



104/2023

04/12/2023

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New European Maritime Safety Strategy 2023

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Abstract:

The sea has always played a vital role in the success of any superpower. The European Union's new Maritime Security Strategy seeks to strengthen Europe's autonomy amid growing threats to maritime security. The Strategy highlights the importance of shipping routes and submarine cable networks in the globalized economy. The demand for maritime resources, such as hydrocarbons and minerals, is driving an increase in the importance of naval forces. The new European maritime Strategy focuses on maritime domain awareness and the need to respond to evolving challenges in the maritime environment while addressing transformations in naval warfare. This article examines its evolution over the past decade and the changes made in the new Strategy.

Keywords:

Strategy, Maritime Security, EU, Threats, Risks, Seabed, EUMSS.

How to quote:

CONTE DE LOS RÍOS, Augusto. *New European Maritime Safety Strategy 2023*. Opinion Paper. IEEE 104/2023.

https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2023/DIEEE0104_2023_AUGCON_Estrategia_ENG.pdf and/or [link bie](#)³ (accessed on the web day/month/year)

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*How inappropriate to call this planet
“Earth” when it is clearly “Ocean.”*

Arthur C. Clarke.

Introduction

The sea has always played a fundamental role in the success of any superpower. Therefore, controlling or depriving an adversary of it represents a strategic challenge of utmost importance. The stakes are only growing, shipping lanes, followed by submarine cable networks, have become the vital arteries of the globalized economic system.

Although not completely uniform, the maritime space exhibits definite characteristics that significantly influence naval tactical operations. The demand for hydrocarbon and mineral resources to meet society's needs continues to increase, supporting the buildup of naval forces at a time when naval warfare is undergoing significant transformations.

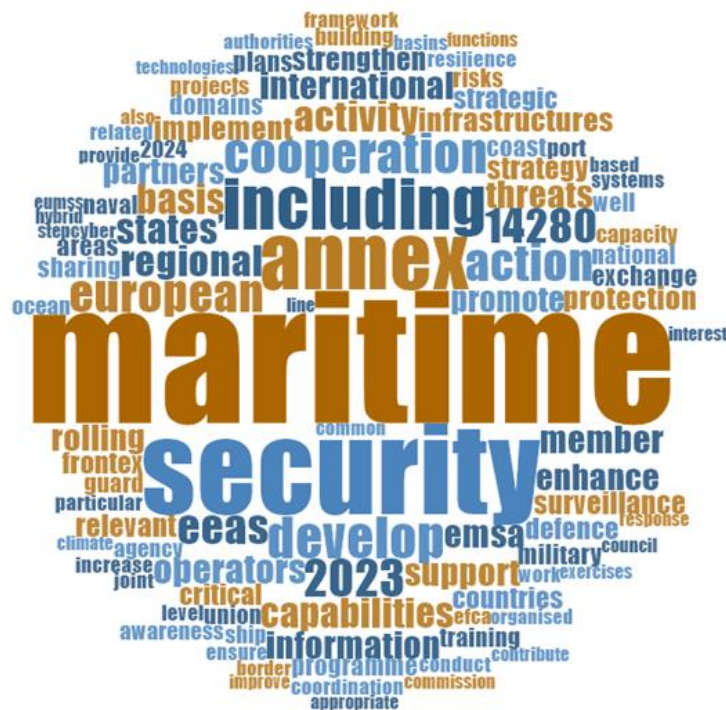


Illustration 1 Word cloud with NVivo (Source: Author).

On October 24th, the Council of the European Union (EU) approved its new EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) and a new Action Plan, which replaced the 2014 EU Maritime

Security Strategy and the revised 2018 Action Plan¹.

Maritime domain awareness is crucial to detect and respond effectively to threats affecting the EU. The EU will strengthen maritime security by improving the collection and sharing of information between various maritime sectors and facilitating cooperation between Member States.

At the international level, the EU will continue to strengthen maritime situational awareness capabilities through information exchange and naval presence, especially in the Gulf of Guinea and the Indo-Pacific region. Today, in an increasingly contested information environment, obtaining accurate information on developments has become essential².

The European maritime Strategy emphasizes the importance of its southern region, as highlighted in the recent Strategic Compass³. The EU seeks to maintain and strengthen existing naval operations in the Mediterranean and to establish maritime connections with several regions, including the Gulf of Guinea, the Horn of Africa, and the northwest Indian Ocean. This approach reflects the growing interconnectedness between maritime sub-regions and the need for more integrated management of maritime spaces.

In this article, we will briefly examine the changes that have taken place over the last decade and the developments that the EUMSS-23 brings. It aims to strengthen the EU's autonomy and capacity to respond to growing threats to maritime security, as well as to increase awareness of the maritime domain in general.

Why a new EUMSS?

Maritime security is of vital importance to the EU and its Member States⁴. Together, the EU Member States make up the largest Exclusive Economic Zone in the world.

The EU economy is highly dependent on the security of the oceans: more than 80% of

¹ Council of the EU (2023). Council conclusions on the Revised EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) and its Action Plan (14280/23). Retrieved from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/67499/st14280-en23.pdf> (Accessed 5-11-23)

² Saunois, L. (2021). Quelle place pour la lutte informationnelle dans les opérations navales? *Revue Défense Nationale*, 841, 133-136.

³ Pontijas Calderón, José Luis (2021). La brújula estratégica de la Unión Europea. *Bie3: Boletín IEEE*, Nº 24, pp. 212-224.

⁴ Council of the EU (2023). Maritime security: Council approves revised EU strategy and action plan. Retrieved from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/es/press/2023/10/24/maritime-security-council-approves-revised-eu-strategy-and-action-plan/> (Accessed 5-11-23).

world trade is carried by sea transport, approximately two-thirds of the world's oil and gas production is extracted at sea or transported by sea, and up to 99% of global data communications are transmitted via undersea cables.

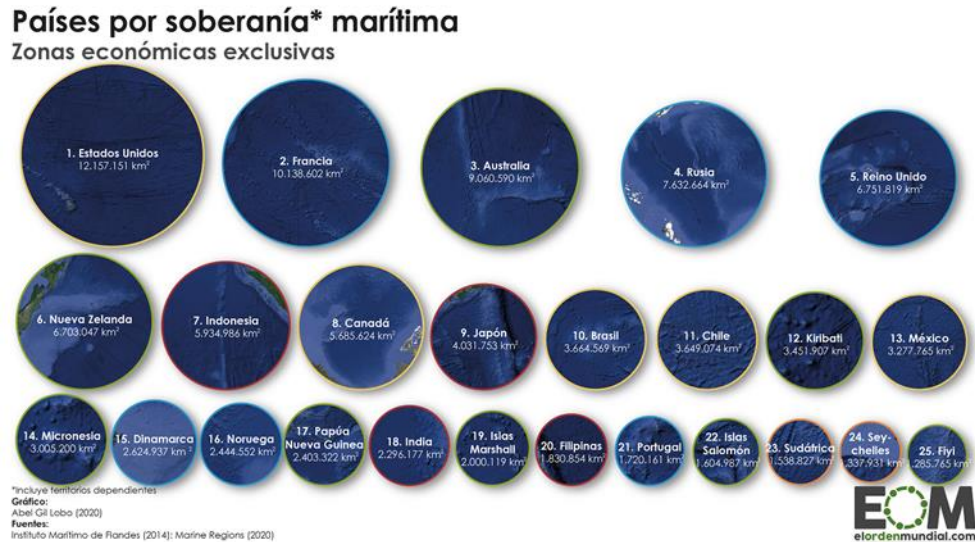


Illustration 2 Countries by Exclusive Economic Zones (Source: EOM).

The oceans cover approximately 71% of the earth's surface, equivalent to 361 million square kilometers, with the Pacific accounting for half of this area. To ensure effective ocean governance, protect our seas and seabed, and realize the full potential of a sustainable blue economy, the global maritime domain must be secure.

Despite growing interest, much of this vast space still needs to be explored⁵. Less than 10% of the seabed has been adequately mapped, and we still need to find out the species that inhabit the High Seas, as well as the nature of its resources⁶.

According to Coutau-Bégarie, Strategy derives from an objective set by policy and aims to guide the action necessary to achieve that objective, which involves the implementation of specific tactics. It is an intellectual approach that guides decision-making and is commonly called "art." It is this differentiation of the degree concerning tactical and logistical that leads to the contrast of its nature or art⁷.

Since 2014, the EUMSS and its Action Plan provided a framework for addressing security challenges in the maritime domain. This strategy fostered greater collaboration between

⁵ Hebrard, P. (2019). Mers et océans: des espaces convoités. *Stratégique*, 123, 31-41.

⁶ Battesti, M. (2019). La haute mer: une «chose commune». *Stratégique*, 123, 67-86.

⁷ Caron, F. (2015). Hervé Coutau-Bégarie et la stratégie navale. *Stratégique*, 109, 23-36.

civilian and military authorities, primarily through information sharing. It also contributed to promoting rules-based governance in the seas and boosting international cooperation. In addition, it has also served to strengthen the EU's autonomy and capacity to address maritime security threats⁸.

The present Strategy builds on and replaces the EUMSS-14⁹. It continues to be guided by the principles set out in the 2014 document, including a cross-sectoral approach, functional integrity, respect for international norms (such as international law, human rights, and democracy), and full compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). It also continues to promote the maritime multilateralism necessary in the face of the world's naval power¹⁰.

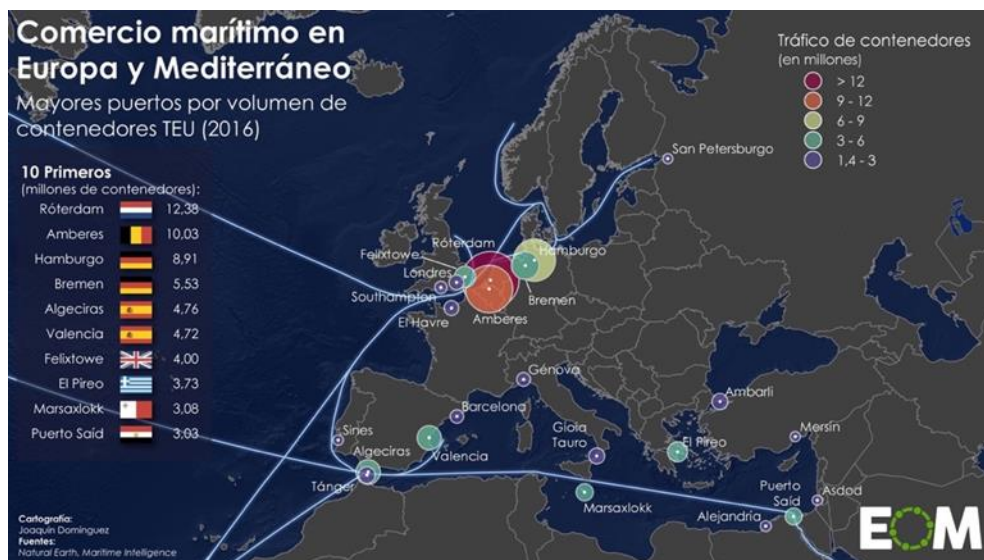


Illustration 3 Maritime trade in Europe and the Mediterranean (Source: EOM).

The EUMSS-23 considers all European sea and submarine basins¹¹, including the Atlantic Ocean, the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the North Sea, the Arctic Ocean, and the outermost regions. However, it is essential to note that because maritime security anywhere in the world inevitably impacts the global scene, the EU's interests in terms of maritime security are global in scope.

⁸ Simon, A. (2016). Quelle stratégie navale européenne? *Revue Défense Nationale*, 790, 41-45.

⁹ Council of the EU (2023). Council conclusions on the Revised EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) and its Action Plan. Retrieved from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/67499/st14280-en23.pdf> (Accessed 5-11-23).

¹⁰ D'Elloy de Bonninghen, A. (2022). La puissance navale aujourd'hui. *Revue Défense Nationale*, 852, 177-188.

¹¹ Morio de L'Isle, B. (2017). Les espaces sous-marins. *Revue Défense Nationale*, 801, 122-127.

The southern region of Europe's maritime Strategy is essential. The recent EU Strategic Compass has set itself a high level of ambition in the maritime field concerning the Southern Neighborhood¹². The Compass, the EU's first security and defense strategy, clearly states that EU Member States must invest in high-level naval capabilities and be prepared to undertake more robust maritime operations¹³.

The EU is playing an increasingly significant role as a global maritime security provider, conducting its maritime operations, such as Atalanta and Irini, implementing the concept of Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMPs), and promoting maritime situational awareness through cooperation with a wide range of international partners¹⁴.



Illustration 4 Gulf of Guinea and Indian Ocean MSPs (Source: EU).

More specifically, the EU aims to ensure the linkage of its initiatives in the Mediterranean with the Gulf of Guinea, the Horn of Africa, and the wider Gulf region. In this regard, it is worth noting that the EU has also recently decided to strengthen its maritime presence in

¹² Council of the EU (2022). *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence (7371/22)*. Retrieved from <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7371-2022-INIT/en/pdf> (Accessed 5-11-23).

¹³ Borrell, Josep (2022). *La nueva Europa de la Defensa y la Brújula Estratégica*. Ministerio de Defensa. Secretaría General Técnica. Retrieved from <https://publicaciones.defensa.gob.es/la-nueva-europa-de-la-defensa-y-la-brujula-estrategica-libros-pdf.html> (Accessed 5-11-23).

¹⁴ El concepto de PMC tiene por objeto aumentar la capacidad de la UE como socio de confianza y garante de la seguridad marítima, a fin de brindar una mayor intervención europea, asegurar una presencia y disponibilidad marítimas continuas en las zonas marítimas de interés.

the northwest Indian Ocean. This approach indicates that the EU believes that maritime sub-regions are increasingly feeding into each other, which calls for a more integrated approach when managing maritime spaces¹⁵.

In addition, operational maritime and border surveillance systems implemented by the European Maritime Safety Agency¹⁶ (EMSA) and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) provide space-based observations, complementing the navigation services of Galileo satellites.

The EU Threat Analysis shows that the EU faces increasing threats and challenges, including in the maritime domain. The EU Threat Analysis is a comprehensive, intelligence-driven analysis of the threats and challenges the EU faces or could face in the future. It is regularly updated and serves as background information to help develop and implement the EU Strategic Security and Defense Compass.

Maritime security faces multiple threats in various regions, including territorial and maritime conflicts, competition for natural resources, and challenges to freedom of navigation, as well as rights of innocent passage and transit. These challenges generate tensions and instability along the EU's sea basins.

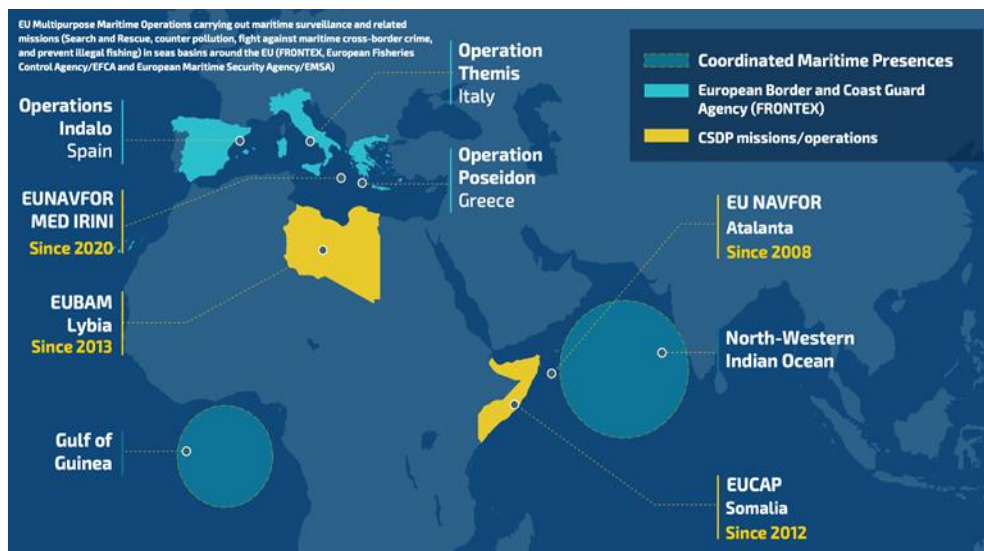


Illustration 5 European missions with maritime assets (Source: EU).

¹⁵ Fiott, D. (2022). Europe and the South: the Maritime Dimension. *Confluences Méditerranée*, 123, 111-121.

¹⁶ EMSA's mission is to serve the maritime interests of the EU to create a safe, secure, environmentally friendly and competitive maritime sector and to act as a reliable and respected point of reference in the maritime sector, both in Europe and the rest of the world.

Challenges to maritime security have also intensified worldwide, not only in European basins, affecting areas such as the Gulf of Guinea, the Gulf of Aden, the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca, and the South China Sea. These developments may affect the interests of EU Member States and their allies, leading us to establish different strategies¹⁷.

Climate change and ocean pollution are expected to have significant and lasting impacts on maritime security. A better understanding of the interactions between climate change and marine environmental degradation is essential to minimize their effects, as they function as risk factors by increasing instability and inequality and aggravating problems such as transnational crime, piracy, and marine resource-related tensions.

Some non-EU countries have increased their military assertiveness and capabilities in the maritime domain, resorting to unilateral actions, including the use or threat of use of force against other countries. This threat includes provocations and violations of sovereign rights in breach of international law, in defiance of the rule of law and international order.

The Indo-Pacific region, where the EU and France have the second-largest Exclusive Economic Zone, has become an arena of intense geopolitical competition. Increased tensions and deployment of forces in areas such as the South and East China Seas, as well as the Taiwan Strait, affect both global and European security and prosperity.

Maintaining stability and security in vital maritime routes, such as the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, the Horn of Africa, and the Indian Ocean, requires increased action by the EU and its Member States, focusing on presence, cooperation, and partnership initiatives in line with the EU's Strategy for the Indo-Pacific region.

In a strategic environment that as a whole is undergoing significant transformations due to the climate crisis, environmental degradation, threats to critical maritime infrastructures, constant illegal trafficking, illegal immigration, and overexploitation of marine resources, including illegal fishing, and not forgetting the consequences of Russia's unjustified and illegal aggression against Ukraine, a stronger and more

¹⁷ See for example the global strategy with Africa (6703/20), the EU strategy on the Gulf of Guinea (7671/14), the EU strategy for the Indo-Pacific (11930/21), the EU policy on the Arctic (1287/21) and the strategy on the outermost regions (8781/22).

significant intervention of the EU as a security reference at the international level is necessary¹⁸.

The attack on Nord Stream gas pipelines in the Baltic Sea in 2022, the unauthorized intrusions near critical infrastructures in the North Sea or the most recent one in Finland in 2023, and the recurrent cyber-attacks on maritime infrastructures, including hybrid campaigns, require the EU to strengthen its security and protection of critical infrastructures, focusing on the development of innovative technologies¹⁹.

Therefore, the new EUMSS-23 finally addresses an aspect forgotten by the previous Strategy, the seabed, with an eye on these latest attacks suffered by underwater cables and pipelines. The EU submarine data cable network is both vital and highly vulnerable. This Strategy reviews the threats and the actors behind them and suggests improving security. The proposals are based on the need to raise awareness across the EU, improve coordination, and share information between EU institutions and Member States.

The EU has the necessary capabilities to conduct surveillance and risk analysis concerning suspicious surface and non-military activities. Maritime satellite imagery and vessel positioning data can be used for such purposes. Suspicious behavior can be monitored using specific anomalous behavior algorithms supported by analysts. The CISE, combined with Member State resources, can be used to share analysis across the EU.

Based on the EU Strategic Security and Defense Compass, endorsed by the European Council in March 2022, and the Joint Communication on Maritime Security of March 2023, this revision of the EUMSS and its action plan aims to address these emerging challenges. It is an opportunity to drive sustainable solutions in maritime security, strengthen the role of the EU and its Member States internationally, and ensure EU access to an increasingly contested maritime environment.

EUMSS-23 provides a framework for the implementation of new measures aimed at protecting the EU's maritime interests, as well as safeguarding its citizens, values, and

¹⁸ Mongrenier, J. (2023). La guerre d'Ukraine, l'OTAN et l'Europe de la défense. Organisation et reconfiguration de l'espace euro-atlantique. *Hérodote*, 190-191, 41-56.

¹⁹ European Parliament (2022). *Security threats to undersea communications cables and infrastructure – consequences for the EU*. Retrieved from [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2022/702557/EXPO_IDA\(2022\)702557_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2022/702557/EXPO_IDA(2022)702557_EN.pdf) (Accessed 5-11-23).

economy. It aims to promote international peace and security and ensure the free flow of trade and freedom of navigation, all in line with the principles of sustainability and biodiversity protection. The EU and its Member States will implement this revised Strategy in line with their respective competencies.

Protecting critical infrastructure in the maritime domain is highlighted as a key priority. The EU must work with Member States to strengthen the resilience of these infrastructures, such as pipelines or underwater cables crossing national waters. This work involves improving current risk and threat assessments, ensuring they are up to date, and complementing them with response plans and mitigation measures backed by cross-sectoral expertise and capabilities.

Tools to support the development of these capacities should be provided to Member States. It is essential to continue to support Member States in building underwater protection assets, drone solutions, and ship repair and shipbuilding capabilities. The EU should also explore opportunities to balance offshore renewables with defense activities, as outlined in the offshore renewables' strategy.

Finally, the EUMSS-23 is an instrument of political action that involves the articulation of principles, the definition of interests to be safeguarded, the elaboration of courses of action, and the allocation of resources and capabilities to achieve a realizable and sustainable objective. This approach is based on a credible assessment of the challenges and threats to be addressed as a matter of priority, anticipating them, preventing them, responding to them, and strengthening, throughout this process, the resilience of the EU and European society.

What are the interests of EUMSS-23?

In response to evolving maritime security threats, the EU has many fundamental interests covering several critical areas.

Firstly, it seeks to ensure the security of the EU, as well as that of its Member States, citizens, and partners, to safeguard lives and property in the maritime environment.

A second vital interest is to preserve global peace and stability. The EU is committed to keeping maritime routes free and open to all, avoiding threats posed by state and non-state actors that may disrupt maritime trade and navigation.

Furthermore, the EU strives to uphold international law, stressing the importance of

respect for international norms, such as international law, human rights and democracy, and full compliance with Montego Bay (UNCLOS). It also seeks to promote good international governance of the oceans through regional maritime conventions supporting the concept of multilateralism²⁰.

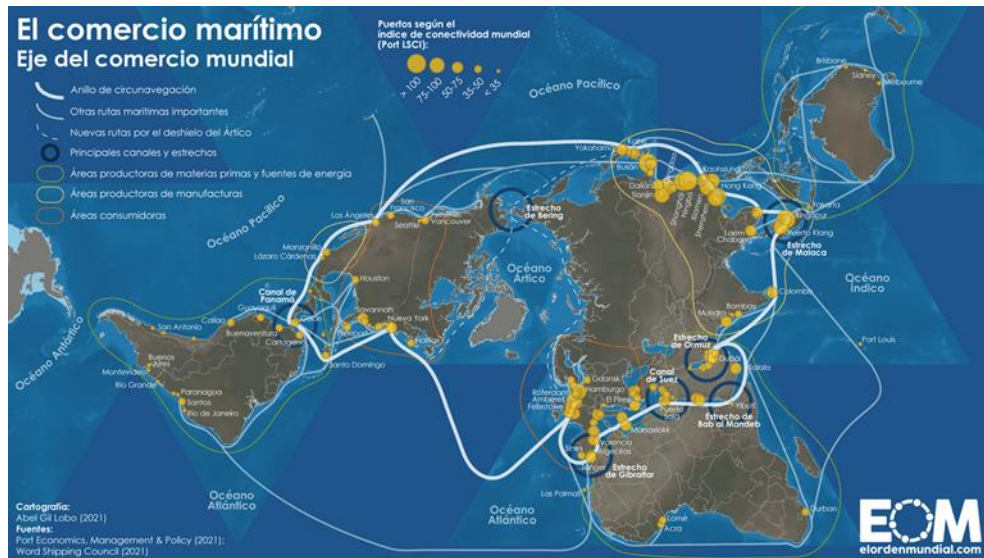


Illustration 6 World maritime trade (Source: EOM).

Another primary concern is to protect natural resources and the marine environment, considering the growing threats related to climate change and environmental degradation. Biodiversity loss, unsustainable exploitation of fish, flooding in coastal areas, and impacts on marine ecosystems are central concerns.

Improving the resilience of critical entities and the security of networks and information systems is a pressing need to include the protection of critical infrastructure both on land and at sea, considering the risks associated with climate change and foreign direct investments.

The EU also strives to protect economic activities at sea by promoting a sustainable blue economy, both on land and at sea, to support vital maritime industries.

The security of the EU's external borders and the protection of its internal security are priority issues in the fight against human trafficking and other illegal activities, including combating terrorism.

²⁰ Conte de los Ríos, Augusto (2023). El Tratado de Alta Mar y la protección de la biodiversidad marina. Global Strategy. Retrieved from <https://global-strategy.org/el-tratado-de-alta-mar-y-la-proteccion-de-la-biodiversidad-marina/> (Accessed 5-11-23).

The EU strives to safeguard the maritime areas of its member states from illegal and unauthorized activities related to hydrocarbon exploration and drilling. Energy security and environmental protection are vital factors.

To ensure its ability to act promptly and effectively in the maritime domain, the EU adopts a multi-domain approach covering land, air, cyber, and outer space to deal with various challenges and threats.

Finally, attention is paid to the safety and security of seafarers under the requirements set out in the Maritime Labor Convention and other relevant conventions of the International Labor Organization. Ensuring adequate working conditions in the maritime environment is essential.

Admiral Bernard Rogel, chief of staff to recent French presidents, described a worrying geopolitical development in an interview in 2021: "The world is going through a deep crisis of multilateralism, and dialogue is receding in the face of the balance of power. Unfortunately, the new world that is emerging is characterized by an increasing use of force, disinhibition of behavior, and the erosion of international treaties"²¹.

Beyond the simple maritime issue, in terms of defense, the real danger to Europeans comes from Europeans if they persist on the path of strategic lethargy. Europeans have collectively grown accustomed to the tranquility of peace in a strategic thinking model that emerged from the post-Cold War period.

We must now admit that this model is obsolete and that we must rethink the foundations of collective security, considering geostrategic upheavals, such as the rise of Asian power, the development of maritime issues, threats approaching as far as the Mediterranean, technological competencies and the strengthening of multilateralism²².

What are the main objectives of EUMSS-23?

EUMSS-23 sets out six strategic objectives to improve maritime security. Firstly, it highlights the need to increase activities at sea, including annual EU-wide naval exercises, strengthen existing naval operations, develop coast guards in various sea

²¹ Bellec, F. (2023). Défense: de la fièvre à l'hypertension. *La Géographie*, 1590, 24-29.

²² Rogel, Bernard (2021). La France face aux nouvelles menaces maritimes. *Vie Publique*. Retrieved from <https://www.vie-publique.fr/parole-dexpert/281186-la-france-face-aux-nouvelles-menaces-maritimes-par-bernard-rogel> (Accessed 5-11-23).

basins around the EU, and expand the concept of Coordinated Maritime Presence to new maritime areas of interest.

Secondly, cooperation with partners is emphasized by deepening EU-NATO cooperation, strengthening partnerships with like-minded countries and organizations, deploying EU liaison officers in maritime information centers in non-EU countries, and promoting dialogue and best practices through Coast Guard function forums.

6 strategic objectives

1) Step up activities at sea:

- organising an annual naval exercise at EU level
- reinforcing existing EU naval operations
- developing further coastguard in sea basins around the EU
- expanding the Coordinated Maritime Presences concept to new maritime areas of interest

2) Cooperate with partners by:

- deepening EU-NATO cooperation
- enhancing partnerships with likeminded countries, regional and international organisations
- deploying EU liaison officers to maritime information centres in non-EU countries
- promoting dialogue and best practices through the coast guard function forums

3) Enhance maritime domain situational awareness by:

- strengthening the Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE) and MARSUR
- reinforcing coastal and off-shore patrol vessel surveillance

4) Manage risks and threats by:

- conducting regular live maritime exercises involving civil and military entities
- monitoring and protecting critical maritime infrastructure and ships from physical and cyber threats
- tackling unexploded ordnance and mines at sea
- developing further awareness and preparedness to tackle threats linked to climate change and environmental degradation

5) Boost capabilities by:

- developing common requirements and concepts for defence technologies in the maritime domain
- stepping up work on projects such as the European Patrol Corvette or improving anti-submarine capabilities

6) Educate and train by:

- boosting hybrid and cyber security qualifications notably on the civilian side
- conducting training and joint exercises open to non-EU partners

Illustration 7 EUMSS-23 strategic objectives (Source: EU).

The third objective is to improve situational awareness in the maritime domain by strengthening the Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE) and dedicated maritime surveillance project (MARSUR), as well as reinforcing surveillance of coastal and maritime patrol vessels.

MARSUR was created, supported by the European Defense Agency (EDA), to enable the exchange of maritime operational information and services between the naval forces of contributing member states. MARSUR has proven its operational value by being chosen by EU Member States to implement the PMC concept in the Gulf of Guinea and the northwest Indian Ocean.

Risk and threat management is the fourth objective, which involves conducting regular maritime exercises involving civilian and military entities, monitoring, and protecting critical maritime infrastructure and physical and cyber threats, addressing unexploded

ordnance and mines at sea, and improving awareness and readiness to address threats related to climate change and environmental degradation.

The fifth objective seeks to enhance capabilities by developing standard requirements and concepts for defense technologies in the maritime domain, advancing projects such as the European Patrol Corvette (EPC), and improving anti-submarine capabilities²³.

Finally, the Strategy focuses on education and training, especially in civilian hybrid and cyber security qualifications, along with conducting joint training and exercises open to non-EU partners.

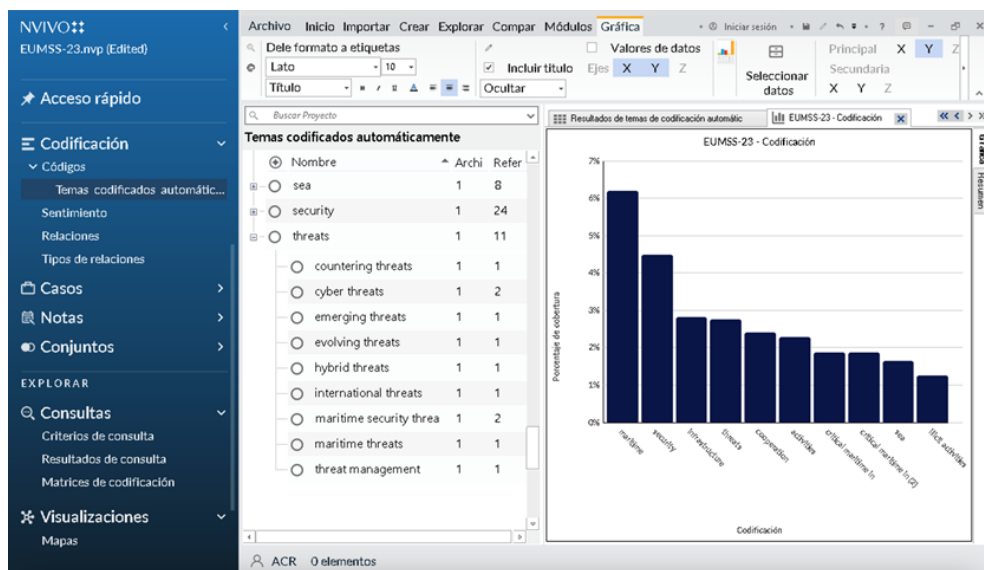


Illustration 8 Analysis with NVivo (Source: Author).

To implement the Strategy, together with its Member States, the EU will use all relevant civilian and military policies, tools, and instruments. It will coordinate the policies and activities of all relevant actors at European, regional, and national levels, reinforcing their synergies and complementarities.

The Strategy will also promote a more coherent EU engagement in external conflicts and crisis to enhance the security of the EU and its citizens. A common approach is therefore needed to make the EU more resilient to maritime threats.

Relationship with NATO

The EU should strengthen cooperation with its neighbors and strategic maritime regions,

²³ Conte de los Ríos, Augusto (2021). La EDA y el programa de la corbeta europea (EPC). Global Strategy. Retrieved from <https://global-strategy.org/eda-programa-corbeta-europea/> (Accessed 5-11-23).

especially in the context of Russia's aggression in Ukraine²⁴. The EU will continue collaborating with NATO on maritime security, building on previous agreements and principles of openness and transparency and contributing to global and transatlantic security, complementing NATO's fundamental role in the collective defense of its members but setting out a consensual position²⁵.

In their latest joint statement in January 2023²⁶, the EU and NATO set out to strengthen their strategic partnership, condemning Russian aggression in Ukraine, reaffirming their support for Ukraine's independence and sovereignty, and recognizing the challenges from authoritarian actors, including China, and the persistence of conflicts in Europe's neighborhood.

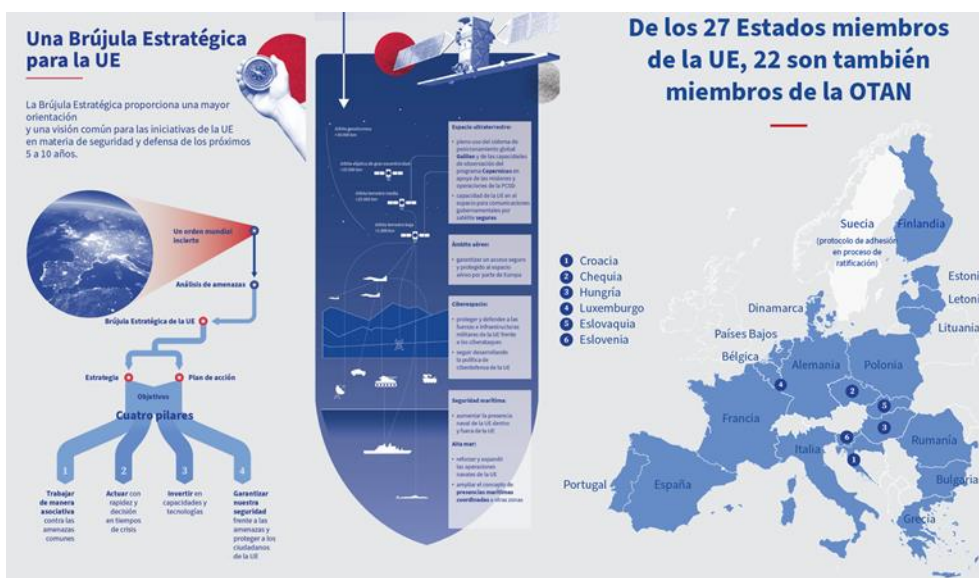


Illustration 9 The Strategic Compass and NATO (Source: EU).

The transatlantic link and cooperation between the EU and NATO are also underlined. NATO remains central to collective defense, and a complementary and interoperable European defense is valued.

The partnership has progressed in countering hybrid and cyber threats, operational cooperation, military mobility, and other areas. In the face of evolving threats and

²⁴ Henrotin, J. (2022). Les opérations navales durant la guerre d'Ukraine. *Stratégique*, 129, 139-150.
²⁵ Dacoba Cerviño, Francisco José (2023). Seguridad en Europa: más OTAN, ¿menos UE?. *Bie3: Boletín IEEE*, pp. 548-559.
²⁶ Council of the EU (2023). Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation, 10 January 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/es/press/press-releases/2023/01/10/eu-nato-joint-declaration-10-january-2023/> (Accessed 5-11-23).

challenges, cooperation will be strengthened in geostrategic competition, resilience, and critical infrastructure security, among others.

The EU also seeks to strengthen cooperation with third countries on maritime security, building on existing instruments and initiatives that include actions such as information exchange and capacity building, especially with littoral states in the sea basins surrounding the EU, such as the Western Balkans and the eastern and southern neighbourhood.

In addition, joint maritime security exercises are promoted with partners to boost interoperability, and port calls and EU patrols are planned, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, according to the Strategic Compass²⁷. The EU will deploy liaison officers to maritime information fusion centers in areas of interest to foster information exchange and cooperation, including law enforcement, justice, and home affairs issues.

Other initiatives seek to grant the EU special status to enhance its role in maritime security in the region. Finally, international cooperation will be fostered in areas such as information sharing and surveillance of critical maritime infrastructure, such as underwater cables and pipelines, and protecting ships and ports in sea basins close to the EU.

Both organizations will collaborate closely with their members to promote transparency. They will regularly assess their progress and fully respect the principles of mutual openness and transparency, reciprocity, and inclusiveness, as well as the decision-making autonomy of both organizations.

A more robust and capable EU in the field of security and defense will contribute positively to global and transatlantic security and is complementary to NATO, which remains the basis for the collective defense of its members²⁸. However, beware, autonomy and sovereignty are not decreed. They are built because it is evident that, since the end of the Cold War, we have yet to devote sufficient defense efforts to ensure our strategic autonomy²⁹.

²⁷ Fiott, D. (2022). L'Union européenne et la *Boussole stratégique* : un moment décisif? *Revue Défense Nationale*, 852, 95-100

²⁸ Pontijas Calderón, José Luis (2022). Hitos en la agenda europea de seguridad y defensa. *Bie3: Boletín IEEE*, pp. 169-183

²⁹ Lanata, A., Loiseau, N., Boniface, P., Merchet, J. & Champeyrache, C. (2023). Europe puissance : d'une autonomie renforcée à la souveraineté? *Revue Défense Nationale*, H-, 81-95.

Enhancing capabilities

To promote its maritime security interests, the EU must accelerate the development of civilian and military capabilities in collaboration with industry where necessary. Research and development (R&D) related to civilian aspects of European maritime security are integrated into the EU's Horizon Europe program in the "Civil Security for Society" cluster.

Current and future R&D will support capacity building at the EU level, addressing issues such as critical maritime infrastructure protection, underwater threat management, readiness and response to artificial and natural disasters, and security of passenger shipping with industry collaboration where relevant. We need to think about a global naval strategy for the 21st century³⁰.

In the area of security and defense, to ensure a more robust Union presence in the maritime domain and the ability to project power, both the EU and its Member States need to develop a wide range of maritime capabilities, taking full advantage of opportunities for cooperation under related EU initiatives and instruments that include enhancing maritime capabilities with a focus on EU resilience, competitiveness and control in all aspects of the maritime domain, in line with NATO and accordance with the Strategic Compass.

The ongoing review of the Capability Development Plan is based in part on lessons learned from Russia's military aggression in Ukraine³¹. The European Defense Agency, for example, will conduct research on key technologies needed to manage uncrewed maritime drones and protect critical infrastructure on the seabed.

The weakening of international law and multilateralism, through increasingly assertive and aggressive competition between global and regional powers, leads to a return to a balance of power to the detriment of the legal order resulting from international treaties³².

As the Strategic Compass also suggests, national and multinational projects must address overcoming fragmentation in critical assets, such as corvettes and embarked systems, and improving platform effectiveness. The Strategic Compass has been

³⁰ Furgolle, G. (2018). Quelle forme pour la guerre navale au XXI^e siècle? *Revue Défense Nationale*, 810, 41-44.

³¹ Gollnisch, A. (2022). Enseignements navals et maritimes de la guerre en Ukraine. *Revue Défense Nationale*, 853, 13-18.

³² *Ibidem*.

described as a "white paper"; however, it represents much more - it is the most ambitious Strategy that the European Union has ever adopted in the field of defense³³.

Remember that the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) was created to undertake crisis management and capability development missions and operations. Several Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) projects on uncrewed maritime systems have arisen from cooperation opportunities. The European Defense Fund will support research and development projects on maritime situational awareness, maritime surveillance capabilities, critical maritime infrastructure protection, and underwater capabilities.

Military capabilities are given relevance, leading to a call for member states to increase defense spending and to engage more in Permanent Structured Cooperation and the European Defense Fund. The EU also seeks to improve the alignment of its capability prioritization processes with operational needs. It will establish an annual meeting of EU defense ministers to review the capabilities landscape and identify defense investment gaps.

In addition to naval, space, and cyber capabilities in which the EU invests, a defense innovation center and a critical technologies observatory have been established. In the same document creating this center, the Commission details some technologies, from artificial intelligence and Big Data to cybersecurity, high-performance computing, microprocessors, quantum technologies, secure communications, and sensors³⁴.

Following the Nord Stream pipeline incident in the Baltic Sea in September 2022, NATO created the Critical Underwater Infrastructure Coordination Cell in February 2023 in response to a proposal from Germany and Norway. This cell, based in Brussels, seeks to improve the security of critical undersea infrastructures by bringing together key stakeholders from NATO member countries and civilian industry to understand the risks better and coordinate their protection more effectively.

In parallel, on October 12, 2023, NATO Defense Ministers endorsed the Digital Ocean

³³ Cózar Murillo, Beatriz (2022). La Brújula Estratégica de la Unión Europea. *Revista Ejércitos*. Retrieved from <https://www.revistaejercitos.com/2022/08/31/la-brujula-estrategica-de-la-union-europea/> (Accessed 5-11-23).

³⁴ Comisión Europea (2021) Action plan on synergies between civil, defence and space industries COM(2021)70. Retrieved from https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-03/action_plan_on_synergies_en_1.pdf (Accessed 5-11-23).

Vision, a pioneering initiative to improve NATO's maritime situational awareness from the seabed to space. Digital Ocean will transform allied maritime domain awareness by improving coordination between national and allied capabilities used for maritime surveillance. The Digital Ocean Vision aligns with the goal set at the Vilnius Summit to establish a NATO framework for securing critical undersea infrastructure in the face of the Russian threat³⁵.

The EU and its member states should work on strengthening capabilities that will enable better detection of suspicious activities to protect critical infrastructure underwater. The EU and NATO should coordinate their efforts in this field, where necessary, to ensure consistent results in overlapping requirements.

Key EU actions to enhance capabilities in this Strategy include developing standard requirements and concepts in technology for security and defense, including maritime situational awareness, building interoperable uncrewed systems for surveillance of maritime critical infrastructure, anti-RPS (anti-drone) systems, strengthening modern anti-mine capabilities, supporting the development of enhanced joint capabilities in maritime patrol aircraft, and conducting joint test and experiment exercises to develop future state-of-the-art maritime capabilities.

Spain and maritime security

The importance of maritime security in the context of national security is highlighted in the National Security Strategy, which was approved in 2011³⁶ and revised in 2013, 2017, and 2021. In addition, this relevance is reflected in the 2013 National Maritime Security Strategy (NMSS-2013)³⁷.

Criminal acts in the maritime environment, such as piracy, migrant smuggling, and armed assaults at sea, continue to be significant challenges in various regions and pose a severe threat to maritime security. These incidents impact freedom of navigation and put key trade routes at risk.

³⁵ Guillaume, L. (2017). Espace sous-marin et stratégie maritime (l'exemple russe). *Revue Défense Nationale*, 801, 113-121.

³⁶ Approved by Agreement of the Council of Ministers on June 24, 2011, and retrieved from <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/documents/9BED-CF7A-estrategiaespanoladeseguridad.pdf> (Accessed 5-11-23)

³⁷ Approved by Agreement of the National Security Council of December 5, 2013 and retrieved from https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/documents/20131333estrategiadesequidadmartima_u.pdf.

Spain, located between the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean and a member of the EU, has a unique and complex geographical location that affects the definition of its strategic maritime objectives. These particularities guide our global Strategy, which focuses on defending these strategic interests and values to promote stability, peace, and security worldwide.

The NMSS-2013 set a precedent by making Spain the first EU country to define its national maritime interests in a strategic document. Subsequently, other countries, such as the United Kingdom, France, Portugal, and the European Union itself, produced similar documents³⁸.

The NMSS-2013 introduced a holistic approach in the EU, addressing in a comprehensive and connected manner the various challenges and threats, as well as the interests to be protected. This holistic view has implications for the governance of the maritime domain that is maintained with the renewed EUMSS-23.

In Spain the NMSS-2013 was followed by Law 14/2014, of July 24, on Maritime Navigation, a much-needed law that came to alleviate a legislative vacuum that, in some cases, dated back to the Trade Act of 1885. This Strategy, still in force, is based on a comprehensive approach to maritime safety, and its purpose is to guide State action in a coherent and coordinated manner, with the ultimate goal of strengthening maritime safety levels, which is considered a shared responsibility with the international community. We see how this same comprehensive approach is addressed in EUMSS-23 and the Strategic Compass.

The first European defense strategy, A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, sets out a strategic vision for Europe based on a typical basis for joint progress in foreign policy, security, and defense. This approach promotes a more coherent and comprehensive engagement in international conflict and crises. It also seeks to strengthen human security, which, in turn, contributes to improving the security of both the EU and its citizens³⁹.

³⁸ García Pérez, R., & Lirola Delgado, I. (2019). *Estrategia de seguridad marítima de España: una agenda de actualización*: Tirant lo Blanch.

³⁹ Parada Martínez, Manuel (2023). La Brújula Estratégica: ¿un documento más para el momento oportuno? *Documento de Opinión IEEE 62/2023*. Retrieved from https://www.ieee.es/en/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2023/DIEEEO62_2023_MANPAR_Brujula.pdf (Accessed 5-11-23).

Spain needs to develop a new, renewed, and adaptable maritime strategy that considers innovative naval tactics such as those displayed in Ukraine, as well as coordination in complex contexts and protection of maritime flows⁴⁰. In addition, it is crucial to strengthen collaboration with civilian actors in the maritime domain and take advantage of technological advances such as drones, anti-drone systems, directed energy, and collaborative naval monitoring to ensure maritime security in various areas⁴¹.

The new maritime Strategy will include issues of current relevance, such as increased competition among international actors, hybrid threats in the maritime environment, and the growing strategic importance of seabed and uncrewed vehicles. The aim is to establish a comprehensive model based on a system that facilitates decision-making based on objective data in line with the 2021 National Security Strategy⁴².

This Spanish Strategy must also be committed to the Defense Industry. The EUMSS-23, as well as the equivalent of the Atlantic Alliance, is a clear symptom of the growing concern of the States to control the threats and risks coming from the maritime space and to maintain the necessary freedom of navigation to safeguard national and collective interests⁴³.

The Navy's General Guidelines underline that the arms race has led us to new advanced weapons systems, significantly reducing our technological advantage. To this end, it is committed to R&D&I to maintain technological superiority over our potential adversaries. Among the new technologies to be incorporated we find Big Data, Artificial Intelligence, and the introduction of digital twins⁴⁴.

Spain must look resolutely towards the sea, protecting its interests in this shared global space in a coordinated and cooperative manner with its partners and allies. It must also exercise its influential capacity to lead developments, including the progressive and silent

⁴⁰ Working on it is currently underway. See: National Maritime Safety Council Meeting March 21, 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.dsn.gob.es/es/actualidad/sala-prensa/reuni%C3%B3n-del-consejo-nacional-seguridad-mar%C3%ADtima-5> (Accessed 5-11-23).

⁴¹ Gollnisch, A. (2022). Enseignements navals et maritimes de la guerre en Ukraine. *Revue Défense Nationale*, 853, 13-18.

⁴² Government of Spain (2021). National Security Strategy 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.dsn.gob.es/es/file/7272/download?token=miLM79u6> (Accessed 5-11-23).

⁴³ Conte de los Ríos, Augusto (2022). El futuro de la Armada y la Industria de Defensa. *Revista Ejércitos*. Retrieved from <https://www.revistaejercitos.com/2022/12/12/el-futuro-de-la-armada-y-la-industria-de-defensa/> (Accessed 5-11-23).

⁴⁴ AJEMA (2022). *Líneas Generales de la Armada 2022*. Official Document on the Spanish Navy's Intranet.

change that digitalization imposes, whose impact on the maritime domain is constant and increasing⁴⁵.

Conclusions

Maritime activity has experienced remarkable growth in recent years. In addition to traditional activities such as shipping and fishing, new activities have gained prominence, such as mining and genetic exploitation in the deep sea, the installation of submarine cables, the use of new energies and biotechnologies, as well as the exploitation of mineral resources. However, this increase in activities has also attracted the attention of individuals and groups engaged in criminal activities and illegal trafficking, which requires preservation and security measures.

In this world that has picked up its pace after a period of global peace, marked by globalization, shrinking borders, and the use of shared resources, there is a pressing need to understand the processes at work and the dynamics generated. For some, these trends represent a significant threat to our role in the international community and our security.

Maritime security is paramount to the EU and its member states because of their interdependence with the oceans and the global economy. The EU relies heavily on security on the seas, as more than 80% of world trade is conducted through maritime transport, and oil and gas production, as well as data communications, are also linked to the sea.

Spain took the first step with the approval of the 2013 Maritime Security Strategy. Ten years have passed since the approval of this Maritime Safety Strategy, and we have gone from milestone to indifference, postponing the updating of a new strategic document that incorporates the changes that occurred in this decade, starting with the need to set the focus on the seabed.

In Europe since 2014, the first EUMSS-14 fostered much-needed cooperation between civil and military authorities, promoting rules-based governance and strengthening the EU's ability to address maritime threats. The new EUMSS-23, based on the EU Strategic Security and Defense Compass and the Joint Communication on Maritime Security,

⁴⁵ Curt García, Luis (2018). La Estrategia de Seguridad Marítima Nacional ante su próxima revisión: avances y opciones de mejora. *Bie3: Boletín IEEE*, N° 9, pp. 669-687.

seeks to address emerging challenges and consolidate the EU's role internationally.

The Compass, the EU's first security and defense strategy, calls for further strengthening the EU's commitment to maritime security. Regular deployments contribute to preventing new crisis and managing existing ones. That is why EUMSS-23 emphasizes the need for member states to invest in high-level naval capabilities and be ready for more robust maritime operations. Specifically, the EU seeks to ensure the long-term sustainability of existing naval operations, such as Irini in the Mediterranean, and to strengthen maritime links between relevant security theaters.

The new EUMSS-23 considers all European sea and submarine basins, recognizing that maritime security has a global reach due to its impact worldwide. The EU has become a significant maritime security provider worldwide, conducting maritime operations, implementing Coordinated Maritime Presences, and promoting cooperation with international partners.

The defense, naval, and security industries were strategically crucial in Europe and Spain. The European Union will promote innovation in essential technologies for related civilian sectors and encourage cross-border collaboration through the coordinated use of all relevant EU resources. Spain must do the same with one of its most profitable defense sectors, the naval sector.

The seabed and the security of the EU's submarine data cable network are vital but also vulnerable, and the new EUMSS-23 strategy seeks to improve security and coordination in this regard. Russia has made great strides in this capacity. However, we presuppose that the EU has the necessary capabilities for surveillance and risk analysis in the maritime domain using satellite imagery and ship positioning data.

Ultimately, this new EUMSS-23 strategy aims to promote peace, international security, and the protection of biodiversity, as well as to safeguard the EU's maritime interests and its economy. As the EU and its Member States implement the new strategy, Spain should update its own NMSS, which has become obsolete.

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