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Spain and its Maritime Strategic Reality



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Abstract:

This paper explores Spanish sea power and maritime strategy in recent times, making the case for an all-encompassing Spanish maritime strategy that merges all dimensions of Spanish sea power and actors involved in it, and puts them to use for the protection of national and collective strategic interests both at home and abroad. Discussing the fundamentals of sea power and maritime strategy theory, it builds on some of the most relevant works in the field by Spanish authors and strategists. From such base, it examines the different dimensions that shape (or should shape) Spanish strategic behavior at sea, highlighting the most prevalent challenges and obstacles currently hampering the enactment of Spanish sea power.

Keywords:

Sea power, maritime strategy, Spain, maritime security, naval power..

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Introduction

Spain is a maritime nation, and as the late Admiral Eliseo Álvarez Arenas often said, the sea has been the cause of Spanish history. Today, sea power remains a fundamental strategic asset for Spain. Its successful enactment and exercise, however, demands the development of a coherent and all-encompassing maritime strategy which guides all national collective interests at sea – both civilian and military – in an effective and coordinated manner.

This paper explores the concepts of sea power and maritime strategy through the case of Spain. It first provides a summary of sea power and maritime strategy theory, including the work of the most relevant Spanish maritime strategic thinkers. It follows with an analysis of Spanish maritime strategy today, examining the different aspects which come into play for its development and use (geography, history, politics, naval power, commercial power and industry). It then concludes with some considerations moving forward into the future, discussing some aspects worthy of further attention and changes needed with them to develop a true, all-encompassing maritime strategy.

On Sea Power and Maritime Strategy

In modern times, authors have discussed sea power from different perspectives, including history, strategy, diplomacy and international relations. Partly as a result of the wide variety of approaches to its study, there is no single, settled definition. For the purpose of this paper, however, sea power is understood broadly as the power that is enacted at and from the sea, not exclusively in its naval (i.e. military) dimension, but encompassing all aspects of national life related to the sea. As James Holmes puts it, «a virtuous cycle among commerce, policy, and military might that makes a seafaring society rich and powerful».[1]

The concept of sea power (two words) rose to prominence with the works of U.S. Navy Captain Alfred T. Mahan during the early 1890s. In spite of the fact that he never truly defined the concept, Mahan concluded that «the possession of that overbearing power

[1] HOLMES, James R. "America is Finally getting its Maritime Strategy right", *The National Interest*, 14 June 2025. Available at: https://nationalinterest.org/feature/america-is-finally-getting-its-maritime-strategy-right (Accessed 16 August 2025).

on the sea which drives the enemy's flag from it, or allows it to appear only as a fugitive», was the central driver of the development of economic and national prosperity.[2] Building on his ideas, authors touching upon the topic in more recent times have emphasized the concept's wider reality beyond the constraints of naval power. Basil Germond has defined it as «a form of power based on a variety of determinants, which from maritime or maritime-related assets, such as commercial shipping, navies, maritime culture, and geographical realities, and it is enacted at or from the sea».[3]

Geoffrey Till has observed that sea power is «[…] a relative and not an absolute term. Countries may have degrees of sea power; they can exert influence in peace and in war by their activities at sea, to a greater or lesser extent».[4] Such variations are often prompted by a nation's strategic reality (geography, economy, strategic culture, etc.). Moreover, Till also underlines the dual nature of sea power as both an input and an output. The former refers to the means – navies, coast guards, merchant fleets, fishing fleets and the broader maritime industry. But «sea power is not simply about what it takes to use the sea (although that is obviously a prerequisite)».[5] Sea power as an output, thus, refers to the ends, the outcomes – «the capacity to influence the behaviour of other people or things by what one does at and from the sea».[6]

Meanwhile, maritime strategy results from the need for an effective organization of maritime resources and capabilities, as well as for the direction of a state's sea power altogether. Thus, maritime strategy can be broadly understood, following Professor James Holmes, as «the art and science of using sea power to fulfill purposes related to the sea»;[7] the direction of all aspects of national power for strategic purposes related to the sea. It serves as an instrument to define the strategic and political ends which are sought, as well as the means necessary to attain them and the ways of doing so in the most efficient way possible.

Though history may have judged him for his views on the decisive battle and his ideas on naval tactics, Mahan's wider work (often quoted but rarely read) reflects a view of national

[2] MAHAN, Alfred T. *The Influence of Sea Power upon History: 1660-1783*. Little Brown & Co.,1890. 138.
[3] GERMOND, Basil. *Seapower in the Post-Modern World* (2024). 8.
[4] GERMOND 2024, 13.
[5] TILL, Geoffrey. *Seapower: A Guide for the 21st Century*. Routledge, 2018. 25.
[6] Ibid, 25.
[7] HOLMES, James R, 2025.

maritime strategy as a variation of grand strategy, considering that «a truly maritime strategy orchestrates the efforts of all government bodies able to shape events at sea, not just the institutions that operate oceangoing ships».[8]

As such, the development of maritime strategy demands a long-term vision, and the acknowledgment that it operates in the real world where logistics, political dissension, administrative inefficiency, health and many other facts all have considerable impact on operations.[9] This is an idea defended by several other authors, including retired Admiral Chris Parry, who has argued that «maritime, especially naval, capability does not exist in isolation; it translates directly into – and links with – political, diplomatic and economic influence».[10]

In the military dimension, maritime strategies can be classified in two broad categories: modern and post-modern (or Mahanian and post-Mahanian) maritime strategies. The first category is characterised by «an assumption that sea power brings influence to bear on the behavior of other states», and thus places its focus on peer competition and the development of naval power based on that of other states. It is the more traditional approach to maritime strategic affairs, «a case of 'like against like' and broadly symmetrical conflict. The main indicator of this is the search for decisive battle» (hence the term «Mahanian»).[11]

On the contrary, post-modern maritime strategies have emerged as a result of globalization with the sea at its very center, and are the most common today. They have «an internationalist, collaborative and almost collective world outlook», and navies see their role as defending the system, directly at sea and indirectly from the sea».[12] Under such model, navies are tasked with missions such as sea control, power projection ashore, and maintaining good order at sea, often in a collaborative fashion derived from the acknowledgment that no single navy is able to succeed working alone and the general assumption that globalization will continue to shape international affairs in the future.

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[8] HOLMES, James R. "Yes, the United States Needs a Real Maritime Strategy»", *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, Vol. 149/6/1,444, June 2023. Available at: https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2023/june/yes-united-states-needs-real-maritime-strategy (Accessed 14 August 2025).

[9] TILL, Geoffrey. *Maritime Strategy and the Nuclear Age*. Palgrave Macmillan London, 1984.

[10] PARRY, Chris. *Super Highway: Sea Power in the 21st Century.* 325

[11] TILL, Geoffrey. "Maritime Strategy in a Globalizing World", *Orbis*, 51 (4), 2007. 569-570.

[12] Ibid, 572.

Spanish maritime strategy lies, as will be seen in the following section, inside the second group, like most of its allies in NATO and the EU, as evidenced by the recently published Armada 2050 plan.[13]

Spanish Maritime Strategy

Spain remains inextricably connected to the sea, despite the troubled history of its relationship with the sea. Such relationship, and the subsequent effect it has upon its maritime strategy, must be understood from an all-encompassing perspective: geography, history, politics, commerce and industry.

Geographically, Spain constitutes the bow of Europe, sailing into the ocean. Its extensive coastline and its position between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea have historically favored the development of both an «Atlantic vocation» and a «Mediterranean vocation».[14] The Canary and Balearic archipelagos in the Atlantic and Mediterranean respectively, together with its two autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla in the tip of the African continent make of Spain one of the main guardians of the Strait of Gibraltar.[15] As Colonel Gonzalo Parente observed back in the 1990s, «it will never suffice repeating Spain does not only possess distributed territories in its national configuration, but it is also a country dominating one of the most important straits for global maritime commerce».[16]

The strategic importance of both archipelagos is evidenced, among other things, by the numerous invasion attempts both archipelagos have experienced across several centuries, or even the British rule over Menorca for 100 years. In fact, during the 20th century, Spanish national and maritime strategies were articulated around the concept of the Balearic-Strait-Canaries Axis (*Eje Baleares-Estrecho-Canarias*), establishing that the core center of gravity of Spain's strategy ought to be the Strait of Gibraltar area and its prolonged accesses reaching all the way to the two archipelagos.[17] While such concept

[13] ARMADA, *Armada 2050*, December 2024. Available at: https://armada.defensa.gob.es/html/home/ARMADA2050.pdf.
[14] DE BORDEJÉ, Fernando. *España: Poder Marítimo y Estrategia Naval*. Empresa Nacional Bazán, 1982.
[15] Ministerio de Defensa. *Defense White Paper*. Madrid: Secretaría General Técnica, 2000.
[16] PARENTE, Gonzalo et Al. *La Estrategia Marítima y su Evolución.* Madrid: Editorial Naval,1991. 470.
[17] VÁZQUEZ ORBAICETA, Gonzalo. «The Spanish Balearic-Strait-Canaries Axis and NATO's Maritime Strategy», *The RUSI Journal*, 170 (4), 21. https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2025.2527285.

was left out national strategic thought after the end of the Cold War, the evolving situation around Spain's maritime backyard favors the return to such concept as a basis for Spanish maritime strategy, expanding it to include presence around the African coasts in the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans (Figure 1) like Italy is doing with its «Mediterraneo Allargatto».



Figure 1: The Balearic-Strait-Canaries Axis (Source: Vázquez 2025, 22).

Historically, Spain has experienced a constant struggle between its maritime geostrategic reality and a continental mindset in political-strategic terms instilled since the establishment of the House of Habsburg. The Monarchy and the Government since the reign of Charles V took a strategic turn away from the policy followed by the Catholic monarchs, focusing their efforts on the wars in the European continent over the establishment of a maritime-oriented empire. As some historians have argued, this prevented Spain from nurturing a proper maritime culture and thus becoming a true seapower state (thalassokratia) as the Dutch Empire and Great Britain would be over the

following centuries.[18]

Fin de siècle politician and one of the most ardent defenders of Spanish sea power, Joaquín Sánchez de Toca lamented history could have been different had the Habsburg House followed the policy orientation of «driving the course of our history towards the expansion of the American nationality, and thus, towards a maritime empire» as set by their predecessors, rather than linking Spain «to a policy of continental supremacy in Europe, and thus, to a continental military empire» as they did.[19]

Continental wars were a highly expensive business, and with most of the economic revenue coming from its overseas territories destined to finance them, the monarchy was ultimately unable to resource its Armada as was needed – neglecting the orientation of its grand strategy towards a maritime grand strategy.[20] The traditional imbalance between the land and naval services, significantly neglecting the latter, contributed to overshadowing the role of the sea and national maritime interests, and has been a constant across Spanish history.[21]

The neutrality during both World Wars and the isolation during the first part of Franco's regime had a notorious impact on Spanish maritime strategic culture and defense priorities. Since its accession to NATO in the latter stages of the Cold War (and later into the EU), that gap was mostly filled by the gradual integration of Spanish armed forces into the Alliance's structure and operations, resulting in a maritime strategy with post-modern characteristics.

In terms of national policy and maritime statecraft, the last decade has seen the publication of several official documents at a higher political level discussing maritime affairs. Standing out among them are the National Security Strategy (NSS) (2021),[22] the National Maritime Security Strategy (NMSS) (2024),[23] and the Spanish Maritime Strategy

[18] ÁLVAREZ ARENAS, Eliseo. *Del Mar en la Historia de España*. Madrid: Editorial Naval, 1987; LAMBERT, Andrew. *Seapower States: Maritime Culture, Continental Empires and the Conflict that Made the Modern World*. Yale University Press, 2018.
[19] SÁNCHEZ DE TOCA, Joaquín. *Del Poder Naval en España y su Política para la Nación Iberoamericana.* Madrid: Imp. Hijos de M. G. Hernández, 1898. xxv.
[20] CERVERA PERY, José. "Sánchez de Toca y el Concepto de Poder Naval". In *Plan Ferrandiz: Poder Naval y Poder Marítimo*, Cuaderno 57, Instituto de Historia y Cultura Naval, 2008. 11-18.
[21] ÁLVAREZ ARENAS 1987, 197.
[22] Ministerio de Defensa. *Estrategia de Seguridad Nacional,* 2021. Available at: https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2021/12/31/pdfs/BOE-A-2021-21884.pdf.
[23] DSN. *National Strategy for Maritime Security*. Presidencia del Gobierno, 2024. Available at: https://www.dsn.gob.es/sites/default/files/2025-01/Accesible%20ENSM2024%20EN_0.pdf.

2025-2050 (2024).[24]

The latest version of the NSS, published in 2021 just before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, will be presumably updated very soon to reflect the changes in the strategic environment since then. The document draws some attention to significant threats to maritime security and their subsequent impact on national security in general. The 2024 NMSS has made important contributions to spread awareness about current threats and challenges to security around Spanish territorial waters and the exclusive economic zone (EEZ), establishing three core strategic goals and a set of measures for their achievement.

However, recent events both in Spanish waters and abroad, such as the Red Sea Crisis, have shown that political commitment towards achieving the objectives put forth in the NMSS remains hampered by a short-sighted vision and the conflicting perspectives on such issues among the governing elite itself, as well as by the lack of a single governing authority in charge of its supervision and implementation (which is spread among a number of ministries and other agencies such as the National Security Department).

Similarly, the *Spanish Maritime Strategy 2025-2050* puts forward an ambitious plan to enhance the national maritime industry, with a set of strategic goals to revitalize maritime activities and their contribution to the Spanish economy. However, just as with the NMSS, responsibility over the implementation of the strategy and the challenges derived from the lack of skilled workforce and the growing toll of environmental regulations, among other things, has a bearing on the overall potential of the document's vision. In fact, both strategies give little attention to the role of hard naval power, the Navy, in supporting the attainment of their strategic objectives, something which in the rapidly changing strategic environment has become paramount (as events in the Baltic Sea and the Arctic showcase).

The shipbuilding industry is another aspect of national maritime statecraft facing some challenges. Recent controversies over the procurement of significant capabilities for the Navy, as is the case with the much-needed substitution of the Harrier AV-8B which make up the backbone of Spain's naval aviation, have openly revealed a lack of long-term

[24] DGMM. *Estrategia Marítima de España 2025-205*0. Ministerio de Transportes y Movilidad Sostenible, June 2025. Available at: https://cdn.transportes.gob.es/portal-web-transportes/maritimo/20250522-estrategiamaritimaespana-def-v.11.pdf.

strategic vision and the predominance of political/partisan interests over real military considerations.[25]

In terms of capabilities and infrastructure, the number of available shipyards in Spain has seen a notable reduction in number from 24 in 2008 to 16 in 2023, a 33% decrease in just 15 years.[26] Navantia stands as the national shipbuilding champion, and despite almost 70% of the company's production is exported abroad, the company holds the monopoly in the constructions of vessels for the Armada. Such monopoly is at the same time indicative of the limited interest among the political elite in fostering the shipbuilding sector by relying on other shipyards beyond Navantia. In fact, as Villanueva has emphasized, the instances in which certain classes of ships have been cut short or extended beyond the number of units initially set have been the result of political and industrial considerations rather than military or strategic necessities.[27]

Finally, the merchant and fishing fleets, and other elements of civilian sea power, are another pillar of Spanish maritime strategy. As of 2025, the merchant fleet under the control of Spanish shipping companies comprises a total of 205 vessels, of which 114 sail under foreign flag and 91 under Spanish flag, for a total of 5,038,094 GT and 4,537,019 dwt. Throughout 2024, 17 vessels joined the fleet while 24 were withdrawn from service, resulting in a 3.3% drop in GT and 7.5% in dwt compared to the previous year.[28] The Spanish merchant fleet stands at an all-time low in terms of number of ships, and «for the first time in history, less than 100 merchant transport vessels of 300 GT or more were sailing under the national flag [in 2024]. The Spanish flagged fleet in GT was at levels of 20 years ago».[29] As the latest Spanish Maritime Strategy 2024-2050 has highlighted, the negative tendency in terms of size of the merchant navy could have negative consequences for Spanish national security, particularly in scenarios in which civilian

[25] REUTERS. "Spain rules out buying F-35, choosing between Eurofighter or FCAS", *Reuters*, 6 August 2025. Available at: https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/spain-rules-out-buying-f-35-choosing-between-eurofighter-or-fcas-2025-08-06/ (Accessed 20 August 2025).
[26] CONTE DE LOS RÍOS, Augusto. "Informe sobre la Estrategia Marítima de España 2024-2050", *Revista Ejércitos*, 19 June 2024. Available at : https://www.revistaejercitos.com/focus/informe-sobre-la-estrategia-maritima-de-espana-2024-2050/.
[27] VILLANUEVA, Christian D. "Luces y Sombras de la Industria Naval Militar en España". In Ibáñez Gómez, Fernando (Ed.) *Seguridad Marítima, Una Incertidumbre Permanente*. Tirant Lo Blanch, 2024. 150,162.
[28] ANAVE. *Merchant Marine & Maritime Transport 2024/2025*. Asociación de Navieras Españolas, 2025. 24.
[29] Ibid.

maritime assets could be mobilized to support the navy.[30]

In the fisheries sector, despite of the overall decline in gross tonnage it has experienced over the last two decades,[31] Spain's fleet stands among the most important in Europe. With 8,814 registered vessels and a combined GT of 328,492 tons, Spain's national fishing fleet is «one of the largest EU fleets and the one that is active in more fishing zones»,[32] effectively making Spain a prominent driver in the sector. The EU's 2024 Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet indicated an improvement in Spanish economic performance in the sector, with a net profit increase of 18% and a total revenue increase of 7% compared to the previous year.[33]

Altogether, maritime statecraft remains an all-encompassing endeavor, for which national governments are required to coordinate all civilian and military aspects of sea power through maritime strategy. Moving forward, several challenges lie in the horizon for Madrid, at a time in which fiscal austerity and political uncertainty stand as prominent challenges to the development of a coherent and solid maritime strategy.

Charting the Way Forward

The biggest challenge to Spain's sea power projection and the development of a truly maritime strategy lies in the notorious disconnection of its strategic culture from the sea. Failure to recognize the role that maritime affairs should play in national life has historically been the main obstacle to the development of a true maritime identity – as the work of Sánchez de Toca, Álvarez Arenas and De Bordejé illustrates – and continues to hamper the effective implementation of a maritime grand strategy compounded by a highly dispersed and decentralized organizational structure with too many institutions involved.

First and foremost, education on what is now called «ocean literacy» (an alternative to the commonly used «seablindness», the inability to appreciate and understand the

[30] PERALES GARAT, Luis. "Una Armada de 500 buques". Opinion Paper *IEEE* 23/2024. https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2024/DIEEEO23_2024_LUIPER_Armada.pdf (Accessed 10 August 2025).
[31] VILLANUEVA 2024, 142.
[32] EU Commission. *The 2024 Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet*, November 2024. 14.
[33] Ibid.

importance of the sea for national prosperity) is highly necessary in Spain. As some have been argued elsewhere, education at the civilian level would provide the necessary base for the general public about the importance of the sea for their daily lives;[34] in this case the fact that Spanish sea power is vital to guarantee national prosperity. As retired USN Captain Jerry Hendrix describes, appreciating sea power manifesting itself in the daily life – whether going to a clothing store, to the supermarket, or to a gas station.[35]

While a challenging endeavour given Madrid's distance from the sea, emphasizing Spain's links to sea and their importance for national prosperity could potentially help to have a ruling class with a stronger awareness about sea power and maritime affairs in the future, one that is thus able to keep the virtuous cycle of sea power running. To that end, the works of Spain's top three maritime thinkers – Joaquín Sánchez de Toca, Eliseo Álvarez Arenas and Fernando de Bordejé – remain crucial references on which to rely and should be a must-read for anyone working in the Government with responsibilities over maritime affairs. Sánchez de Toca remains, perhaps, the closest to a Spanish version of Julian Corbett or Alfred Mahan.

In structural terms, an aspect imposing serious constraints to the development of Spanish military sea power is the distribution of its armed forces among the three services. Ever since the mid-20th century, there has been a dominance of the Army over the Navy and the Air Force in terms of resource allocation, traditionally maintained at a 3.7:1:1 ratio in favor of the Army. It could be argued such distribution, illustrative of Spain's strategic culture detachment from its maritime reality, no longer serves Spain's strategic needs given its extensive maritime interests and geostrategic position, and would require a mild adjustment to give the navy a more adequate weight altogether.[36]

Retired Marine Corps Colonel Juan López Díaz has argued that the current model is a legacy of outdated territorial defense doctrines, which utterly fails to address contemporary security challenges in the maritime domain, thus requiring a rebalancing of

[34] SMITH, James W. E. "Sea Power and its Importance to Defend the UK transcends a Change of Government", *Warships IFR Magazine*, September 2024. 36-37.; O'CONNELL, Callum. «From 'Seablindness' to Ocean Literacy: Making a Positive Case for the Maritime», *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, 151/8/1,470, August 2025.

[35] HENDRIX, Jerry. "The Age of American Naval Dominance is Over", *The Atlantic*, 13 March 2023. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2023/04/us-navy-oceanic-trade-impact-russia-china/673090/.

[36] The challenge is further complicated by the current problems of manpower in the Spanish (as well as many European) armed forces, which are under resourced and struggle to fill all necessary positions.

military resources by reducing the Army's size in favor of the Navy.[37] This shift could enhance Spain's power projection capabilities and the capacity to protect maritime sovereignty and respond effectively to prevailing threats and humanitarian crises at sea. Its successful achievement, however, necessitates a strong commitment by the political ruling elite, which will only come through education.

Lastly, from a capability and maritime security perspective, it is worth highlighting the absence of a Spanish Coast Guard, an institution akin to those in the United States, the Netherlands or many other NATO countries, acting as the sole responsible actor for all constabulary activities across its EEZ and zones of interest. As of 2025, these tasks are shared by a number of entities and administrations whose responsibilities and AORs often tend to overlap and conflict with one another.[38] Albeit at a high economic and bureaucratic cost initially, a Spanish Coast Guard would alleviate existing problems of Spanish constabulary presence, leading to a more robust control of its waters through a unified chain of command and streamlined processes that avoid wasting existing resources.[39]

The absence of a Coast Guard further aggravates the need for a stronger supervision and control of the vessels associated to the so-called Russian «Dark Fleet» which regularly transit Spanish waters in the Atlantic. These vessels pose a significant risk to Spain's marine ecosystem and resources given its potential to cause a disaster comparable to the Prestige incident of 2002.[40] Several open-source intelligence (OSINT) analysts have been raising their voice on this problem for some time, but Spanish authorities continue to downplay the threat posed by these vessels showcasing their lack of awareness for the impact that maritime activities have for national prosperity.[41]

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[37] LÓPEZ DÍAZ, Juan Ángel. "La Proporción Áurea", *Revista General de Marina*, 275 (10), 2018. 541-556.
[38] VÁZQUEZ, Gonzalo. "Maritime Security in NATO's Southern Flank: The Case for a Spanish Coast Guard»", *CIMSEC*, April 2025. Available at: https://cimsec.org/maritime-security-on-natos-southern-flank-the-case-for-a-spanish-coast-guard/ (Accessed 15 August 2025).
[39] FERNÁNDEZ DIZ, Aurelio & NOVOA SANJURJO, Fernando. "Misiones de la Armada y Necesidad de un Guardacostas", *Cuadernos de Pensamiento Naval*, No. 39, 2024. 29-62.
[40] LLOYD'S LIST. "Will it take a 'Prestige' moment to tackle the Dark Fleet threat?", *Lloyd's List*, 11 October. Available at : https://www.lloydslist.com/LL1150953/Will-it-take-a-Prestige-moment-to-tackle-the-dark-fleet-threat.
[41] MUÑOZ ABAD, Rafael. "El Fenómeno de la Flota Fantasma y sus Riesgos para España", *Real Instituto Elcano*, 28 July 2025. Available at: https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/analisis/el-fenomeno-de-la-flota-fantasma-y-sus-riesgos-para-espana/ (Accessed 13 August 2025).

Final Considerations

This paper has explored maritime strategy and sea power theory focusing on the case of Spain. By looking at all the different dimensions which configure and influence in the development of maritime strategy as a means to drive and exercise national sea power, it has argued for an all-encompassing Spanish maritime strategy which brings together military and civilian maritime assets.

Maritime strategy is not simply a document that is published and distributed by the Government or the Navy. Maritime strategy is a way of organizing national resources and promoting national foreign policy by taking advantage of the advantages that the maritime environment gives to a nation like Spain. It must be the result of a combined process of analysis and reflection on the changes taking place in the environment, and the definition of long-term national security interests.

This is not a trivial matter. Today, Spain and its allies are facing a new reality, at a time when fiscal constraints and political uncertainty at the international level are combined with the increasing importance of the oceans in the arena of great power competition. A world in which the democratization of maritime power that we are witnessing with Ukraine in the Black Sea or the Houthis in the Red Sea threatens to alter stability at sea, with the consequences that this may have for navies and the way they are used.[42]

Changes in the strategic environment make it necessary to work on the development of a maritime strategy that effectively merges and coordinates the civil and military aspects of its maritime power, while reducing as far as possible the current decentralized structure of entities with direct competence over different aspects of Spanish sea power, thus providing a more compact and coordinated structure for its management. Meanwhile, the work of Spanish maritime thinkers remains fully valid as valuable references on which to rely to better understand the maritime reality of Spain and the need for a great maritime strategy.

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[42] DUNLEY, Richard "The End of the Age of Transoceanic Navies? Democratisation of A2/AD and the Relationship Between Land and Sea Power". *The RUSI Journal*, 169 (4). https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2024.2391354.