU, with their Common Security and Defence Policy, are essential for our future. They are very important, and in addition, they are complementary.

The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty will allow, now more than ever, a much more coherent and coordinated European Foreign Policy. This will have an impact on European Security and Defence Policy. We will still receive tactical procedures and operational doctrine from NATO, and we also will align our national strategic concept with NATO strategy (this, I will say again, is also our task) and will conduct NATO operations as necessary. But we also will take advantage of those procedures and doctrine for all operations in defence of our European interests whenever it is necessary.

We should see this as only natural: it is in accordance with the advanced and complex Western societies of the countries to which we belong.

6. Conclusion

NATO has exerted a very important influence on the Spanish Navy. It would be very difficult to explain many things we carry out in our daily routine without this influence. Organization, training, command structure, procurement, standardization etc is very much driven by ideas born inside NATO.

¹⁵ Pérez Muniello, Francisco (2009): *El Gasto de defensa en España*, Madrid, Ministerio de Defensa, 171-217. The chapter "El Gasto en defensa en el mundo" makes an extremely didactic analysis, with profusion of sources and comparative references among NATO partners and between NATO and Spain.



But NATO is not an organization foreign to us. We also influence NATO and being present there we influence others as much as they influence us.

In the near future one of the big challenges we'll have to face is to develop the Europe's security and defence policy while keeping a solid relationship with NATO in benefit of our future security.