

ATLANTIC — CENTRE —

For Defence Capacity Building

POLICY BRIEF **ISSUE 07** | FEBRUARY | 2021

NATO 2030 and the Atlantic Centre: enabling a potential cooperation in the maritime security domain

Rodrigues Pedra¹

NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has launched, on the 8 of June, his outline for NATO 2030 in an online conversation with the Atlantic Council and the German Marshall Fund of the United States. In the beginning of that conversation, the Secretary General stated: This is an opportunity to reflect on where we see our Alliance ten years from now, and how it will continue to keep us safe in a more uncertain world. This uncertain, complex and vulnerable world includes Russia's aggressive actions, China's emergence as a global power, terrorism in all forms, non-state actors' perils, cyber and hybrid risks threatening Euro-Atlantic security. Furthermore, the USA's decision to pull out of the Open Skies Treaty, the withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, last year, and the challenge of the New START negotiations between Washington and Moscow, in the beginning of 2021, makes the Cold War memories alive and the peer state nuclear competition a real scenario in the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century. History does not repeat itself, but it rhymes, as Mark Twain is often reputed to have said – a sentence that illustrates the evolving context.

¹ Portuguese Navy Lieutenant Commander.

So, what could the role of NATO be in 2030? And how could the Atlantic Centre support NATO 2030, thus enhancing cooperation with the Alliance?

When considering the first question, it is important to recognize that the role and relevance of the Alliance has long been established. For decades, the political approach to the security challenges in the Atlantic and the fostering of the transatlantic link represented the cornerstone of Euro-Atlantic security and the lead instrument for security collaboration. NATO's strategic vision has always promoted the transatlantic bond between Europe and North America, while it had prevented simultaneously the menaces of Halford John Mackinder's heartland theory: who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; who rules the World-Island commands the world.

Since its inception, this political approach towards the security of the Atlantic region delivered an overwhelming and powerful message about freedom and shared values, including democracy, individual liberty, human rights, and the rule of law. Under the Alliance collective defence umbrella, from 1950-1980, the West also started to build a new security narrative. Although the military sector was still important, new approaches to security had been developed. Environmental, economic, societal, political, human security and responsibility to protect (R2P) started to be buzzwords, changing the landscape of the international security agendas. The collapse of the USSR, in the early of 90s, the rising of intra-state conflicts and the war amongst the people in Africa, Middle East and Europe, and the eruption of transnational terrorism, triggered new ways to tackle security challenges. The strategic context and the perception of threats has changed and so has the posture of the Atlantic Alliance. Over the years, NATO has been going through a continuous and successful process of transformation leading nowadays to three core tasks: collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security, enhancing the political and military role of the Alliance in Europe and around the world.

An approach to NATO maritime operations uncovers the role of its naval forces during the conflict of former Yugoslavia, with operation SHARP GUARD, in the 1990s. In the 21st century, Standing NATO Maritime Groups have protected sea lines of communications against transnational terrorism in the Mediterranean Sea, with operation ACTIVE ENDEAVOUR (2001-2016) and SEA GUARDIAN (2016 till now); have fought against pirates off the shores of Somalia, commencing with operation OCEAN SHIELD in 2008; and have implemented assurance measures in the Atlantic Ocean, and in the Baltic, Black and Mediterranean Seas, in the wake of the Russia's aggressive posture, since 2014. NATO has also led the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan since 2003 and, as member of the Coalition to Defeat ISIS, enhances military capability-building across the Middle East. NATO is also supporting the African Union and conducting air policing missions on the request of its Allies. Furthermore, the Alliance also addresses hybrid and cyber-threats and other regional and global issues. Besides the natural transatlantic link, NATO has also established a global partnership which includes the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue, and other partners across the globe such as the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Mongolia, Australia and Japan.

Bearing in mind the complexity of the security environmental, NATO 2030 can contribute to address actual challenges in three important ways. First, as an international security organization, it can foster a shared awareness of threats and risks among the North Atlantic community and partners, through a global approach, not a global presence, including non-military and soft security challenges, as COVID-19 context has taught the world. This common perception could further strengthen partnerships in many directions, addressing the full spectrum of threats. Second, the capacity to continue to change and adapt as the world continues to change. This capacity should rely on a frank discussion and genuine consultation fostering a continuous transformation and innovation of NATO, essential to tackle the challenges of tomorrow. The transformation should also include the necessary mechanisms for enhancing the global and regional cooperative opportunities amongst different partners. This is a moment to strengthen multilateral institutions and to strengthen multilateral cooperation. Third, NATO should develop a comprehensive approach, using a broader range

of tools, military and non-military means. If in the short term it is important to be able to engage in expeditionary operations, in order to fight terrorism, maritime piracy and other threats and risks, in the long run, training and building local capacity is the best approach to enable countries to stabilize their own countries and fight threats and risks themselves.

The following are three actions the Atlantic Centre could undertake as part of its approach to support NATO efforts, in particular addressing maritime challenges in the following years. First, the Atlantic Centre should spur Alliance members to address more seriously challenges emanating from all strategic directions. This is particularly true in the Mediterranean, South Atlantic (e.g. Gulf of Guinea) and the Arctic, where Russia and China define themselves as a near-Arctic countries. Thus, the Atlantic Centre could be a primary platform of shared awareness in the Euro-Atlantic area. Doing that, insights must be taken on security of sea lines of communications and seaborne critical infrastructures, as the globalization and world's prosperity depend on it. Bearing in mind that 90% of the world's commerce and 97% of global digital communications (through submarine cables) are seaborne, fostering a security architecture for the Atlantic Basin, which links Americas, Europe and Africa through interdependence and in a complex manner, should be a priority of the security agendas.

Second, as stated before, the vulnerability, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity of the strategic environmental leads to the assumption that no nation is capable to ensure security on its own. This is particularly true when addressing maritime challenges. Maritime security is, by nature, governed under international frameworks, especially the UN Convention on the Law at the Sea, which concedes limited jurisdictional rights to coastal states, thus, implying natural international cooperation at sea, including interagency coordination. Therefore, the Atlantic Centre should support multilateral initiatives with the coast states in the Atlantic Basin, starting with the Portuguese speaking countries, enhancing political and security approaches between, Portugal, NATO, EU, and those Atlantic partners, actually tackling challenges as human trafficking, terrorism and piracy. Supporting their efforts means ensure security for all the Atlantic Basin.

This will lead to the next and last consideration, building internal capacity. Training and building local capacity, requires a holistic approach and the use of all instruments. Portugal has been involved in maritime security capacity building projects, through the Portuguese Navy, for more than 30 years, mainly with nations belonging to the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), where there are specialist teams permanently deployed to work with our partners. Fostering operations between NATO and CPLP, including those to ensure freedom of navigation would be a useful complement to Portuguese maritime and air exercises and operations in the Atlantic, off the coast of Africa, as well as to all European and US initiatives in Africa. Mar Aberto is a good example of the Portuguese Navy approach to maritime issues in Africa. This includes a permanent coastal patrol vessel - Zaire - stationed in São Tomé & Príncipe, since the beginning of 2018, operating under a bilateral agreement, by a mixed crew of the Portuguese navy and of the São Toméan coast guard, performing search and rescue missions as well as law enforcement at sea, supporting surveillance and the enforcement of fisheries regulations, through the embark of fisheries inspectors.

To conclude, the outline for NATO 2030 illustrates the complex nature of security, where multiple threats, risks and actors are involved. This security context enhances even more the importance of the maritime domain in an interdependent and global society. The role of NATO towards protecting the maritime domain and its attributes, source of resources, means of transportation, communication and force projection, in particular in the Atlantic Basin should remain a high priority, since its control is critical to seize, retain and exploit the initiative, while enhancing freedom of action by reducing vulnerability to threats and risks. A global approach towards the maritime domain, not a global presence, also requires capacity to foster civil-military cooperation and a comprehensive approach. This is an opportunity to reflect on where we see the Atlantic in the future and how it will continue to keep the Euro-Atlantic region safe in a complex and uncertain world. The Atlantic Centre, with the support of the different instruments of national power – diplomatic, informational, military, economic and culture – could assume an important role in avoiding sea-based threats and risks, through the creation of a forum for the discussion of maritime security issues, in a global and comprehensive manner, thus linking the Atlantic Basin nations in a unique and single common

propose: ensuring the security and safety of its citizens, while supporting NATO's 2030 initiative.